Student proves that volunteering is contagious

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Samantha Gaynor newwave@tulane.edu

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Inspired by the Tulane Arts in Medicine Program, which provides arts-related workshops, activities and performances for patients and staff at Tulane-Lakeside Hospital for Women and Children, Sami Lapayowker envisioned an idea that would help funnel more volunteers to the program.

With the help of Tulane Hillel and members of the Teen Jewish Leaders club, Lapayowker, a Tulane junior double majoring in dance and neuroscience, began organizing students to volunteer. Eventually, the number of people interested in volunteering grew from a full list to the need for a standby list.

“It started getting bigger and bigger and there were more people who wanted to do it,” Lapayowker said. “I would have a waiting list for people who wanted to come.”

To keep up with the demand to volunteer and the limited amount of seats available through Arts in Medicine, Lapayowker encouraged more people to volunteer through the hospital.

Lapayowker said she is grateful for the opportunity to give back to the hospital and the patients there.

“Volunteering is important because it gives you a sense of purpose and accomplishment,” Lapayowker said. “It makes you feel good to help others and see the impact you have on their lives.”

Lapayowker hopes to continue volunteering with the program and inspire others to do the same.

“I want to continue volunteering with Arts in Medicine and encourage other students to do the same,” Lapayowker said.

Lapayowker’s efforts have not gone unnoticed.

“Sami’s dedication and hard work are really impressive,” said Dr. Michael Sadler, the director of the Tulane Arts in Medicine Program. “She has truly made a difference in the lives of our patients and staff.”

Lapayowker’s story is a testament to the power of volunteerism and the impact it can have on others. She has shown that volunteering can be contagious and encourage others to get involved as well.

To learn more about Arts in Medicine and how you can get involved, visit the Tulane Arts in Medicine Program website.
Medicine, Lapayowker created her own program — Tulane Hillel Art Therapy (THAT), which organizes volunteers to do arts and crafts with patients at Tulane-Lakeside Hospital.

The only difference between her program and the one offered through the hospital is that her program is specifically geared toward the hospital’s pediatric patients and is conducted only once-per-month on Saturdays.

“It’s incredible to see students wake up early on the weekends and do something so positive for the community,” said D.J. Handelman, an adviser for the Teen Jewish Leadership club. “Sami uses her passion to create opportunities for others to give.”

The next date for volunteering is Oct. 28 and Lapayowker expects a large turnout. Volunteers will do autumn-themed arts and crafts during the October visit.

On occasion, Lapayowker and other THAT volunteers visit with kids in isolation units where special robes and masks are required to protect the patients from exposure to germs.

“The outfits tend to make the patients uncomfortable, which also makes us have to work harder to get the kids to open up,” Lapayowker said. “There’s a mask covering your face so you have to appear friendly through the mask.”