

# Alton Marina named RBGA Small Business of the Month

**Telegraph staff report**

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ALTON — Just a few days after celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Alton Marina was named the RiverBend Growth Association's Small Business of the Month for September.

The marina is owned by the city but operated by Parrot Point Marina. CEO Karen Baker-Brcnic, who is in her 10th year with the marina, said she and her staff strive to make it a place where people feel like they're on vacation, but close to home.

Businesses who win the association's monthly award provide services and support to the community. Baker-Brcnic says since her business won the award about eight years ago, the marina has undergone many changes and improvements, which she says provide a unique service to the community.

"We are instrumental to Alton in that we're the window from the river," Baker-Brcnic said.

People from all over patronize the marina, including "loopers," or boaters who are going from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, up the Atlantic coast and back to Minnesota. Many visitors say Alton is a beautiful place to see from the river, Baker-Brcnic said.

"It's exciting we get to be that entity," she added.

In addition to providing a place for concerts, events and parties, the marina brings visitors who then shop, dine and explore Alton, Baker-Brcnic said. During boating season from early March until November, the marina employs 18 individuals. During the off-season, it employs about eight.

"We're open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. There's always somebody here," Baker-Brcnic said.

About 1,500 people attended the marina's 20th anniversary celebration.

The marina boasts 300 slips, with about 94 percent occupied during the season. That's up from about 40 percent when she first started, Baker-Brcnic said. The key to driving up business is offering premium services like dock delivery of food, alcohol and ice, clean and air-conditioned private bathrooms, full-service deli and shop, and the little things, like manicured landscaping.

As for winning the association award, Baker-Brcic said, “It’s very much of an honor.”

The Alton Marina is located at #1 Henry St. in Alton and can be reached at 618-462-9860.

The RiverBend Growth Association is both the chamber of commerce and the economic development organization for the communities of the Riverbend. Each month one association business is selected as Small Business of the Month. The monthly winners receive approximately \$3,500 worth of marketing. The association can be reached at 618-467-2280.