

Proud Market Supports Local LGBTQ+ Orgs and Vendors

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - On Thursday, June 15, the Old Bakery Beer Company hosted the second Proud Market to showcase work by local LGBTQ+ and ally artisans.

The event also served as a fundraiser for Alton Pride and the Metro Trans Umbrella Group, two local LGBTQ+ organizations.

“It’s a lot about just being supportive of the people who are around us, our friends and our family members and team members and other people in our community who, especially in recent years, have been threatened and attacked,” Lauren Pattan, vice president and operations manager of The Old Bakery Beer Company, said.

A variety of vendors were in attendance. Candles, earrings, paintings, pottery and clothing were popular sales items.

Charlie Witzel, who owns [CBJeeBees](#), was at the Proud Market selling hand-painted patches. Witzel noted that they were originally anxious about coming to the event because they hesitate to leave St. Louis and go to smaller towns in the current political climate. For safety reasons, Witzel carefully chooses which events to participate in.

But that doesn’t stop them from making their patches, many of which advocate for trans rights.

“I’m also trans myself, so I’m proud of me and I’m going to speak out for my rights,” Witzel said. “It means a lot to me to be able to do stuff like this because it gets the word out, and then people wear and get even more exposure to it.”

Other vendors expressed their appreciation for the market and the chance to support the LGBTQ+ community. Beverly Forrest of [Lotus Aromatherapy](#) donated a percentage of the night’s profits to Alton Pride, and Chris Smejkal and Dana Cattani are raising funds for the [Trevor Project](#) all month with their business [Park Bench Creations](#).

“I come from a really conservative southern home, and I have a child that is LGBT,” Amber Busler, who owns [Re-Bloom STL](#), said. “I think it’s just really important to me to be in the inclusive spaces and just be a part of that positive environment.”

In addition to the market, The Old Bakery Beer Company offered their regular menu items with a few special deals. The restaurant sponsors a charity every month with their “Drink for a Cause” program. [Alton Pride](#), a group that organizes many LGBTQ+ events in the area, received 25% of the night’s sales through this program.

Throughout the month, customers can also purchase a pint or six-pack of the restaurant’s popular Hibiscus Tart beer. A percentage of those proceeds will go to [Metro Trans Umbrella Group](#), a support and advocacy group for transgender individuals in the Greater St. Louis area.

“We want to make sure that we can provide a safe space for and they can see that we are actually supporting them in a real way,” Pattan said.

To learn more about The Old Bakery Beer Company and their future events, visit [their website](#).