

Alumnus aims to Save the Blues

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mcross3@tulane.edu



Left to right, Tulane students Josh Gaiman, Sean Keating, Harrison Bamel and Kelly Delduca pose with Ric Stewart, executive director of the Save the Blues Foundation. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In James Brown's classic song "Night Train," the godfather of soul rasps the line: "And don't forget New Orleans, the home of the blues." As executive director of the [Save the Blues Foundation](#), Tulane University alumnus Ric Stewart channeled the spirit of Brown's lyrics when developing his nonprofit organization, which aims to build a museum dedicated to the musical genre's regional roots and broad cross-genre influence in downtown New Orleans. The Blues Center will begin a capital campaign this spring.

A 1994 [School of Law](#) graduate, Stewart is currently an adjunct lecturer for the [A. B. Freeman School of Business](#).

“The first blues song, ‘I Got the Blues’ by Anthony Maggio, was published here in 1908,” said Stewart. “The idea is to celebrate that New Orleans is the home of the blues by creating a music destination museum called the Blues Center, which is intended to be in the CBD.”

Currently known as WTUL's D.J. Maraca, the roots music aficionado has worked in college and community radio since 1986. Stewart began his mission to create the educational center in 2015.

“I went around the country and checked out different music museums. What makes them exciting is interactive content, so I’ll be focusing on that first,” said Stewart. “We’re creating a music map that’s interactive, tying geographical connections together with exclusive content and historical overviews.”

Tulane senior Sean Keating began an internship with Stewart’s foundation in 2016.

“The nonprofit sounded like it had a mission that I could get behind—giving back to the New Orleans community,” he said.

Keating assisted in writing a grant last year for funding from the [New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation](#).

“We got a grant from them to create documentary content that we’re now going to feature in our kiosk at [Jazz Fest](#), which will operate as a pop-up museum,” said Stewart.

Located in the festival’s Grandstand gallery, the unique kiosk will be manned by Keating and fellow Tulane students Harrison Bamel and Kelly Delduca, who are also currently interns for the foundation.

Offering a sneak peek of what future exhibits will look like at the planned museum, the kiosk will screen exclusive performance footage and interviews with Allen Toussaint, Earl King, Tony Joe White and Jontavious Willis. Another set of videos will premiere musician Joe Krown discussing and demonstrating the evolution of the New Orleans-style of piano playing.

“It’s a chance to talk with people and share our enthusiasm,” said Stewart.

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