

## Tell me something, mister

December 18, 2012 5:15 AM Mary Sparacello  
msparace@tulane.edu

New Orleans is a city filled with stories. Capturing them on camera, however, is no easy task. This fall, Tulane University undergraduates worked with New Orleans schoolchildren on projects that showcase local culture.



Tulane undergraduates work with local youth on a project incorporating storytelling, writing and reporting, and film creation and production. (Photo from Luisa Dantas)

“One of our main objectives is to give students a deeper and more nuanced understanding of New Orleans history, communities and culture,” says filmmaker and writer Luisa Dantas, who teaches a course called Place-Based Storytelling in New Orleans at Tulane.

Students in Dantas' [service-learning course](#) partnered with Kids ReThink New Orleans Schools and Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School in the Tremé neighborhood. Tulane students produced short films about New Orleans, and at the same time, they taught students in after-school media programs at Clark and three local middle schools — John Dibert Elementary, Arthur Ashe Academy and Langston Hughes Academy — to create their own films.

On Dec. 17, all of the students presented their work in Freeman Auditorium on the

Tulane uptown campus on topics ranging from tourism on Bourbon Street to effective school punishments.

Place-Based Storytelling is one of several undergraduate service-learning courses funded by Andrew Fredman, who graduated from Tulane in 1984, and sponsored by the [New Orleans Center for the Gulf South](#) at Tulane. The classes connect Tulane undergraduates to students at local partner schools to cooperate on projects incorporating storytelling, writing and reporting, and film creation and production.

The courses contribute to the documentation of the Gulf South and foster storytelling skills among local youth, sometimes welcoming renowned guest artists. This semester, students were delighted to meet “Treme” co-creator Eric Overmyer, who offered feedback on their films and talked about depicting New Orleans culture in an authentic way.

The audience at Monday's screening cheered the young filmmakers. Joel Dinerstein, director of the New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, says, “We're thrilled with this collaboration between Tulane undergraduates and New Orleans public school students.”

*Mary Sparacello is a writer in the Office of Development.*