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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRANCISCAN CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERN AT ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY
www.sbu.edu/FCSC

THE YEAR OF THE PIVOT!

By Alice Miller Nation

If there is one thing I could change about my life, it would be my understanding of change. I am referring to the changes in my life and the situations around me. In my younger years, I spent way too much energy resisting change rather than understanding and seeing changes as opportunities and potential for my growth and the growth of organizations.

I often learn from our students. This year has been no exception! The Bona Buddies student leadership team totally reimagined what could be, rather than dwell on what was lost due to the pandemic. The Warming House has been serving a takeout meal service since March 13, 2020. Once again, it was the student leadership team along with me and the guidance of university administration that planned and implemented a COVID-19 safe meal service for our guests and student/community volunteers. Silver Wolves and Friends with Sisters partnered with BonaResponds to continue to engage with elders in the Olean community so that the isolation that the elderly often experience could be minimized.

All outreach programs needed to undergo extensive changes in order to continue this academic year. Our student leadership teams thoughtfully evaluated each of their programs while determining what was essential. From there, brainstorming and dreaming began. What could be? What are best practices at other schools or other areas of the country? And finally, let’s come up with a plan. The plan might have several iterations, but let’s start if it doesn’t work, we will stop, re-evaluate and pivot a bit to keep what is essential and get us closer to our end goal.

This evaluating, planning, implementing and re-evaluating has occurred repeatedly the last nine months. Wow! I wish I’d had such a clearly defined method for approaching challenges at my fingertips when I was in my early 20s. It has often been said that the Warming House is as much about feeding the most vulnerable in the Olean area as it is about offering St. Bonaventure students a place to understand and practice living Franciscan values. When our students leave the SBU campus, it is our dream that not only do they walk away with a well-earned academic degree, but also the ability to implement and carry these values we hold dear to classrooms, boardrooms, athletic fields and cul-de-sacs. Living lives with Franciscan hearts is what will offer hope and light to our world.

As each of us makes our way in a national landscape that is challenging at best, let’s remember that we are Bonnies. Bonnies are loyal and generous, ready to respond when opportunities arise. May we each have a part in bringing hope and goodness to the world in which we live.

Peace and All Good,
Alice Miller Nation

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

St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
Applying Knowledge Outside the Classroom

Papers, presentations, exams, and quizzes might be the first things you think of when you are asked how you were tested on your knowledge in a class. It’s a similar situation in the School of Business’ MGT 301 course, but with a twist.

Each semester, students are put into groups of 3-5 students in which they plan and serve a meal at the Warming House. This project allows for students who have not volunteered at the Warming House the chance to experience Franciscan values in action.

During the process of executing our project we held multiple Zoom meetings, met with Alice Miller Nation, director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern, and Nate Parish, a student coordinator at the Warming House. We reviewed our plan, so we knew exactly what we were going to be doing. When we arrived writing campaign, which allowed the buddies and mentors to communicate with each other.

Lastly, we started a Zoom tutoring service that many buddies utilized. It was a very different semester, compared to Bona Buddies practices of previous years, but we were able to create ways to maintain 64 matches of SBU students and buddies during the pandemic.

The silver lining to this story is that as coordinators, and as a program, we were able to come together and create something great during these difficult times. The future is unpredictable and constantly changing, but with our group of coordinators and the strong support system at St. Bonaventure University, there is no doubt that we can continue striving for great things for Bona Buddies.

Bona Buddies 2.0
By Gabby Runfta ‘22, Grace Weber ‘22, and Catherine McNamee ‘22

Since March of last year, it has been COVID this and COVID that. Fall semester ’20 began with a new campuswide “no visitors” policy to ensure the safety of the campus community, forcing our daily business-as-usual lifestyles to be anything but normal.

This necessary policy change created problems for the Bona Buddies program. For many years, the buddies came to campus each week to meet with their mentors. Many people would take the new ban on campus visitors as a sign to put the program on pause for a semester or two. Instead, the Bona Buddies student leadership team went straight to work.

We started meeting on Zoom in July. Our first order of business was finding a way to end the Spring 2020 semester right by creating summer letters to be shared between mentors and buddies, since their time together was cut short. We then met once a week almost every week for the rest of the summer, brainstorming and making a game plan to keep the program running during the pandemic while also following the university’s “no visitors” policy. It was not easy.

So much time and effort by the student leadership team went into planning for the fall semester. It was challenging and eye-opening experience. We were a group of students who had just met one another, with some of us having less experience running the program than others. We had to come together and create a game plan for the upcoming semester.

We developed a few ideas that allowed us to keep the mentors and buddies connected and involved. First, we created activity bags, designed for the buddies by their mentors, that we delivered to the buddies. We were able to see and talk to the buddies, while following social distance protocols, of course. Second, we started a pen pal letter...