

Beyond the wheel

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Jyneco “Miss Nikky,” Thornton, a shuttle driver at Tulane, goes beyond the call of duty as she volunteers to work with kids in Make Music NOLA. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Part of Jyneco Thornton's job duties with the Tulane University Department of [Shuttles and Transportation](#) is to shuttle undergraduate service-learning students to [Make Music NOLA](#), an after-school program that uses musical instruction and performance to promote the healthy growth and development of local elementary school children.

In the two years that “Miss Nikky” Thornton has worked at Tulane, she has

developed strong bonds with both the Tulane students that she shuttles and the children participating in Make Music NOLA.

“She knows all of the kids” names and who they are,” says Laura Patterson, executive director of Make Music NOLA. “She listens to their performances, volunteers at different events and shows that she really cares.”

Program participants perform at events around New Orleans and when they do, Thornton attends to lend a hand in any way possible. She also has coordinated a relationship between Make Music NOLA and Tulane Athletics that will allow the children to perform at future Green Wave sporting events.

Thornton's actions are no surprise. Over the past 12 years, she has worked driving limousines, public buses and school buses. As a school bus driver, she frequently decorated the vehicles with the children's names and made sure to recognize their birthdays. If one of the children was sick and had to miss school, Thornton would show up at the child's front door with a get-well-soon card and a teddy bear.

“My job is to protect the kids when they are with me,” Thornton says. “I do not know their situation at home, so I might be the first adult they see that day and the last one they see when they leave.”

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

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