

Social Work graduate makes a difference in children's lives

June 17, 2016 11:00 AM Joe Halm
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Katie Ryan earned a certificate in disaster mental health and trauma studies along with her master's degree in social work from Tulane University. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

Katie Ryan, who earned a master's degree from the [Tulane University School of Social Work](#) in 2014, has always been interested in helping others, and she's never been afraid of a challenge.

When she had the opportunity to help open a Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS) office in New Orleans, she jumped at the chance to become the office's child and family specialist.

Thanks to the trauma work that Ryan had conducted as an undergraduate as well as her experiences during her MSW internship at Hynes Charter School, she was ready to take on the new responsibility.

Several clients from her Hynes internship followed her to the new PCHAS office, hosted by Lakeview Presbyterian Church.

She meets with five to nine clients a day, from home visits to community visits at schools or in her office, which is outfitted for play therapy.

Ryan even has a service dog named Roux to help with therapy sessions.

The New Orleans office of PCHAS opened in February 2015 and continues to grow despite lack of any state or federal funding. The program is funded through grants, such as from the Kellogg Foundation, as well as donations from private individuals and church communities.

In 2015, PCHAS of Texas and Louisiana helped more than 3,457 children and families.

Ryan earned a certificate in disaster mental health and trauma studies along with her MSW. She said her education was key.

“My trauma work at Tulane helped me understand how crisis management works with these families, and how it impacts their day.”