

Public health undergrad gets a boat named in her honor

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Isabelle Smith standing aboard the Isabelle. A dedication ceremony happens today. (photo courtesy of TradeWinds Towing)

Isabelle Smith is making a name for herself as a [public health](#) undergraduate with minors in both Spanish and psychology. She is making a name for herself, however, well beyond her ambitious academic pursuits.

This afternoon, Smith will be the guest of honor at the christening of one of the largest and most capable offshore towing vessels on the Gulf Coast, the ISABELLE.

At the event, she will engage in the time-honored tradition of breaking the bottle of champagne across the hull, blessing the future safety of the ship as she navigates the seas. The ticketed event will take place at Mardi Gras World at 5:00 PM and will be attended by several federal, national, and local maritime leaders, including the New Orleans Captain of the Port Kelly K. Denning.

For the third-year Tulane student, the ceremony and christening are an honor that represent what her family has accomplished over the course of decades of hard work to establish their company, TradeWinds Towing LLC, as a fixture in the maritime industry.

“This christening event is the mark of a new chapter for TradeWinds Towing, my father, and all the crew and people who have dedicated time away from their families to make the Tug Isabelle a true beauty,” Smith said.

“This event means a lot to me personally, because I have first-hand seen the blood, sweat, and tears that my family have put into this business in the past two decades. It is an honor to have such a majestic vessel named after me, but the true honor is being the daughter of [Dominique Smith](#) and Elisabeth Neumann!”



Isabelle Smith was born in Annapolis, Md., but her family moved to St. Augustine, Fla., when she was very young and acquired their first tugboat in 2005. The Smith family has been a leader in the offshore transportation of freight, ships, and at times high seas salvage and rescue assistance.

The family's connections to the industry [run much deeper](#), however, as Smith's grandmother, Elsbeth Smith, was a trailblazer, becoming the first licensed female tug captain in 1973. She later earned the distinction of becoming [the first American woman to complete a world circumnavigation on a tugboat in 1991](#).

Smith credits her grandmother with being “the epitome of a powerful woman, breaking gender stereotypes,” but she also points to her parents as being a major influence in her life.

“They have showed me that it is important to take risks and fight in this tough world,” Smith said. “I’ve picked up a few things about the maritime industry over the years, and I can say that it is very uncertain, and you need to be ready for adverse situations 24 hours a day.”

That mentality will serve her well as she continues to journey to wherever the “waters” may take her – be that a career in public health, more travel abroad (she is planning to study abroad in Buenos Aires next summer), or even, perhaps, finding a path in the maritime industry.

“My dad always jokes about me taking over the family business,” Smith says. “But I was attracted to Tulane, primarily the public health department, because of the range of opportunities it provided. The classes offered, both undergraduate and at Tidewater, offer diverse paths of public health, which I think is so awesome.”