

The More You NOLA: ELLA Project

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Musicians and artists are the backbone of New Orleans' culture and the ELLA Project is helping to bolster these creative spirits as they play a key role in preserving the character of the Crescent City.

The [ELLA Project](#), a newly independent nonprofit organization, supports the local creative community by providing invaluable pro bono legal support and arts business services.

The project was co-founded in 2004 by Ashlye Keaton, a Tulane law alumna, and Gene Meneray, an alumnus of the [School of Liberal Arts](#). It was in partnership with the [Tipitina's Foundation](#), the [Arts Council of New Orleans](#) and [Tulane University Law School](#). Since its founding, more than 2,000 clients have been served.

Keaton and Meneray originally met while working at the Arts Council of New Orleans in 2004. While there, they recognized a citywide issue of local artists and musicians being underserved in legal assistance and career development. Aiming to help this demographic, and buoyed by a small initial contract from Tulane Law School, they established the partnership with the Tipitina's Foundation, and started providing services.

"We expanded our services after Katrina. We wanted to have a far-reaching impact while being adaptive to our clients' needs and the changing landscape," said Keaton. "We continued to grow after that, which is why we launched as an independent entity."

As supervising attorney, Keaton helms a team of Tulane law students in providing pro bono assistance for issues like trademark matters, copyright regulation,

nonprofit formation and contract preparation.

Keaton's legal successes include her work helping Mardi Gras Indians establish copyright protection for their iconic, vivid suits as works of sculpture.

As director of business services, Meneray provides the tools for clients to be able to compete in the local economy by offering business consultations, grassroots marketing advice and financial planning.

"These artists create the landscape that makes New Orleans special, and we offer services that empower creators," said Keaton.

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— Ashlye Keaton, co-founder and supervising attorney for The ELLA Project