

New Orleans music: Deserving of service

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Matt Sakakeeny is recognized with this year's Barbara E. Moely Service Learning Teaching Award for the contributions he's made to the community through the service-learning components of his New Orleans Music course. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

What better environment to absorb the roots and impact of American music than New Orleans? [Matt Sakakeeny](#), an associate professor of music at Tulane University, calls the Crescent City “the perfect place to learn all about the significance of music.”

The role New Orleans" music plays in the lives of its residents is the focus of Sakakeeny"s research, as well as his class, New Orleans Music, and his 2013 book, [*Roll With It: Brass Bands in the Streets of New Orleans*](#).

Born in Massachusetts, Sakakeeny lived in New Orleans for several years after earning a bachelor"s degree in music and then he earned a PhD in ethnomusicology from Columbia University.

"I moved to New Orleans in 1997 and was the co-producer of the public radio program "American Routes" with [Nick Spitzer](#), anthropology professor at Tulane. I became immersed in the local music scene through the show, and eventually went back to school to do an in-depth study," Sakakeeny said.

On the Tulane faculty since 2008, Sakakeeny has brought his immersion in the New Orleans music scene back uptown through teaching New Orleans Music at Tulane.

"New Orleans Music has a service-learning option where Tulane students tutor middle-school kids in the [Roots of Music](#) after-school program. I usually have about 10 students tutoring there every spring."

Founded in 2007 by Rebirth Brass Band snare drummer Derrick Tab, Roots of Music provides free instrumental instruction to local middle school children.

"I helped get them started by getting them grants to buy instruments, and then professor Paul Colombo and I invited them to become a community partner with the Tulane Center for Public Service soon after," Sakakeeny said.

For this and other achievements in public service, Sakakeeny received the Center for Public Service"s [Barbara E. Moely Service Learning Teaching Award](#) on Nov. 17.

Benton Oliver is a senior at Tulane University majoring in music, communication and German.

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