

Travel Dreams Come True

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This summer, Caitlin Canfield will combine her love of travel with her commitment to service when she takes a group of Sojourner Truth Academy students on a service-learning trip to Panama. Canfield is a master's student in international health and development at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.



Holding the flag of Panama, these Spanish students at Sojourner Truth Academy are looking forward to a service-learning trip to the Central American country this summer. Leading the trip will be Tulane student Caitlin Canfield. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

A volunteer at the uptown New Orleans charter high school, Canfield saw firsthand how the school's students, almost all from low-income families, had never had the opportunity to travel and “be a tourist.”

With the exception of Hurricane Katrina evacuations, “most have never been out of New Orleans,” Canfield says. Calling travel a “transformative experience,” she decided to find a way to share it with these kids.

The [trip](#) for 10 students selected from the school will last 10 days and include service-learning projects in Panama. Two nights will be spent in home stays with rural host families. All 10 of the students are in Spanish classes at Sojourner Truth, which has a social justice focus and requires community service.

Canfield designed the trip to have a variety of experiences ? service, culture and environment ? with opportunity for students to interact with local families and other teenagers. “I love bringing all different types of people together,” she says.

To coordinate the trip, she partnered with Fundacion ProEd, a nonprofit that works with public and private school kids in Panama on community projects. Tulane alumna Nanette Svenson is involved in the organization and has assisted Canfield with arrangements. Costs for the trip ? about \$2,000 per student ? will be covered 100 percent through fundraising activities such as raffles, letter-writing campaigns and events.

Canfield will graduate from Tulane in May, but intends to stay in New Orleans for the immediate future. She would love to coordinate a reciprocal trip for Panamanian students. “*That* would be truly global,” she says.

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