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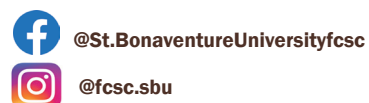
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRANCISCAN CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERN AT ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY
www.sbu.edu/FCSC

Furthering Francis



Winter 2024-2025

Oh, What a Night!

It started with an idea over lunch and a “yes, I would be happy to help.” The Endowment for Warming House Sustainability was still a plan, not quite ready to launch. Lindsay Retchless came up with the idea of an Empty Bowls Dinner, which historically supports food insecurity initiatives.



Alice Miller Nation

Betsy Gingerich enthusiastically accepted the position to co-chair the event as she and our university president, Dr. Jeff Gingerich, were just completing their first year as Bonnies.

Fourteen months later, the Endowment for Warming House Sustainability is just shy of \$500,000. This is halfway to the goal of \$1,000,000.

Each year, 5% of the endowment will be used to support the operational budget of the Warming House. Your generosity, compassion and care for our neighbors will ensure the Warming House serves the most vulnerable of the Olean community for another 50 years. Thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Back to Oh, What a Night! After the



Above, Warming House coordinators Max Wolfe and Molly Edgington share their Warming House experiences. At right, guests browse the wide selection of hand-crafted bowls and baskets before choosing one to take home.

setup for the Sept. 26 Empty Bowls & Baskets dinner was completed, I walked around the room. I read the stories on the soup posters of those who have offered support to the Warming House over the years. I touched the bowls and noticed the colors and textures, thinking about the dozens of the people who put time and effort into each one. I was filled with awe, humility and gratitude.

The Warming House is a place that offers nutrition, dignity and community each day to the food insecure. The Warming House also offers SBU students a place to learn, grow and be



challenged in so many ways.

Max Wolfe, '26, one of the two SBU student speakers at the event, shared an important lesson learned at the Warming House. “When things are hard, I’ve learned to not always assume that they are bad. You see, it’s not always the burnt pans of our lives that we should focus on, but the growth that comes from it. There will be hard times, but the Warming

[Continued inside]

Empty Bowls & Baskets – A Different Perspective

The Empty Bowls & Baskets Dinner was a complete success. The dinner was an important reminder that during the event we had our bowls full of nutritious food to warm us and fulfill our needs, but unfortunately that is not the reality for everyone in our community.



Kathleen
Biong
Percegon

A few weeks before the dinner, I attended my MBA (Master of Business Administration) Organizational Behavior class, where Alice Miller Nation joined us to share the mission behind the event. She invited us to get involved by volunteering as part of an activity that added purpose to our class.

We were given a series of topics to reflect on before, during, and after the event. Later, I wrote a paper about those topics.

I was particularly struck by the generosity of all those involved in the event. This includes the Warming House coordinators and volunteers who serve the guests at the Warming House daily, the committee members who planned every detail to ensure the event's success, and the MBA students who actively participated and assisted during the event. The generosity of the Empty Bowls & Baskets guests, who are part of the Olean and SBU community and rose up to help those who do not always have a full bowl, truly exemplified the spirit of compassion and community.

A few weeks after the dinner while analyzing the event, I understood that we can always do more. When seeing the example of Betsy Gingerich, who volunteers weekly at the Warming House, I understood that I can also find time to do more for others.

It does not only have to be by supporting someone or an organization financially, but it can be by volunteering



Above, Mike Stewart, Alice Miller Nation and Bill Seifert stand next to the St. Joseph's soup story. St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute in Buffalo has delivered the St. Joe's Food Basket to the Warming House for more than 40 years.

my time, talking to someone who may need it, or just being present. When listening to two Warming House coordinators share how much working in the Warming House had added to their personal lives, I realized that by helping others you end up learning and finding fulfillment within yourself.

Those, among many other life lessons that I absorbed through this event, were a reminder that it does not matter how busy or tired I might be, there is always room to honor the Franciscan values of wisdom, integrity and compassion and assist those in need.

