

Public Service Shows Off

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Dylan Buffalo can tell it like it is. And that's exactly what the Tulane senior did at the Center for Public Service's showcase on Tuesday (Dec. 2). At the event in the Lavin-Bernick Center, Buffalo shared his experiences this fall as an intern investigator with the Orleans Public Defenders.



At the showcase for the Tulane Center for Public Service, senior Dylan Buffalo is ready to share his experiences as an intern investigator with the Orleans Public Defenders. (Photos by Sally Asher)

Buffalo was among hundreds of students, faculty members and community partners who gathered to swap stories about Center for Public Service-sponsored internships and other opportunities to fulfill Tulane's [public-service graduation requirement](#).

The event presented a chance for more than 60 community groups to celebrate successful collaborations and to drum up interest for future alliances with Tulane students and faculty.

Buffalo's internship as a public-defender investigator with Orleans Parish Criminal District Court is satisfying and challenging because it is “hands-on,” he said.

Buffalo goes door-to-door, locating and interviewing witnesses in criminal cases. Most people he approaches are cooperative, he said, once they realize “you're just trying to get their side of the story.”

The duties of a public-defender intern can include taking statements from witnesses, performing background checks, writing investigative reports and testifying in court.



Marie Gould, standing, is assistant director of For the Children literacy program, which benefited this semester from help by Tulane sophomores (seated from left) Alison Kass, Hannah Woo, Melissa Loper, Katie Ivory and Sabrina Cutaia.

All these activities are good training for someone who aspires to be a lawyer, but Buffalo, who is pursuing a double major in communication and philosophy, puts aside future career benefits, saying the most gratifying part of the internship is that “it feels great to have an effect on people's lives.”

The Orleans Public Defenders internship is one of hundreds of opportunities for Tulane students to fulfill the public-service graduation requirement, according to Amanda Buberger, assistant director for the [Center for Public Service](#).

Community agencies roughly fall into categories pertaining to the environment, education, social services, medicine and culture. They range from reading programs for public school children to environmental advocacy organizations focused on saving the Gulf Coast.

Some of the groups have well-established ties with Tulane through the Center for Public Service. Other community agencies were making a first-time pitch at the showcase event for their programs to interest students and faculty in new partnerships.

While community partners explained their agencies' missions, Tulane professors showed off what their students have done in courses that fulfill the public-service graduation requirement.

When physics professor of practice Jerry Shakov and his Tulane students performed an experiment involving condensation in a can, the presentation stopped people in their tracks. First the soda can, holding a little water, is heated, then plunged quickly into ice. The can implodes because of the pressure difference, Shakov says. The experiment is one that students in Shakov's introductory physics class conduct in teaching science to students at Lusher Charter School, a New Orleans public school.