

## Aiding New Orleans youth leads to social work degree

May 02, 2014 12:15 PM Joseph Halm  
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When Liz Jones joins the seven other Tulane University [School of Social Work](#) graduates on May 17, it will mark the end of a long, rewarding journey and the beginning of a new one.



Liz Jones' drive to help others leads to her master's degree in social work. She has served as the senior program coordinator at the Tulane Drop-In Center while earning her master's degree part-time. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Jones has served as the senior program coordinator at the [Tulane Drop-In Center](#) in downtown New Orleans while earning her master's degree part-time. Jones says she became interested in social work shortly after she joined the center in 2004.

"If I could make that kind of impact on people, it would be amazing," she says, about watching the center's social worker, then Isabella Christodoulou, help its clients. "Our clients need someone that they can count on and trust, and I wanted to be that type of person."

Now providing supportive and case management services for the city's disconnected

youth, ages 14-23, the center's original focus was strictly on the city's homeless youth population, but it has since expanded.

Jones' responsibilities also have grown, but the mother of two says she has always remained focused.

"I just do what needs to be done," she says. "The support of my family and the Drop-In Center staff has made it easier for me to be that type of person."

Jones, who originally wanted to become a lawyer, completed her field placement at the Orleans Public Defenders Office. While there, she often encountered the same clients from the Drop-In Center and was able to use those relationships to help her clients better their situations and lives.

"Professionally, I felt like the most that I learned from working in either field came from working with the social workers," she says.

"I loved my field internship at the public defender's office because it helped me put what I learned in the classroom into perspective. Now, I'd like to provide social work services more in the legal field but also through direct services."

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