



# Alton Night Market Off To Great Summer Season Start, Offers Live Music With Homegrown Items For Sale

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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## SEE VIDEO:

ALTON - One of Downtown Alton's newer traditions, the Alton Night Market, opened its 2020 season last Thursday night at the Jacoby Arts Center, a later than usual start due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and adjustments have been made to keep social distancing in mind.

The live music and outdoor vendors have been moved to the center's large parking lot because of social distancing rules, along with art displays and local vendors selling homegrown and handmade items, along with vintage and hip thrift items.

"Today, this is the first Night Market of the 2020 season," said Bailey Shaw, a member of the Alton Main Street promotions committee, "so we're really excited to be back. This year, we moved the market over to the parking lot, just to make sure we could stay more socially distanced than we had in the past; the pocket park was pretty small. But this has allowed us to really spread out. I know that I feel really super safe, because there's a ton more space that has at least quadrupled the size of the pocket park, which is awesome."

A vendor that has been a part of the market since the beginning is very happy to be back, and the response has been very good.

"I've been coming since the very beginning," said Niki Busler of Once Design. "This is our fourth or fifth year. I love the Night Market; I help run their social media page, and I come down here to show off my designs and prints, T-shirts and things like that. I had to go a lot online, and not a lot of people wanted to see anyone, with the whole social distancing, so that was a different change, but it's been a good response, getting orders

online. I really like it, actually. But I'm happy to be back out at the Night Market, to see people, to see the community, and see everything that all these local vendors make, it's so cool. So, sometimes, I don't get to see it online, obviously, but I get to see them personally here, which is fun. That's why I love coming to the Night Market, because it's here, I can look at it, like right then and there."

The reasons that the vendors are at the market itself are varied, as well.

"I am here today, selling my cold-pressed fresh juice," said Courtney-Jean McLaughlin of CJ's Juicery, "because we are able to be back open to the public, and to celebrate not being quarantined. The juice is fresh, cold-pressed juice. No added sugars, just all fresh fruits and vegetables, and it makes you feel great."

Despite the pandemic, McLaughlin was able to keep her shop open, going through some sluggish sales, but it wasn't anything that she wasn't expecting.

"I was actually able to stay open through all of this," McLaughlin said, "but it definitely slowed down a little bit, which, you know, that's a given, being a business owner, so nothing out of the ordinary. But I'm just happy to see everyone's smiling faces, and we're all feeling good."

Despite all the obstacles thrown at many events this summer, due to the pandemic, Shaw is very happy that the Night Market was able to return.

"The Night Market is something I look forward to every week," Shaw said. "So, at the beginning of the summer, when we thought this wasn't a possibility, it was definitely disheartening, because we weren't going to have that sense of community every Thursday. And so, figuring out a way to have our vendors. and have our community come together still, and be safe while doing it, has just been really exciting. So we're really excited to get the 2020 season rolling. It'll be shorter than before, but hey, at least we're out here. It's going to be fun, we've got a lot of great bands lined up, still, so we're still going to be able to sit back, hang out, check out a lot of awesome vendors. I know they, themselves, have been putting in a lot of great regulations on keeping things sanitized, and sanitizer available once you touch stuff, So, everyone should feel super safe, and excited to come out to the Night Market this year."

The Night Market will be held every Thursday from 7-10 p.m. through Sept. 3. For more information, please log on to the website, [www.downtownalton.com/events/night-market-on-broadway](http://www.downtownalton.com/events/night-market-on-broadway).



[Charles Thomas also contributed to this story.](#)