

# **Pitch-fest: Treasurer candidate works with Alton Main Street to help blossoming non-profits**

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ALTON – Madison County Treasurer Democrat Candidate Chris Miller worked with Alton Main Street and the Simmons Hanley Conroy National Law Firm to expand small business benefits to local non-profits through a sort of “pitch fest” last Friday in the law firm's auditorium.

Miller said the event follows a six-week spring “boot camp” for entrepreneurs and small businesses as well as an inaugural “elevator pitch” competition last July. A second such competition was held at Friday, Aug. 17, 2018, only for non-profits specifically instead of small businesses. These boot camps and pitch presentations are part of Miller's “Alton RISING” initiative to assist with Alton's small business and non-profit organizations with the help of Alton Main Street. Miller said these events have “expanded” his partnership with Alton Main Street.

During these elevator pitches, people operating nonprofits were invited to pitch their ideas to a group of qualified judges, who asked questions to each candidate following their pitches. The winning idea was given a \$100 prize.

Maggie Partipilo won the \$100 first prize at the most recent pitch fest with her Junior League Achievement's Student Clothing Initiative. Other participants included April Gray of Trinity's Way, and group dedicated in the memory of her daughter, Trinity Buel, who lost her life in a car accident earlier this year. The group wants to work to improve the conditions of no-kill animal shelters in the area, especially for late-in-life animals. Nicole Gory of the Magic Box freecycle shop also pitched her idea to operate a secular place for people to find resources.

Previously to announcing his candidacy for Madison County Treasurer, Miller worked for most of his adult life with entrepreneurs and community development, he said in a release. He said he worked with Pembroke Township to build and develop an entrepreneurship training program for their neighbors. He also worked with Madison County residents to connect an unincorporated area to the county's sewer system. He also works as a professor of entrepreneurship at Washington University in St. Louis.



“As any nonprofit executive worth her salt will tell you, being 'entrepreneurial' is a necessity of the business,” Miller said in a release. “By their very nature, nonprofits are great at thinking outside the box, acting energetically and without fear of failure and seeing the world in terms of opportunities, not obstacles. If that's not entrepreneurial, I don't know what is!”

In that quote, Miller was responding to Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany. McGibany has been working with Miller to expand the mission of Alton RISING, which is similar to the aims of Alton Main Street, which has been working to improve the community through grassroots efforts for years. McGibany said she embraced her organization's function as a sort of business.

“As a nonprofit ourselves, Alton Main Street fully understands that just because we have a different tax status than our commercial business partners doesn't mean we don't also operate like any other small business in the area,” she said.

There will be another entrepreneurial “boot camp” starting on Sept. 9 at 2 p.m. at the Jacoby Art Center. That event is free and open to the public and starts a four-week training period for entrepreneurs

