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St. Bonaventure University, P.O. Box AR  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

# the Warming House

COMMUNITY • DIGNITY • NOURISHMENT

Spring 2022

## Good conversations with a dedicated team

My first “real job” was at Camp Stella Maris, a summer camp on Conesus Lake, which is a ministry of the Diocese of Rochester.

The summers were great. I learned a great deal about myself and the world in which I live. Each summer, staff were evaluated twice. I was so nervous as these evaluations approached, I often found myself with tears in my eyes throughout the whole evaluation.

At times, I could barely talk and respond to my evaluator. One summer I remember thinking, *if I ever have the opportunity, I am going to help others better respond to difficult situations like evaluations and hard conversations.*

Who knew that all these years later I would have the opportunity to prepare young adults to participate in evaluations and challenging conversations.

And so, each year, all of the Warming House coordinators participate in a self-evaluation as well as an evaluation by me. I think it is important to give our students the opportunity to honestly look at the work and ministry they do and to have the chance to sit down and talk about what is working and where we can raise the bar.

I encourage honesty and a thoughtful assessment before coming to the appointment. On my part, I promise good listening and honesty. I also let them know they will not hear anything at this evaluation that they don't already know. (I give consistent feedback throughout the



By Alice Miller Nation

semester, especially in areas that need improvement.)

As we get close to the end of the semester, it is now time for these conversations. I actually love these encounters with the Warming House student leadership team. The 10 coordinators are so dedicated and passionate about what they do each week.

I find these evaluation conversations to be filled with good ideas that could be implemented at the Warming House and possibilities for ways SBU students can further support the most vulnerable of the Olean area. I feel the Warming House team is so much more prepared to face the future than I might have been at their age. At times I marvel at their ideas and the ways they put their experiences together.

As I write this newsletter article, Warming House coordinators Elizabeth Egan, Valentina Cossio and I are preparing to speak at St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester about

the meaningful ways young adult women live and express their faith.

For all who might wonder and sometimes ask, how is the Warming House doing? The Warming House is doing well. The need continues to be great. We still serve many more meals each day than before the pandemic. Our guests often live lives that are challenging. We continue to work toward long-term sustainability for the Warming House.

I am often humbled and awed by the generosity of so many. Yes, the Warming House is doing well and runs each day on the values of nourishment, community and dignity, as well as some down-to-earth Bona pride.

May we all share the best of who we are as Bonnies with the piece of the world we meet each day.

Peace and all good.

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



▲ From left are Adam Burlingham, Fr. Xavier Seubert, O.F.M., and Sam Bozuhoski.





▲ Warming House staff and guests – including Hiryu “Mike” Waseda (left) – were excited to get a visit from Reilly the Bona Wolf.

## The Need is Still So Great

By Hannah Gonsiorek  
Psychology, '22, MBA, '23



For Hiryu “Mike” Waseda, being the graduate assistant manager at the Warming House is a special and rewarding position.

Each afternoon he faces multitasking, delegating, and responding to whatever the day throws at him. When speaking to him about his experiences the past two years at the Warming House, he elaborated on the personal connections he’s made with guests and the continued need that still exists today.

“I try to talk to everyone. Just because I’m there every day and try to pay attention to all who come in,” said Waseda. “I try to figure out what people are struggling with and just listen to be there for those that need it.”

During the height of the pandemic, the Warming House’s indoor seating was closed due to health regulations. Many guests who looked forward to their daily chats and conversations over a warm meal found it difficult to be without those connections.

For some, that is the best part of their day. For Waseda, he was happy to help reopen the doors to establish those personal connections again.

When asked about the number of meals being served as compared to the past, Waseda said that it is fairly steady but seems that the word is spreading between community members and guests. In the last few months of 2021, a trend of serving more meals began and continued into the early months of 2022.

“At the beginning of this year, in January and February, we seemed to serve more than usual,” and some months are higher than others, Waseda said. Many guests say they are coming back specifically for the coordinators’ cooking, though rising food and gasoline prices as well as food insecurity could be contributing.

