

## Shuttle driver and musician Strother Davis keeps gospel alive

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If your morning Tulane University shuttle bus driver conjures up visions of Jazz Fest, it's because you may have spotted Strother Davis boogeying at the gospel tent this past weekend.



Gospel music is a family tradition for Strother Davis. The Tulane shuttle driver took up the trombone at age 9. (Photo by J.C. Paciera)

The Tulane [Shuttles and Transportation](#) driver received the Gospel Is Alive Award from the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation on April 16, recognizing Davis for his outstanding contributions to the city's gospel community and allowing him to attend Jazz Fest as a special guest and to jam onstage.

"It was like my Grammy," [Davis](#) says. "My dad played his whole life and never really got acknowledged for it. I dedicated it to him."

That award paired with a surprise win at the [Tulane's Got Talent](#) competition on April 25.

Davis is a fourth-generation musician, son of the organist at what was formerly the New Orleans Revival Center. The uptown church boasted a full band for Sunday

mass. Now 38, Davis chose the trombone at the age of 9.

"I liked the sound of it and the way it looked," he says. "It was intriguing to try to understand the positioning and how they got the sound out of it."

Davis' great-grandmother, a Tuskegee University music professor, ran an orchestra out of her home on Willow and Upperline streets in uptown New Orleans. She once tutored Louis Armstrong.

The extended family gathers every Sunday at the home of Davis' grandmother to catch up and play music. These days, he brings two trombones ? one for himself and one for his 12-year-old son. His daughter, 8, plays the saxophone.

Students who missed out on Jazz Fest can still enjoy Davis's musical talent. He often sings or plays trombone as students board the bus.

"There's a lot of law students, business students, medical students that ride the bus. I know there's a lot of pressure, a lot of testing they have to do," Davis says. "I know music uplifts people."

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