Inaugural Vincent Ilustre Founder

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During her time at Tulane University, senior Emma Skok has worked to leave a positive impact in the New Orleans community. During the fourth annual Community Involvement Awards ceremony on April 23, Skok received the Vincent Ilustre Founder's Award, which was given for the first time this year.

commencement 2014

Emma Skok is all smiles after receiving the first Vincent Ilustre Founder's Award, presented by CACTUS, the Center for Public Service and the Undergraduate Student Government. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Named in honor of the founder of the Tulane Center for Public Service, the award distinguishes a senior undergraduate student who has made a lasting positive contribution to the community of public service at Tulane. The recipient is required to have founded a sustainable organization and worked to make it thrive throughout the student's time in New Orleans.

Skok founded her own organization, Tulane United for Autism, which has continued

to grow in the last couple of years under her leadership. Along with this organization, she has also been involved with the Community Action Council of Tulane University Students (CACTUS) executive board for the past three years.

"It truly means a ton to follow in the footsteps of Vincent, someone who is so dedicated to service," says Skok. "I really did want Tulane United for Autism to succeed and as my time at Tulane comes to a close, with this award it feels like I've accomplished that."

Vincent Ilustre, a Tulane alumnus, recently moved from his position as executive director of the Center for Public Service to his current position as senior director of development for regional programs.

Other award winners at the event on the uptown campus included Patrick Wroe, Mary Reynolds, Erin Shafter and Georgina Dench, who all received the Outstanding Student Leader Award. Chloe Arnow and Claire Beauchamp both won the Environmental Change Award. A full list of winners is available here.

"This is an important way to recognize not only students who have been very involved with service in a particular year, but also student organizations and community partners," says Samantha Gould, the chair of CACTUS. "The ceremony brings all of these parties together to celebrate a great year and thank everyone for their hard work."

Greg Thomson is a junior at Tulane University majoring in communication.