

Runsdorf Recipient Champions Food Justice

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Maya Newman, a sociology and social policy and practice major with a minor in public health, made volunteering a large part of her Tulane experience. For her efforts, the Center for Public Service awarded her one of its 2019 Runsdorf Awards for student excellence in public service. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Maya Newman had always been interested in food justice issues, so she joined the Tulane University chapter of the Food Recovery Network (FRN) her freshman year. The group of volunteers collects, weighs and packages leftover food at Bruff Commons five nights a week. A representative from the New Orleans Mission picks it up the next morning, and food that used to go to waste is instead served to those in need.

Newman, a sociology and social policy and practice major with a minor in public health, made volunteering a large part of her Tulane experience. Under her leadership on the executive board of Tulane's chapter of FRN, the organization grew to more than 200 volunteers and donated more than 10,000 pounds of food just this semester.

For her efforts, the Center for Public Service awarded her one of its 2019 Runsdorf Awards for student excellence in public service.

"Tulane has shaped my world outlook and made me passionate about a variety of issues." — Maya Newman

Newman's experience with FRN led to an internship with the New Orleans Mission, where she learned about many of the issues that lead to homelessness. She also got involved with the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center. Newman says

she learned much both in and out of the classroom.

“Tulane emphasizes community service, and they give many opportunities to go out and make a change,” Newman said. “And I love how the university offers classes to go along with your community service. In my service-learning class, we talked about issues of privilege and how to do community service in a way that’s not intrusive.”

Newman plans to study for the LSAT after graduation and find a job working for a nonprofit organization or legal office. She eventually wants to study environmental law.

“Attending Tulane has shaped my world outlook and made me passionate about a variety of issues,” Newman said. “The classes and community service I participated in gave me both theoretical and real-world knowledge on these issues, as well as problem-solving skills. This knowledge is invaluable for my future career path and has given me the drive to make a positive impact. And New Orleans’ rich culture has made my college experience extremely fun and lively.”