

## Miss Louisiana trades sash for stethoscope at Tulane

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When Justine Ker completes her reign as Miss Louisiana, she'll be heading to the Tulane School of Medicine as a first-year medical student. (Photo by Steven Palowsky)

Last September, Justine Ker represented Louisiana in the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, playing classical piano in the talent portion of the competition. This summer, she's entering Tulane University School of Medicine as a first-year medical student.

Ker has spent her year as Miss Louisiana promoting statewide physical and mental health initiatives.

She has traveled the state and visited schools, working with the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and acting as ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals in Louisiana. Her platform is "A Beautiful Mind: Promoting Positive Mental Health."

"I go to elementary schools and teach kids about confidence through positive communication skills, deep breathing and exercise," said Ker. "Using my voice as Miss Louisiana has allowed me to inspire people all over Louisiana to practice positive mental health every day. I think we don't do that enough."

As Ker wraps up her reign as Miss Louisiana, she is looking forward to delving into medicine at Tulane.

"Tulane has a great community, and I already feel so welcomed into the Tulane family," she said. "My year as Miss Louisiana confirmed why I want to be in the medical field. I've been able to teach people about positive mental health and confidence, and I want to meet people as a physician and help them better their lives in whatever way I can."

Ker's hometown is Choudrant, Louisiana, and her undergraduate degree is from Vanderbilt University, where she majored in neuroscience.

After she moves to the Big Easy, she plans to visit local pediatric patients.

Meeting children and their families has been a rewarding experience for Ker. "For a lot of the kids, an actual queen is coming to see them, so being Miss Louisiana becomes so much more than just a crown and a sash."

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Justine Ker, Miss Louisiana