

Student proves that volunteering is contagious

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newwave@tulane.edu



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Inspired by the [Tulane Arts in Medicine Program](#), which provides arts-related workshops, activities and performances for patients and staff at Tulane-Lakeside Hospital for Women and Children, Sami Lapayowker envisioned an idea that would help funnel more volunteers to the program.

With the help of Tulane Hillel and members of the Teen Jewish Leaders club, Lapayowker, a Tulane junior double majoring in dance and neuroscience, began organizing students to volunteer. Eventually, the number of people interested in

volunteering grew from a full list to the need for a standby list.

“It started getting bigger and bigger and there were more people who wanted to do it,” Lapayowker said. “I would have a waiting list for people who wanted to come.”

To keep up with the demand to volunteer and the limited amount of seats available through Arts in Medicine, Lapayowker created her own program — Tulane Hillel Art Therapy (THAT), which organizes volunteers to do arts and crafts with patients at Tulane-Lakeside Hospital.

The only difference between her program and the one offered through the hospital is that her program is specifically geared toward the hospital’s pediatric patients and is conducted only once-per-month on Saturdays.

“It’s incredible to see students wake up early on the weekends and do something so positive for the community,” said D.J. Handelman, an adviser for the Teen Jewish Leadership club. “Sami uses her passion to create opportunities for others to give.”

The next date for volunteering is Oct. 28 and Lapayowker expects a large turnout. Volunteers will do autumn-themed arts and crafts during the October visit.

On occasion, Lapayowker and other THAT volunteers visit with kids in isolation units where special robes and masks are required to protect the patients from exposure to germs.

“The outfits tend to make the patients uncomfortable, which also makes us have to work harder to get the kids to open up,” Lapayowker said. “There’s a mask covering your face so you have to appear friendly through the mask.”