

Tulane's Center for Public Service - on the forefront of Hurricane Ida recovery efforts

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Center for Public Service volunteers Diana Soto-Olson, left, and Lana Nitti sort a donation during the Hurricane Ida donation drive in the University Square parking lot on Wednesday, Sept 15. (Photo by Rusty Costanza)

Tulane's Center for Public Service (CPS) has committed to helping the region recover from Ida and has stepped forward to lead Tulane in assisting communities most impacted by the storm. CPS responded quickly by holding a supply donation drive on Sept. 15 in the University Square parking lot. Items such as cleaning supplies, diapers, batteries and non-perishable food were donated to Cut Off, Louisiana, and mutual aid organizations, primarily to support the needs of the coastal tribal communities of Pointe-au-Chien, the United Houma Nation and Isle de Jean Charles, who were particularly hard-hit by Ida.

Partnering with Tulane's Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity, CPS has received approval for a program that will allow Tulane staff and faculty to volunteer up to four hours a week during regular business hours. The Hurricane Ida Faculty/Staff Service Days provide the opportunity for up to 25 staff members to volunteer each week.

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“I think it really shows the (Tulane) administration’s commitment – giving us the green light to recruit staff to volunteer during office hours – that’s absolutely phenomenal,” said Agnieszka Nance, director of CPS.

The service activities will be coordinated by CPS and will allow staff to [sign up](#) for volunteer shifts for ongoing projects throughout the fall semester. Staff should request supervisor approval prior to signing up.

CPS is also partnering with Tulane’s Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and the Community Action Council for Tulane University Students (CACTUS) to organize a donation drive on Sept. 27 and 28, when students have returned to campus. The goal is to collect items for the Krewe of Red Beans, the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe, the United Houma Nation and other organizations working with Tulane in recovery efforts. All students are being asked to either bring an item to donate or purchase something from an [Amazon wish list](#) that contains items that CPS’ partners have identified as needed. Drop off locations will be inside residence halls and the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life.

“This will be a campuswide, student-driven event and it has the potential to be a really big drive,” said Katie Houck, associate director of CPS.

USG and CPS will also be collaborating to create volunteer opportunities for students. Beginning on Oct. 2, the groups will coordinate weekly volunteer activities for students with local New Orleans organizations as well as offering opportunities for relief work in coastal Louisiana communities.

Outreach Tulane, the university’s largest and longest running student-led day of service, which was originally scheduled for Aug. 28, has been rescheduled for Oct. 16. Student leaders will be reaching out to service organizations and communities impacted by Ida to determine what their needs will be at that time and organize the event accordingly.

CPS has also begun the discussion with Tulane faculty regarding restructuring the fall service-learning classes to be more focused on community rebuilding, which will allow students to assist in Ida recovery efforts.

Other disaster relief efforts are already underway. D. Jelegat Cheruiyot, professor of practice in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the School of Science and Engineering, has partnered with the nonprofit Glass Half Full NOLA, started by Tulane graduates Max Steitz and Franziska Trautmann.

Glass Half Full NOLA began as a glass recycling program for New Orleans but has expanded their focus, due to Hurricane Ida, to work with Cheruiyot in offering support to the Pointe-au-Chien Tribe and has successfully organized many volunteers. CPS is planning to assist Cheruiyot and Glass Half Full with cleanup, technology support and other services in the very near future.

The Office of Advancement is assisting in the setup of a [Wavestarter campaign](#) to fund all CPS Hurricane Ida relief efforts. The fundraising program is set to launch the week of Sept. 27.

CPS is continually updating their website to provide information on volunteer opportunities and in-kind and monetary donation requests from local service organizations. To learn more about CPS and disaster relief resources, click [here](#).