Kathleen Biong Percegon, '25, is assistant coach of the men's and women's tennis team at SBU and a Franciscan Center for Social Concern office assistant.

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House has taught me to take life a little easier and find the good stuff in every situation."

Molly Edgington, '26, told a story about her first weeks at SBU and how she started working at the Warming House. She shared, "there is always room at the Warming House." As she reflected on that statement and her Warming House experience, she realized she has developed lifelong skills that she will practice long after she crosses the graduation stage.

Thank you for your support and care for the Warming House.

We have a long way to go to ensure long-term sustainability for this mainstay of SBU culture and service. I am confident that together we can care for our neighbors while living the values we hold so dear.

Alice Miller Nation is director of University Ministries.



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View more photos from the Empty Bowls & Baskets Dinner and Auction, download soup recipes served at the dinner, and learn more about the Warming House endowment.

Furthering Francis

More Than *Just* a Mentor

Every Monday through Thursday, from around 4 to 6 p.m., St. Bonaventure is a little brighter. The spirit-lifting sound of companionship between young children and college students



Casey
Reed, '28

takes form in giggly chatter and games outside of University Ministries.

Bona Buddies is a free SBU program where elementary-aged "buddies" from the surrounding community

come and enjoy time with a student mentor.

Freshman Evie Lyman gave a brief overview of the Bona Buddies schedule — it consists of reading, free playtime, outdoor games, and snack time. Students emphasize that no matter what the activity is, the time spent is always valuable.

The program is at its full capacity of 80 buddies — with more on a waiting list. Mike Waseda, assistant director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern, says the program's mission is rooted in companionship and focuses on "learning something new."



An SBU student mentor and her Bona Buddy.

In the last two years, the Bona Buddies program has introduced reading time to the schedule.

"We always have 10 minutes of reading right away," Lyman said. "He (my buddy) sits next to me, and while I read out loud to him, he follows along with me."

Waseda said this new activity is helping the buddies. Volunteers set an example for their buddies by presenting reading as a fun learning opportunity. Designated reading time also teaches time management. Once the kids finish their reading, they have free playtime with their mentors.

According to the New York State Mentoring Program, mentoring outcomes include greater participation in school, improved attendance, higher graduation and college admission rates, and better overall performance.

Volunteer mentor Courtney Westfall said the program has allowed her to become more passionate about her future career as a special education teacher.

"As a future educator it really makes me feel like this is my calling. With our buddies you start to create meaningful relationships with them that go past just being around each other. You learn so much about them as people," she said.

Casey Reed is majoring in Adolescence Education with a concentration in ELA.

Bridging Generations: Finding the Silver Lining of Joy and Understanding in Every Smile

The Silver Wolves program embraces the joy of connecting St. Bonaventure students with the residents of a local retirement home, Eden Heights, which is only a few minutes from campus.

Through shared activities such as arts and crafts, board games, and meaningful conversations, the students foster connections that transcend generations. Each visit offers insight into the wisdom of the residents and the kindness of the volunteers.

"The wisdom shared by the residents enriches our lives as students, while our volunteers' youthful energy and enthusiasm brings



Student leaders Abby Mainville (from left), Patrick Birney and Meghan Litterer.

a spark to those at Eden Heights," said Patrick Birney, '27, an Accounting major and member of the Silver Wolves leadership team. "Together, we create a vibrant community, celebrating both the past and the present, proving true connections know no bounds."

Each visit fosters a sense of belonging for students and residents alike, enhancing mutual mental well-being in the process.

"Through our shared activities and conversations, we create lasting bonds that enrich both their lives and ours. The residents are filled with gratitude every time we walk through the doors," added Meghan Litterer, '26, a Public

Health major.

St. Francis believed in breaking down barriers between marginalized peoples.

"Our senior citizens are often forgotten today, and it is our mission to negate this neglect," said Abby Mainville, '26, an Adolescence Education major. "Coming together as one community creates opportunities for shared experiences while exposing us to unique learning opportunities."

The residents' warmth inspires the students to continue their efforts.

In every smile and laugh shared, they find the silver lining of joy and understanding.