

## **Music Soothes Mental Disorders of Aging**

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Tulane junior Judy Fustok is discovering the power of music to reach seniors suffering from Alzheimer's, dementia, depression and other disorders. Fustok meets one-on-one with residents at St. Margaret's Daughters Home and notes changes in their levels of communication as she plays music on an iPod for them.



Judy Fustok, a junior majoring in psychology, plays gospel music to Augustine Lumar, a resident at St. Margaret's Daughters Home. Fustok says Lumar sometimes sings along with the music or gets up to dance. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Through the Tulane Center for Public Service [Internship Program](#), Fustok is earning 400-level course credit while fulfilling her public-service graduation requirement. Her project is inspired by [Music & Memory](#), a national nonprofit program.

"The residents respond to the music, but also to the one-on-one time they spend with Judy," says Manda Mountain, administrator at St. Margaret's, a nursing home with 112 residents in the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans.

Fustok started out at Tulane as a pre-med student, but now she is considering a career in clinical psychology.

“I have learned how to take what I learned in the classroom and apply it to real life,” Fustok says. “With the various disorders and syndromes I learned about in class, I have observed how people may express spectra and different ranges, from sweetness to aggressiveness, in their disorders. This exposure has opened my eyes to what I'll experience in the future.”

Mountain says the Tulane [Center for Public Service](#) has been a partner with St. Margaret's on several projects involving residents. Among the projects, students in a dance class interviewed residents about their life stories and then incorporated the residents' hand gestures into an interpretative dance. Biomedical engineering students designed cots for use during a hurricane evacuation. And students in a Spanish class conversed with Spanish-speaking residents.

“It would be lovely if we could have one student paired with each resident,” Mountain says. “The Tulane connection has been invaluable. Residents love interactions with the students, who bring a different, young energy and perspective.”