

A "Glass Half Full" state of mind

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As seniors at Tulane, Max Steitz (SLA '20) and Franziska "Fran" Trautmann (SSE '20) often gathered over a bottle of wine to share ideas. One evening as they looked at the wine bottle they shared, they saw something new — the opportunity to make a difference.

With guidance from Jelagat Cheruiyot, PhD, a senior professor of practice at Tulane School of Science and Engineering, they turned their idea into a business and founded [Glass Half Full](#) in 2020 with the ambitious mission of bringing glass recycling back to the state.



The founders began with a grassroots approach, working closely with community members and placing glass crushing machines in unconventional locations such as fraternity houses. Volunteers, including friends and supporters, helped collect and sort donated bottles, allowing the initiative to grow rapidly. As awareness spread, the founders realized the enormous demand for glass recycling services in the region. Their first facility in uptown New Orleans quickly became too small to handle the increasing volume of glass being collected.

With hard work and Tulane faculty mentorship, Steitz and Trautmann were able to transform that insight into innovation, establishing an ecologically focused glass recycling center for New Orleans, **Glass Half Full**. The co-founders were recently honored at the **Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation's Lepage Gala**, a festive evening that is dedicated to honoring outstanding entrepreneurs.

Eventually, Steitz and Trautmann partnered with Village X, which shared their commitment to community impact and environmental sustainability. Through this partnership, they secured a larger and more advanced facility in St. Bernard Parish. At this new site, Glass Half Full developed a state-of-the-art operation that transforms recycled glass into sand and gravel. These materials are then used for projects such as coastal restoration, disaster relief and eco-friendly construction — important initiatives for protecting Louisiana's vulnerable coastline.

Since its founding, Glass Half Full has grown significantly. The company now processes millions of pounds of glass each year and collaborates with businesses, festivals and municipalities throughout the region. The organization has also contributed to environmental restoration by helping build two islands off Bayou Bienvenue using recycled glass sand. In addition to its environmental impact, the company creates workforce opportunities and strengthens community involvement in sustainability.

In addition to being honored at the Lepage Gala, both founders will receive the **GOLD (Graduate of the Last Decade) Professional Achievement Award** at the [52nd Annual Tulane Alumni Awards Gala](#) on April 18.