

The More You NOLA: Women who make parades

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Virginia Saussy holds a decorated woman's shoe, the signature throw of the all-female Krewe of Muses. Saussy is a founding member of the krewe. (Photo by Sally Asher)

From Thursday (July 28) through Saturday (July 30), the JW Marriott Hotel (614 Canal St.) will host the [FestiGals New Orleans Girlfriend Getaway Weekend](#), a summer festival celebrating the empowerment of women throughout the Crescent City.

In 2015, more than 2,200 women attended the weekend retreat put on by FestiGals, a nonprofit organization dedicated to women's causes and local culture.

The festival's special events include a [culinary showcase](#) with executive chef Meg Bickford at Cafe Adelaide (300 Poydras St.), the [Stiletto Stroll](#) (a secondline benefitting the New Orleans Family Justice Center with an after-party hosted at

Mardi Gras World) and the [Bodacious Bras for a Cause Brunch](#) benefitting the Cancer Association of Greater New Orleans and the Breastoration Fund.

FestiGals will also host unique workshops covering a wide array of topics, ranging from women's sexual health to social media savvy.

On Friday (July 29) at 9:15 a.m., the "Women Who Make Parades" panel will lead a discussion on how local women are shaping modern Mardi Gras.

Moderated by [Krewe de Jeanne d'Arc](#) president Amy Kirk Duvoisin, the panel's speakers include [Krewe of Nyx](#) captain Julie Lea, Camille Baldassar, founder of the [Pussyfooters](#) marching troupe, and [Krewe of Muses](#) officer Virginia Saussy.

Saussy, a 1988 Tulane University graduate, is a founding member of the all-female Krewe of Muses, which is known for having glitter-decorated and bedazzled shoes as its signature throw. She has been a member for 17 years.

"Mardi Gras has historically been a male-dominated holiday," said Saussy. "Back in 2000, there were no nighttime uptown parade options for women who wanted to be a part of the show and not just in the audience. I credit Staci Rosenberg and Dionne Randolph. They kicked the door open."

Both Tulane alumni, Rosenberg and Randolph helped paved the way for Muses' first roll in 2001. Today, the parade organization has grown to more than 1,000 riding members.

"The enthusiasm in women's groups is amazing. I want attendees to take away that we all have a role in Mardi Gras," said Saussy.

Registration for FestiGals is available [online](#).

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— Virginia Saussy, founding member of the Krewe of Muses