



Franciscan Center for Social Concern
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Furthering Francis



Light has broken through the darkness

Light has broken through the darkness. There is much to celebrate on the St. Bonaventure University campus. We have a new president. Dr. Jeff Gingerich and Betsy Gingerich have been to the Warming House to see what this almost 50-year-old soup kitchen is all about.



After more than two years of pandemic pause, we have begun service learning trips for Bona students once again. We started with a new opportunity, just for first-year students. Becoming Bonnies: A Week of Service was a partnership between the Franciscan Center for Social Concern, University Ministries, Mt. Irenaeus and BonaResponds.

Fourteen incoming first-year students came to campus a week early to serve and make friends. It worked! A second trip went to the St. Francis Inn in Philadelphia over fall break. All of the outreach programs within the FCSC are back and engaging students in rich experiences and opportunities to practice and learn leadership skills.

Light continues to break through the darkness. Although the pandemic is not far from our minds, life seems normal on the St. Bonaventure campus once again. I am so blessed to have the opportunity to visit with students about important topics as they make decisions about the people they are going to be for the world. At a recent Warming House team meeting, we had a rich conversation about the loneliness of many in our society. We spoke of some of our Warming House guests who struggle with loneliness and isolation. We made connections to the Franciscan story of the Wolf of Gubbio.

It was a rich conversation and I was reminded of Elizabeth Egan, a senior journalism major and Warming House coordinator who last year began to learn the beverage order of each of our guests. Yes, I am blessed



New Bonnies came to campus before classes started to participate in a weeklong service learning experience called Becoming Bonnies: A Week of Service.

to be working with and learning from some really thoughtful young adults.

May the light continue to give us hope as we bring our Franciscan values into our communities. The young people I encounter each day are very interested in making the world a better place. They have both open minds and open hearts. Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, from Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles came to campus in September. He is known for saying, "there is no us and them. It's only us." May we all look for opportunities to break down barriers and offer light where there is darkness. May we look at those we encounter each day as us rather than perpetuating the walls and barriers that exist in our world. If you need a bit of hope, come volunteer at the Warming House. I am sure you, too, will be inspired by our students!

Peace and all good,
Alice Miller Nation
Director, Franciscan Center for Social Concern

Breaking the Bubble Becoming Bonnies: A Week of Service

By Joe La Pietra, '26



Joe La Pietra

Machetes, drills and chainsaws. It might sound like something from a horror movie, but it was actually community service. A week before most St. Bonaventure students arrived for the fall semester, 13 first-year students and I were already here on campus. We had signed up for a unique opportunity called Becoming Bonnies: A Week of Service, a new learning retreat exclusively for first-year students.

Throughout the week, while most of our friends back home may still have been sleeping, we were building friendships while serving the local Olean and Allegany communities.

“Everyone got to work as a team while serving others and it helped us become closer trying to solve different problems together,” said Sullivan Murphy, '26.

We slept, ate and hung out at Mt. Irenaeus during the week when we weren't out building ramps, making meals at the Warming House, or listening to speakers. We grew closer to each other throughout the course of the week and formed friendships we likely wouldn't have if we had

not met during this inaugural week of service. We discussed serious topics, discussed not-so-serious topics, participated in daily reflection and conversation, went to Niagara Falls, and so much more. It was a fantastic experience and I consider myself fortunate to have been a part of it. Not only did the week give us a head start on making friends at college, but it also introduced us to many of the friars.

By the end of the week, all of the students were feeling ready for college and ready to start the next chapter of their lives at St. Bonaventure.

We're grateful to everyone who made Becoming Bonnies: Week of Service possible, and we hope that it will become an annual event at St. Bonaventure.

(Joe La Pietra is a business management major.)



▲ After a long day of service, our newest Bonnies enjoy a delicious dinner at Mt. Irenaeus.



▲ Freshmen Isabella Venter (left) and Robin Stone

An Awesome Meal

By Joe La Pietra

“Coming to the Warming House breaks the Bonaventure bubble,” says Gabe Cote, a second-year student who works as a Warming House coordinator this year. “The Warming House is not just a soup kitchen, it's a place where people come together and build relationships.”

As a residential campus, St. Bonaventure allows students the ability to disconnect from the real world, but that doesn't mean one should leave the outside world when they come to Bonaventure.

“It's not only about serving meals, cooking and cleaning, but also talking to the volunteers from the university and the community who come to us from a variety of backgrounds,” said Hiryu “Mike” Waseda, the graduate student managing the Warming House.

As a student volunteer at the Warming House, I have learned that I am not just cooking and cleaning, but I'm serving others, and in doing so, learning about myself. Serving at the Warming House is not only therapeutic, but also instills in me a deeper sense of social responsibility. At St. Bonaventure, students can have this bubble, this perception of “I'm an adult, I'm in college,” and yet, it is through volunteering at the Warming House that I have matured in just a few short months.

In the past few years, the Warming House has seen an increase in the number of meals served to those dealing with food insecurity. With the rise in inflation, the Warming House prepared and

SBU is canning the food pantry stigma

By Annika Spitzer, '26

Just less than 30% of four-year college students are experiencing food insecurity nationwide according to the most recent Hope survey.

It is a statistic that often shocks people due to the dining halls and restaurants found on college campuses. Nonetheless, college students have reported not knowing where their next meal is coming from and going several days without eating a meal.

Members of St. Bonaventure were compelled to lower the statistic through their volunteer-run food pantry available for all faculty, students and staff.

“People gather around food,” said SBU Food Pantry coordinator Valentina Cossio.

Born in Bolivia, Valentina expressed how the sharing of a meal is a form of affection in her culture. It is through food and companionship St. Bonaventure students seek to share kindness with their fellow Bonnies.

The food pantry team works diligently to create



Annika Spitzer

a welcoming environment that disproves any negative connotations regarding food pantries.

“Some students come in just to hang out and do homework together,” said Valentina.

One of the ways the food pantry raises awareness to food insecurity is through a table display during Family Weekend. The crew believes it is vital for the community to be aware of this very real issue.

Volunteer Mitchell Signor said the food pantry is important to students.

“It particularly supports students living off campus, as they are adjusting to adulthood. It provides a safety net for students to stay fed and financially secure,” Signore said.

The purpose of the SBU Food Pantry is to assist students in every stage of their journey. Asked why the food pantry is valuable to the students, a guest replied, “There are times when you take from the pantry. There are times when you



▲ Volunteer Allie Beamish restocks canned goods in the SBU Food Pantry.

donate to the pantry, and it depends where you are at in life.”

Providing fresh meats, frozen meals, bagged snacks, and even hygiene products, the food pantry is always looking for ways to better serve the campus.

(Annika Spitzer is a strategic communications major.)

served more meals than anticipated last summer. In fact, the Warming House has been consistently serving meals at a greater rate this year than any recent year.

When I volunteered, we served 82 meals. The team of coordinators prepared that day for 60 meals, but we had to prepare an additional 20 meals to fulfill the needs of our guests. Even when the unexpected

happens, the Warming House continues to serve the local community. Most days, between 45 and 80 meals are served to the most vulnerable of the Olean community.

My time at the Warming House has offered me the privilege of meeting and serving others in need, and, most of all, I am learning from my peers. I am learning the stories of our guests and who they are as

individuals.

Nearing the end of my visit, someone came in and requested 15 meals to go. We quickly had to gather and prepare 10 meals using food that was not prepared for that particular day. In the end, the rush was worth it though when the last patron thanked us for all our help and told us it was an “awesome meal.”