Defined as “a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life,” food insecurity is something many people in Cattaraugus County struggle with (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021). During times of economic hardship and a lingering pandemic, individuals can struggle to provide

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## The Warming House says ‘Thank You’

By Hannah Gonsiorek, '22, '23

“It started as a joke I made on Twitter and over several months it became a recurring theme,” said Del Reid, the mind behind the slogan “Bills Mafia” and founder of 26 Shirts, a Buffalo-based T-shirt company.

As “Bills Mafia” started to gain attention on social media, Reid saw an opportunity like no other.



“I felt a concern and need to do something productive with this audience and tried a

couple different things,” Reid said.

26 Shirts honors families with hardships, unexpected circumstances, as well as medical and health concerns by promoting a new T-shirt every two weeks. That’s 26 shirts a year, every two weeks.

With a passionate Bona alum in his office and eager Bona fans coming to him to create a St. Bonaventure tee in 2015, Reid agreed and created a T-shirt honoring the Warming House.

Since then, his company has run several St. Bonaventure campaigns, donating a portion of the proceeds to the Warming House. Overall, the company has raised \$1,357,747, with \$8 from each shirt going to its corresponding cause.

The Warming House is beyond grateful for the creativity, philanthropy and generosity 26 Shirts has given over the years.

Similar to Reid’s mission to give back, the Warming House runs on Bona passion, Franciscan values, and the heart to help others when they need it most, which the world needs more of each day.

## Grant writing gives St. Bonaventure students a rare and valuable experience

By Cameron Carr



Among the many tremendous programs St. Bonaventure offers to the community, the Franciscan Center for Social Concern’s (FCSC) is fueled by generous funding they receive each year. The Warming House, Bona Buddies, and Silver Wolves are just some of the programs where funding is essential in the continuation of making an impact. In addition to the generous donations from donors, the FCSC applies for several grants each year.

Hannah Gonsiorek, a St. Bonaventure senior and FCSC employee, said she first felt intimidated when asked to write grants, a task she considered quite daunting. “It can be uncomfortable to ask for money,” said Gonsiorek. “We ask for money from such reputable organizations.”

For years, students have been participating in this process along with Alice Miller Nation, the center’s director. Grant writing is a process that involves much preparation, including presentations to request funds for both the Warming House and Bona Buddies.

Rob DeFazio, associate dean for student life and a member of United Way of Cattaraugus County’s board of allocations, said he seldom encounters student grant presentations. “The FCSC is the only organization I see using students,” said DeFazio.

Thomas Buttafarro, another member of United Way’s board of allocations, said the board loves seeing the students. “Speaking as the director of community relations here at SBU, I can tell you that the students do an excellent job making our university look good,” said Buttafarro.

Miller Nation gives students this rare opportunity out of a desire to teach them a valuable skill.

“I am not aware of any other area of the university that uses students to write grants. I teach the students



▲ A St. Bonaventure student shares a meal with Warming House guests.

this skill to provide them with a unique experience,” she said.

Requiring an advanced level of responsibility, grant writing becomes a valuable experience for the FCSC’s student workers.

“Grant writing felt like a really good crossover between my journalism and business degrees,” said M.K. Killen, an ’18, ’19, St. Bonaventure graduate and former FCSC grant writer. “Knowing how to communicate a program’s effectiveness is an essential skill for many careers,” said Killen.

Gonsiorek said learning how to write grants has helped her develop her professional skills and she is grateful for the opportunity the FCSC has given her.

Both student workers and student volunteers recognize the uniqueness and value of undergraduate grant writing. Through passion and responsibility, the FCSC is using grant writing, a necessary tool, to develop professionalism in students, and gain funding for its benevolent programs.

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basic necessities for themselves and their families.

A lack of employment, being unemployable due to disability, chronic illness or a lack of housing can contribute to these rates. The Warming House helps to combat some of the financial hardships to free up other essential funds for

bills, shelter, and services.

With the pandemic still ongoing, these rates have been much higher as nutritious food prices increase. Currently, Cattaraugus County is ranked #5 in food insecurity in the state, with a 13.8% food insecurity rate. As a community, we can combat food insecurity at the source by lending a helping hand,

becoming a volunteer, or simply understanding the severity of such a close-to-home issue.

As the Warming House aims to help the most vulnerable of the Olean community, St. Bonaventure students are given the opportunity to grow, empathize, and reveal their Franciscan heart by giving back. The need is still so great.