

Literacy Tutors Form Friendships

November 16, 2010 9:15 AM Michaela Gibboni
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Tulane students participating in service learning have the opportunity to reach out to New Orleans' culturally diverse immigrant community as English as a Second Language (ESL) tutors and teaching assistants. In a partnership between the nonprofit Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans's "Hispanic Apostolate Community Services and the Tulane Center for Public Service, the students help adult learners speak, read and write English.



Tulane first-year student Aly Kahan, left, tutors Ahmadou, a native of the West African country Mali. Kahan is helping Ahmadou learn to read and write in English through a partnership between Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans's "Hispanic Apostolate Community Services and the Tulane Center for Public Service. (Photo by Claire Barry)

The service learning is done in conjunction with the Latin American Studies 101 course as well as various Spanish classes. Throughout the semester, the students write reflections on their [service-learning](#) experience.

Aly Kahan, a Tulane first-year student, works as a literacy tutor for Ahmadou, a woman from Mali. Although Ahmadou speaks English well and has lived in the United States for more than 10 years, she has never learned to read or write in English.

As is the case for many of the tutors and adult learners, Kahan and Ahmadou have created a bond. "I look forward to seeing her every week," says Kahan.

Kahan says that she values the hands-on learning opportunities that she's finding at Tulane. "Service is what makes Tulane unique," she says.

Beyond ESL classes, Hispanic Apostolate Community Services (HACS) offers job, health, tax preparation, housing, counseling and other services to the New Orleans immigrant community. Post-Katrina, HACS has received an influx of adult learners, jumping from approximately 150 to 700 annually. ESL and tutoring services are offered in five different locations within Orleans, Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes.

HACS has two full-time staff members and 75 volunteer ESL teachers. Approximately 60 students enrolled in service-learning courses at Tulane and Loyola universities tutor each semester.

Karla Sikaffy, director of adult education for Catholic Charities, says that she greatly values the assistance the community provides for the adult learners. "We would never be able to meet the needs of our ESL clients without our volunteers and the Tulane University Center for Public Service," she says.

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