

## Compassion in Action trip brings service to life

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jhalm@tulane.edu

Each summer, the Tulane Center for Public Service and the Tulane School of Social Work offer a unique, three-week course in India that provides students with eye-opening experiences through service to Tibetan refugees in Dharamsala.



Tulane students Erica Makar and Nicole Heimberg assist Tibetan children in a creativity workshop. (Photo from LHA Charitable Trust)

The “India: Compassion in Action” service program pairs Tulane students with Tibetan refugees as English-as-a-second-language tutors, among other social-assistance activities that are more than just general volunteerism, says program coordinator Michael D. Smith.

This year's 12 class participants organized a creativity workshop at Gangkyi Petoen Day School providing an opportunity for more than 100 students in first through fifth grades to explore their artistic side. Activities included drawing, creating crowns and even guiding the children to create whatever their hearts desired.

“This exchange between the Tulane students and the day school children was truly heart-warming,” Smith says. “Helping the children discover their artistic side is such

an important service to provide for their development, and the students learned how much of a difference they can make in these children's lives but just showing them how to be creative.”

The program also provides students with a chance to learn from world-renowned scholars such as professor Samdhong Rinpoche, who is versed in Buddhist philosophy, science and politics and serves as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's highest representative. Besides being a scholar, Rinpoche's resume includes twice serving as speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile as well as being the first directly elected Kalon Tripa (prime minister).

Rinpoche's message of Buddhism and nonviolence resonated with the students who engaged in a lengthy question-and-answer session after his talk, Smith says.

The Compassion in Action program is offered in collaboration with the program's host partner, the [Louisiana Himalaya Association Charitable Trust](#), and fulfills the second tier of the [public service graduation requirement](#) for Tulane students.

*Joseph Halm is marketing/communications coordinator for the Tulane School of Social Work.*