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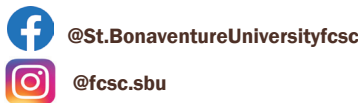
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# Furthering Francis



## Are we living the Good Life?

As I look back on the past year, there are two particular encounters that I had with students that keep me coming back.

### The Campus Food Pantry

"Alice, I want you to know, I love volunteering at the Food Pantry," the student said.

"Tell me about that," I replied.

The student continued. "My favorite shift is 6 to 8 p.m. I won't lie, it always offers a chance for me to get some homework done, but throughout the shift students come in and look for a few things to supplement their groceries for the week. I love to hear their excitement when they find something that they love and it is a surprise that we have a favorite item."

"You know, we have our staples, but then we have random items that just make students happy. I love to see someone experience unexpected joy. I am so glad SBU has a food pantry available for the community."

### Walking in the Steps of Saints Francis and Clare

"What is the difference between a vacation and pilgrimage" was a



Alice  
Miller Nation

question I was asked when proposing the opportunity of a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi for SBU students who are engaged in outreach through the Warming House and Bona Buddies. I thought to myself, that is a great question. I replied to this student this way: "When you go on a vacation, you see all the places you want to see. If you want to spend a day at the pool then you spend a day at the pool. Sometimes on a vacation you run yourself ragged hitting all the things on your bucket list."

"A pilgrimage is an opportunity to go someplace new and it is both educational and formational. A pilgrimage follows an itinerary and the hope is that we allow the experience to soak into our soul. We will visit the places that were important to saints Francis and Clare. We know the stories, and we will hear them again and let the stories come alive while in the places Francis and Clare walked."

"Being in Italy will give us the opportunity to feel and experience the stories in a different way than we can while talking about the stories in the Great Room on campus. It is the hope that a pilgrimage would allow our Franciscan heritage to become part of who we are, deep down, all

the way to our toes."

It is so fun to engage students in conversations and activities that help them ask the big questions in life. Sometimes what we do is just fun as we build community and relationships. Other times what we do leads young adults to begin asking themselves questions that offer meaning and direction to their lives.

Last spring, Fr. Stephen Mimnaugh, O.F.M., vice president for Franciscan Mission, and Dr. Andrew Belfield, assistant professor of Theology and Franciscan Studies, and I went to a conference that asks "What does it mean to live the Good Life?"

We have spent a great deal of time thinking about this question and I am anxious to speak with students and colleagues as we answer this question not once, but hopefully throughout our lives.

And so, I ask you, are you living the Good Life? How does your Good Life offer hope and goodness to your experience of life and the lives of others? Sit down with a cup of coffee or tea and spend some time thinking about the Good Life throughout the summer. It might lead you on a pilgrimage of your own.

Peace and all good,  
*Alice Miller Nation*  
Director, University Ministries



# Happy Anniversary, Warming House

By Betsy Gingerich  
Co-Chair of the Warming House Anniversary Committee

The moment that Jeff and I stepped into the Warming House a few months after we moved to Olean in the summer of 2022, we knew that something extraordinary was happening within the walls of this downtown extension of St. Bonaventure University.

Even though both of us have been working in Catholic higher education for decades, we had never quite experienced a university living out its charism like what was happening at the Warming House.

I've been fortunate to volunteer with the students often since that first visit. While I have always been aware of the sad reality of hunger and homelessness in this country, I have learned so much about the hidden realities of food insecurity that exist in rural and small-town areas like Olean.

The joy and love the students display at the Warming House while preparing a meal for the guests is remarkable to witness. Fifty years ago, the Warming House was founded by a group of St. Bonaventure students and it continues to be led



Betsy Gingerich and two students bake cupcakes on a Tuesday afternoon at the Warming House.

by students today.

To work alongside and to watch our St. Bonaventure students is truly inspiring. They plan the meals, cook the meals, welcome the guests, pray over the meal, and clean up afterward, six days a week.

