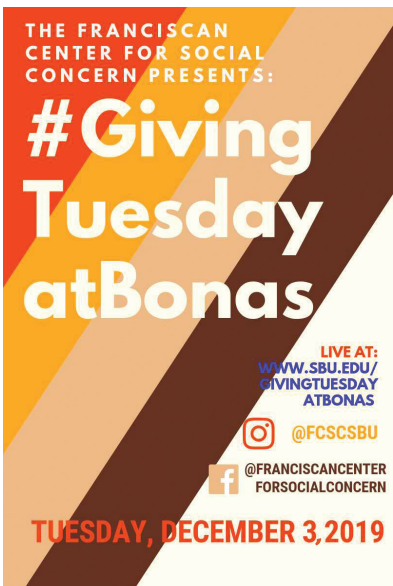




Franciscan Center for Social Concern  
P.O. Box AR  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRANCISCAN CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERN AT ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY

[www.sbu.edu/FCSC](http://www.sbu.edu/FCSC)

November 2019

# Furthering Francis



## I loved Thursday mornings!

I came to St. Bonaventure a year ago, making the choice to “step up my game” by finding a way to serve in a creative and unique way. I inquired at the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany Motherhouse across the street from campus and was soon connected with a sister who was no longer able to read because of her diminishing eyesight.

Sr. Anne Caldwell and I began meeting each Thursday morning at 9:30 a.m. We spent the first weeks getting to know one another and soon decided that I would read to her. I began reading a book of homilies written by a priest she had known for many years. I would read the Scripture texts and then the



Alice Miller Nation is the director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern.

homily. For a few minutes we would sit in quiet, letting the words slowly sink into our consciousness. Sometimes, Sr. Anne would ask me to reread a part of the Scripture text or the homily. And then we would talk. And talk we did!

Each week, as I walked down the steps from the Motherhouse, overlooking the vista of our campus and into the valley, I felt I had just experienced a miniretreat. My step was a bit lighter, there was often a smile on my face and I knew my “homework” for the week – a nugget of wisdom gleaned from our conversation that morning.

I suppose my Thursday “retreats” were the beginning of a new program at SBU, whose home is in the Franciscan Center for Social Concern (FCSC). Friends with Sisters began last spring with a six-week pilot program, which taught us a lot about connecting college students with elderly women religious. We now have 11 pairs of students and sisters who meet weekly for friendship and conversation. The program attempts to expand the world of SBU students as well as the women who faithfully served others through mission work, education and medicine.

Sr. Anne died this past summer while I was away on a family vacation. Although I was not able to attend her funeral Mass, I have stopped at St. Bonaventure Cemetery and visited her grave several times.

Yes, saying goodbye is part of loving others. I'd like to think the richness of relationships carries each of us through the moments we say goodbye to those who have enriched our lives. Programs like Friends with Sisters indeed offer our SBU students many gifts and experiences to carry with them along with their diploma upon graduation.

Friends with Sisters is just one of the many ways SBU students are making a difference in the lives of others. We hope that you will consider a gift to #GivingTuesdayatBonas on December 3 so that we can continue to offer Friends with Sisters, the Warming House, Bona Buddies, Silver Wolves, BREAK The Bubble and the new SBU Food Pantry as opportunities of growth and transformation for SBU students.

Thank you for your support and prayers for all we do in the Franciscan Center for Social Concern. I am often humbled and awed by the great generosity and care so many offer to our FCSC outreach programs.

May the holiday season that is upon us be filled with great gratitude for all we have been given.

Peace and good,

Alice Miller Nation  
Director  
Franciscan Center for Social Concern







The SBU Food Pantry is open Monday through Friday and is available to students, faculty, and staff.

## SBU Food Pantry Opens



By Grace Seeley, '21

On Oct. 2, the mission to end food insecurity at St. Bonaventure University began with the ribbon-cutting of our new food pantry.

Food insecurity — defined as the lack of having access to enough food — affects the lives of nearly 25-30 percent of undergraduate students.

I became involved with the pantry's development about a year ago after a conversation with Franciscan Center for Social Concern Director Alice Miller Nation. Shortly after that, a task force was formed, planning was underway, and the search began for a secure home for the pantry.

After a long search, we finally began working

to convert room 114 in the McGinley-Carney Center for Franciscan Ministry into our food pantry. We aimed to finish the work in time so that the pantry would be available to students staying on campus during the midterm break. Our grand opening also coincided with the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts' fall exhibition, "Out of Darkness: Putting a Face on Homelessness."

Finally, after nearly a year of hard work, our vision had come to life.

Since opening, our 15 volunteers allow us to have the pantry open every weekday, but our goal now is to find enough volunteers so that we can expand our hours of operation. Generous individuals have also stepped forward to donate a fridge and freezer to allow us to distribute perishable and non-perishable items. ►



Dr. Dennis DePirro, Trevor Carney, Grace Seeley and Trevor North cut the ribbon to the SBU Food Pantry on Oct. 2, 2019. Photo credit: Layne Dowdall

◀ We've also been partnering with other clubs and organizations in the Bonaventure community.

