

Work for NOLA health brings national award to Dr. Karen DeSalvo

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It's no surprise to Dr. Lee Hamm that Dr. Karen DeSalvo, health commissioner for the city of New Orleans, has been cited by a national magazine as one of nine [“Public Officials of the Year.”](#) Hamm knows how dedicated DeSalvo is to the Crescent City and its citizens.



Dr. Karen DeSalvo, right, and Alexia Lanehart, a student at Clark Preparatory High School, display produce at Grow Dat Youth Farm in City Park. Grow Dat is a partner in FitNOLA, an initiative to make New Orleans a healthier city by its 300th anniversary in 2018. (Photo from Dr. Karen DeSalvo)

Hamm, senior vice president and dean of the Tulane University School of Medicine, worked closely with DeSalvo when she was a senior Tulane administrator, helping to rebuild the city's healthcare system after [Hurricane Katrina](#).

“Karen has been an inspiration and leader for students and faculty alike at the School of Medicine,” he says. “She continues to do great things as a public official.”

Governing magazine selected DeSalvo for its group of top public officials in the

nation, along with a governor, a lieutenant governor, a legislative leader and others. Chosen by a selection committee after hundreds of nominations by individuals in the public and private sectors, they will be honored at a gala on Feb. 3 in Washington, D.C.

DeSalvo holds two degrees from Tulane – her medical degree and a master's in public health – and served as vice dean for community affairs and health policy at the Tulane School of Medicine before taking a leave of absence and joining Mayor Mitch Landrieu's staff in 2011.

In her city role, DeSalvo has initiated the [Fit NOLA](#) program to improve New Orleans' high rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. It brings together more than 100 groups to encourage active lifestyles and improve access to nutritious foods.

In an interview with the magazine, DeSalvo said she had planned to serve in the health department for only a year but felt compelled to stay on.

“I underestimated how much I'd enjoy working for the people of New Orleans. It's a really special honor,” she said in the interview.

Hamm is proud of DeSalvo's success. “Because of her Tulane history and connection, she continues to bring honor and recognition to the school and university,” he says.