The students working and volunteering at the Warming House are not only learning valuable skills

such as cooking and cleaning and organizing and baking, but more importantly, they are interacting with the food-insecure members of our community with love, kindness and dignity. Their confidence and bravery while managing the daily meal is inspiring. This is not a small commitment.

As we continue this year of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Warming House, I ask that you consider supporting the work of the students by contributing to the Endowment for Warming House Sustainability.

Your gift will help to ensure that the great work of the students at the Warming House will continue for another 50 years and more. I also invite you to attend the Empty Bowls and Baskets Dinner to benefit the Warming House on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024.

Information about tickets for the Empty Bowls and Baskets Dinner can be found at [www.sbu.edu/WarmingHouse50](http://www.sbu.edu/WarmingHouse50). To learn about sponsorships, visit [www.sbu.edu/emptybowlssponsors](http://www.sbu.edu/emptybowlssponsors).

## Many thanks to our many artists

Everyone who attends the Empty Bowls and Baskets Dinner Sept. 26 in the Richter Center will take home a handmade bowl or basket.

Many hands are creating hundreds of bowls for the event, including the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany; SBU students and staff on campus during the summer; first-year students from the first floor of Robinson Hall; and alumni, friends and other members of the campus community.



## Student Voices

Alumni Reunion Weekend gave us the opportunity to salute the Warming House with those who came back to campus. At the Warming House celebration, rising juniors Kevin Eberth and Kylee Leonard shared how being a Warming House meal coordinator has enhanced their Bona experience.

Kylee Leonard, '26 | Health Science Major

I believe there is one word that truly encapsulates the Warming House: *community*!

Every year we serve tens of thousands of meals to individuals in the Olean area, which is incredible. But I think our most special trait is being able to create a community within our dining room and for those who come for takeout meals. Whether it be community between students, between guests, or both, the relationships formed due to the incredible work that goes on in the



Warming House are beyond special.

To so many, the Warming House is much more than just a soup kitchen. I know for me, the Warming House has made me more caring, compassionate and patient.

At the beginning of my time at the Warming House, I didn't quite understand how the coordinators could handle the occasional harsh words or actions of some of our guests. Not knowing the guests yet or their stories made it hard for me not to get upset with them for seemingly not appreciating the work we do. However, the more I opened myself to them and learned more about our guests, I found myself much slower to grow upset. I have also grown to care for many of our guests, learning about them, hearing bits and pieces of their stories, what they like, and how they show appreciation has truly been an amazing pleasure. Slowing down and remembering why I am there and who I am there for has translated into my daily life as well.

As much as we help our guests, I would argue that they help us even more. Since my start at the Warming House, I would never have guessed how much I would learn about myself. Looking back and looking forward to the next two years I get to spend there, I feel so very lucky to be a small piece of this amazing place.

Kevin Eberth, '26 | Public Health Major

When I first arrived at Bonaventure as a freshman, I was unaware of what opportunities were here. I was soon introduced to Alice Miller Nation and the Warming House. At first, I thought it was just some sort of regular campus job that is available everywhere in the country. I found out my second Sunday on campus that my original thought was quite wrong.

I remember going to the University Ministries building and waiting for a ride to the Warming House. That is where I first met Mike Waseda.

My first day I didn't do much other than wash dishes and attempt to put them away in the correct spot.

I vividly remember asking Mike if it was okay to make coffee for the guests, which of course it was. That day at the Warming House opened a whole new world to me. When I look back, I came from being an unsure teenager in a new place who didn't know how to cook to someone who now can lead the Warming House with my fellow coordinators and volunteers.

In these past two years I can confidently say the Warming House has brought challenges to me that I wouldn't have braved otherwise. These range from guests not getting along with each other and a water main break (which meant we couldn't use tap water but still found a way to serve the meal), to how to overcome the food allergies of our guests.

The Warming House doesn't just feel like a campus job. It unites people, not just because of food but because there is conversation and community.

I have met some of my best friends at the Warming House: people I can count on, people who care and will go the extra mile. There is something special about getting in the Warming House van and heading off with your closest friends to whatever challenge the Warming House might throw at you that day.

