

New Orleans-based alumnae entrepreneurs create smart water bottle

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Two Tulane alumnae, Maria Patrizia Santos and Kamiya Stewart, have teamed up to create Caracas Canteen, a New Orleans-born smart water bottle. (Photos provided by Kamiya Stewart)

Two Tulane alumnae have teamed up to create Caracas Canteen, a New Orleans-born smart water bottle.

Kamiya Stewart, who earned a PhD in psychology from the School of Science and Engineering, and Maria Patrizia Santos, who graduated from the School of Public

Health and Tropical Medicine, co-founded this women-of-color led business aimed at helping people increase their water intake. The company launched this past summer.

Through computer technology, the Caracas Canteens, which look like traditional water bottles, use an internal alarm to remind the user to drink water throughout the day. They are also able to automatically track water intake — an evidence-based practice shown to significantly increase water intake among people compared to those who do not measure their water intake. An accompanying app helps users monitor their daily progress.

The technology behind Caracas Canteen is an intersection of Stewart and Santos' respective fields: social psychology and public health. "We searched for empirically based ways to increase our water intake. We learned that the average adult consumes ... less than one-third of the recommended amount. Water intake is even lower in some populations than others, making water intake a health equity issue," said Santos, who is currently pursuing a PhD at the School of Public Health.

"Who has the time and energy to manually track how much water they consume? And make sure children, youth, older adults, family members with disabilities, and other family members are drinking the recommended amount by tracking their intake?"

The Caracas Canteen bottle does that work for you.

They chose the name "Caracas Canteen" because they wanted a name that reflected global reach and because Santos is originally from Caracas, Venezuela.

Practical for hot and cold drinks, the canteens have a sleek design and are easy to hold and carry. They are well-insulated to stand up to New Orleans summers for up to 24 hours.

Stewart and Santos, who met as Community Engagement Advocates at Tulane, shared a passion for increasing equity and social justice and were both already interested in entrepreneurship. But they found they worked better as a team than as individuals.

"Our unique experiences allowed us to approach social issues and difficult conversations in novel ways that seemed to mesh extremely well when we

collaborated. Together, we were able to integrate and focus our passions and develop a mission that we love and wholeheartedly aim to achieve,” added Stewart, who has a research position at Policy Research Associates.

The Caracas Canteen is available from their [e-commerce site](#) and also on their [Amazon.com store](#).