

Tulane graduate leads youth running program

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Tulane alumna Denali Lander is executive director of Youth Run NOLA. The organization will host its fourth annual 504K race on Saturday (March 18). (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The local nonprofit [Youth Run NOLA](#) helps 10-to-18-year-olds throughout Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes hit their stride in developing self-esteem and healthy living habits.

“Running relies on support and is accessible and affordable for everyone,” said Denali Lander, a 2009 graduate of the [School of Liberal Arts](#) and executive director of Youth Run NOLA. “I grew up believing that sports had the power to build communities. The goal here is to create a community of healthy young leaders through running.”

Lander helped form Youth Run NOLA while working as a teacher in 2010. Experienced runners joined students for after-school runs.

Thirty local schools participate in the organization's eight-month training program. Students network with peers, coaches and volunteer running buddies during weekly practices and monthly events.

Tulane first-year student Leo Gutierrez works with the organization as a running buddy. A longtime Youth Run NOLA participant and [Posse scholar](#), Gutierrez regularly provides support to students during local races like the [Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon](#).

"After receiving a kidney transplant in 2012, I wanted to find a way to promote the longevity of my new kidney, so when I joined Youth Run NOLA, they provided me with the opportunity, resources and encouragement to maintain a healthy lifestyle," said Gutierrez.

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"The goal of Youth Run NOLA is to create a community of healthy young leaders."
— Denali Lander, executive director of Youth Run NOLA