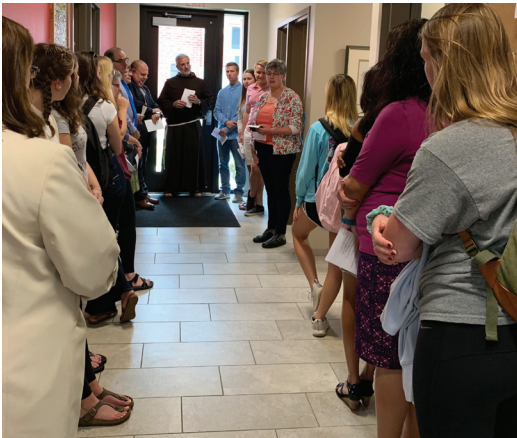
Thanks to a collaboration with the Damietta Center and Br. Angel Vazquez, our on-campus barber and a new addition to our community of friars, on-campus haircuts will be given in

exchange for a donation of \$3 or one can or box of food donation to the food pantry during the month of November.

Interested in donating food outside of the Damietta Center? Perishable items can always be donated at the pantry and donation boxes for nonperishable items are always located in

the MCCFM. Monetary donations can also always be sent to the Franciscan Center for Social Concern.

On behalf of my fellow coordinators, Trevor North and Trevor Carney, I can't begin to thank everyone who has contributed to making this newest outreach program possible. We are excited to see how it continues to grow!



Students line the halls of the McGinley-Carney center during the grand opening of the SBU Food Pantry on Oct. 2.

## Seeing God in Guatemala



By Victoria Wangler, '21

Sometimes your heart must break open to hold more love. I did not understand this until last summer, when I went on a short-term mission trip to Guatemala through

Franciscan Mission Service.

Five other Bonaventure students and I served for one week at the Valley of the Angels Orphanage outside Guatemala City. We lived among the students, teachers, caretakers, and missionaries at the Franciscan boarding school. Every day was jam-packed with activities; we prepared bags of food and delivered them to families of the students, helped out in the Valley's garden, kitchen, classrooms, and office, and spent countless hours with the children.

My favorite part was our afternoons at Valley. After a late lunch, the older students would work on their homework while the younger students asked us to play cards, soccer, hide-and-seek, or simply ask about our lives in America and why we came to Guatemala. I had unforgettable conversations with

wonderful, ambitious and talented students who hold the same fire for life in their hearts that I do.

It wasn't always easy.

Before leaving for Guatemala, I had grandiose ideals of how this trip would answer all my questions about life. Just the opposite happened: No simple answers were apparent and so many questions arose.

As my heart cracked open, so did the world. More than once during and after the trip, I have been moved to tears of anger and sadness at the state of inequity, violence, persecution, and poverty that other people live in. Yet despite those horrors and disparities, the people of Guatemala are filled with so much love and light. It is a wonder that awes me as much as it haunts me.

I will never forget the love I felt from the people of Guatemala. It wholly overwhelmed me and broke through into my heart. I have never been loved so unselfishly and unassumingly than by total strangers from a different country. They welcomed me completely and asked for nothing in return. I saw God in the eyes of every person I met. I can still see their faces.

Before this mission trip, I held great fear. I was afraid of the travel, potential dangers, and the



Top from left, Victoria Wangler, Kristen Talty, Bryce Murphy, Scarlett Vasquez. Bottom from left, Kimber-Lee Iacona and Isabella (Izzy) Ambrogio

language barrier. More than anything, I was afraid of how the mission would affect me. I have always been scared to totally surrender into God. I clung to control and my own individualism.

My time in Guatemala broke my heart completely; in pieces, in tears, and in love, I gave myself to God. Now, I trust Him to guide me: to move my heart as it needs to be moved and to break it as many times as it takes to hold His love. I know now that my purpose is to serve others, especially the most vulnerable among us. I never would have been changed if I didn't take the chance and go.

If you ever have the chance to serve, no matter the capacity, please do it. You will never be the same.

## Q&A with Warming House Coordinator Nathan Parish



Nathan Parish, '22, a Rochester, N.Y., native and a sophomore at St. Bonaventure University, serves as one of seven student coordinators for the Warming House and recently offered the following thoughts on his time as a coordinator.

**How did you first get involved in the Warming House?**

I first got involved in the Warming House the very first day I had my training day, which was to see if I wanted to be a service coordinator. After my very first shift, I realized I definitely wanted to be one of the service coordinators and turn this into my work-study job. I wanted to come back and be around all of the volunteers and people we were serving, as I loved talking to them.

**What was your first experience like?**

My first experience was fun but also

overwhelming. Within an hour of being there, I tried to learn a lot of the routines and I realized this is not your typical work-study job. It requires a lot of hard work to prepare a meal for all of the guests that come to the Warming House, and there is a lot of cleaning up to do. The fun part of the Warming House is getting to talk to the guests when they sit for their meal and getting to know their stories.

**What have you learned from your time working there?**

I have learned that this job is more than just serving guests for a meal and cleaning up. It takes compassion to get to know each and every one of the guests. We coordinators make an impact on their everyday lives when they come into the Warming House needing a hot meal for dinner and wanting to talk to someone.

**Is there a story you have from a guest at the Warming House that has left an impact on you?**

I remember one of the stories a volunteer

told me when I was working with him. He described his childhood and how every day he was running away from his mother because she was giving him drugs. He tried to free himself from the lifestyle that his mom created but he still kept on going back to her. Eventually, he moved out, only to move back in shortly after. After experiencing a near-overdose, during which an ambulance was called, he finally decided to leave for good.

**What's your favorite part of working at the Warming House?**

My favorite part of working at the Warming House is being able to talk to the guests and listen to what they have to say. A lot of them have really funny things to say and very interesting stories. And to be truthful, I also love cooking the meals. I used to hate cooking but ever since I became a coordinator, I have become a much better cook and learned a bunch of different kinds of meals I can make.