

Alton's Bluff City Grill selected as Small Business of the Month

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Bluff City Grill owner Cathy Gross, who has had the business for four years, recently celebrated a year at its current location at 424 E. Broadway, Alton. A larger space than her previous location allows the restaurant to cater events on the building's upper level, which seats more than 400.

Alex Heeb|The Telegraph

ALTON — The RiverBend Growth Association chose Bluff City Grill as Small Business of the Month.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker, who was among the dignitaries in attendance at an awards ceremony, said

the business has significantly factored in Downtown revitalization.

"We are thrilled to have been chosen," owner Cathy Gross said about the business, located at the former Eagles Club building at 424 E. Broadway, Alton.

"The Broadway corridor had been dead for most of the time I've lived here," said Walker, who counts the business among his favorite restaurants. "With the amount of work, the amount of risk, the amount of capital in that risk, the amount of hours you have to put in, for someone to take this on, is almost a miracle. As large as this is, for her to do this, it's a gift to the city. Anybody in their right mind would like to have her in their city doing what she does."

The building required significant work to make it suitable for use as a restaurant.

"It was very outdated," Gross said. "We had to redo basically from the floor up. We had to replace all the ceiling tiles. We redid the floor. We had to drywall, paint, trim, bring in new air conditioning units, heat, all new windows."

For Gross, the risk was worth it to take her business to the next level.

Gross, who has had the business for four years, recently celebrated a year at its current location. She had little choice but to expand because the business had outgrown its previous location, she recalled.

The larger space also allows the restaurant to cater events on the building's upper level, which seats more than 400.

"We can host anything from weddings to class reunions to birthday parties," she said. "We can handle it all."

For years, Gross worked as a bartender and she loves food service, she said. Owning her own establishment was a longtime dream, she noted. She crafted a broad menu of American favorites that she hopes will appeal to a wide swath of people.

"We just want to create an environment that anyone can feel comfortable in," she said.

Gross remains passionate about the work, which keeps her very busy.

"I just enjoy working for myself," she said, "And, the thrill of being busy. It keeps you excited. It's definitely one of those businesses that is unpredictable. You never know what the day is going to bring."

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