

Madison County Treasurer candidate to host pitch contest for local entrepreneurs

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – Madison County Treasurer candidate Chris Miller is working on a program to help small businesses and nonprofits in Alton grow and innovate.

Called Alton RISING or The Riverbend Investment in Startups and Innovation for New Growth is “designed to create a community of entrepreneurs, small business owners and innovative nonprofits who come together on a regular basis for training and support,” Miller said in a release. He said startups less than five years old are responsible for

nearly all job creation. The program had an inaugural event featuring a six-week boot-camp from March-April 2018. It had around 50 participants from across the Riverbend.

“Even though I've been in business for nearly a decade now, the free training and networking Chris Miller and Alton Main Street provided helped me connect to new customers and rethink how we're going to continue to grow,” Sheila Curry, owner of Granny's Uniforms on College Avenue in Alton said in a release.

To follow the initial success of that boot-camp, Miller is going to host a “Pitch Competition and Networking” event on July 13 from 5-7 p.m. at the Simmons Hanly Conroy National Law Firm, located at 1 Court Street in Alton. The event will feature people from across the Riverbend pitching new ideas to a panel of five or six to-be-determined judges. There will not be a *Shark-Tank*-style response from the panel, though the top three pitches will be awarded \$100, \$50 and \$25.

“We're looking for the Riverbend's best and brightest entrepreneurs, innovators and small business owners looking to launch a new product or service!” Miller said in a Facebook message. “Entrepreneurs at any stage (including just having a great idea) are welcome to apply, but note that only 15 entrepreneurs will be chosen to present a two-minute pitch. Cash prizes will be awarded by a panel of esteemed judges.”

“There's no one 'right' way to do an elevator pitch, but the concept is you have less than two minutes to tell a potential investor or business partner enough about your big idea to make them want to continue the conversation after the elevator doors open,” Miller said to potential pitchers. “Usually, the 'who, what, when, where, and, especially, why' are good places to start and don't forget to have an 'ask' for help of some form or another at the end to make it easy for the judges to know how best to help you.”

Besides pitchers applying, audience registration is also required, as seating is limited to the first 50 registrants. RSVPs can be made at: [RSVP](#)

Following the pitch event, Miller said he is looking towards the future when he plans on hosting another boot-camp event for local businesses and nonprofits.

When asked if this initiative has any relation to his campaign, Miller said his campaign itself was built on his work with entrepreneurs. He currently works as an assistant professor and director of interdisciplinary entrepreneurship at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. He has spent years working with entrepreneurs, start-ups and nonprofits in both Missouri and Illinois.

“Supporting and training start-ups and small businesses is what I've been doing every day for over a decade and is what I'll continue to do for the rest of my career,” he said.

“It is my sincere belief, however, that fulfilling the statutory duties of the treasurer's office with excellence and integrity is merely the baseline of what voters should expect of their next duly-elected treasurer. At no additional cost to the taxpayers, it's my intention to replicate the work here at Alton RISING in communities across Madison County, whether I'm elected treasurer or not.”

More information on Alton RISING can be found on its Facebook page: [Alton RISING](#)