

Greater debaters

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From left: Tournament judge Andrew Pritzker, league director Ryan McBride, judge Cleveland Donald and former debater Jennifer Castro attend a tournament on the uptown campus in April. (Photo by Kirsten Ranheim)

Long after the service requirement of the undergraduate years has ended, Tulane University alumni keep returning to campus to work with the [Crescent City Debate League](#), a program of the [Center for Public Service](#) that has worked with local middle-school students since 2009.

Andrew Pritzker (SLA '14), who works for Tawani Enterprises in Chicago, returned to judge a tournament in April. "It's like I never left," he says. "A lot of the same people volunteered and came back." Alumni have also come from as far away as California.

New Orleanians tend to stay involved as well. Gregory Tacconi-Moore (SLA '12), a third-grade teacher at Success Preparatory Academy in the city, coaches a team at that school and is also the league's co-director. "The personal satisfaction I derive from working with this program is seeing [students'] skills grow not just over the years students are in the program, but on the days of tournaments," he says.

But aren't middle-school students already pretty good at arguing, like with their parents? "Debate teaches essential life skills that students may not otherwise receive in a traditional classroom setting," Tacconi-Moore says, like public speaking and problem solving.

Elise Matton (SLA '14), also a team coach and teacher at Success Prep, talks about the "power that debate has as an educational and personal development tool."

"I've seen people go up, in one year, two or three grade levels in writing skills, reading skills," adds J.R. Stevens (SLA '12), a Tulane Law School student and co-founder and co-director of the league.

Even working from another city, Pritzker says, "I want to continue to stay involved with it as much as I can. If you believe in something you have to do what you can to participate and donate your time to it because that makes all the difference."

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