

School of Social Work offers street-level health care

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fdawson@tulane.edu



Elk Place Health Spot, a monthly event staged by Tulane School of Social Work and the city of New Orleans, brings together health screenings and health-related information for passers-by at the busy intersection of Canal Street and Elk Place. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

From the first day that Patrick Bordnick, dean of the [School of Social Work](#), spied the school's building near the corner of Canal Street and Elk Place, he envisioned a mini health fair there. The busy downtown New Orleans intersection is a mass-transit stop that sees heavy foot traffic from pedestrians and commuters.

"My first thought was, this is fantastic ... I can only imagine what we could do to

work with our community to improve their health and behavioral health,” he said.

Today, that health fair is a reality; the Elk Place Health Spot began in June. To make it happen, the School of Social Work partnered with the city of New Orleans’ Health Department, led by director Marsha Broussard, a 2011 graduate of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Thanks to a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield, the free monthly event brings together providers to perform screenings such as vision checks and 1-minute HIV testing, with the chance to pick up a healthy snack and learn about topics like backyard mosquito control. At the September health spot, there was a place to sign up for Medicaid benefits and a fully equipped mobile dental clinic.

Bordnick said the event is already growing, based on the community’s needs. Besides attracting more healthcare providers to offer a wider variety of services and information, there’s potential for music performances, participation from local arts and entertainment organizations, and industry-specific services for hospitality workers and musicians, such as hearing screenings.

Bordnick said he hopes to override the area’s perceived reputation for crime. “Instead of this area being known as a place of danger or hurt, we’re going to make it a place of healing and a community resource. We will change that stigma.”

The next Elk Place Health Spot takes place Oct. 26.

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