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# the Warming House

COMMUNITY • DIGNITY • NOURISHMENT

Summer 2023

## A Challenge by Choice

By Alice Miller Nation

Audrey decided to learn how to make croissants this summer while participating in the Farm to Table community. “What are you doing?” I asked while walking into the McGinley-Carney Center kitchen. “Oh, just making croissants,” replied a smiling Audrey Welcyn.

“Tell me about that” was my response. I will admit, I was secretly wondering if she knew the labor-intensive nature of croissants. I quickly realized that she fully understood as this was her second go around.

This day she was making them for the gathering of Farm to Table students and the Warming House Advisory Board. How thoughtful I thought to myself as I smelled the croissants baking in the oven.

Sully (aka: Sullivan Murphy) often found himself working with BonaResponds on Saturdays throughout the summer, hauling wood and building ramps.

After a week of working in the sun at Canticle Farm and in the hot kitchen of the Warming House, Sully would get up on Saturday mornings, make his way to the BonaResponds trailer to meet Jim Mahar and others who would spend the day building ramps, offering access to those without. Another example of a young person with a heart for others.

“Alice, I really want to do Farm to Table, but I also need to take



▲ Farm to Table students and the summer manager on the steps outside the Warming House. Pictured are (front row, from left) Sullivan Murphy and Luke Vredenburg, and (back row, from left) Audrey Welcyn, Jenna Langley and Adam Russ (summer manager).

a class this summer. Do you think we can make it work?” I have discovered that Jenna Langley is a determined young adult and has a generous heart for others. Watching Jenna this summer has inspired me to be more generous and thoughtful myself.

Luke Vredenburg chose to participate in the Farm to Table community to experience new opportunities as he considers becoming a Franciscan friar. Participating in conversations and relationships that integrate mission and to continue to grow into a Franciscan-hearted

person was a motivator in Luke’s “yes” to Farm to Table this summer.

One of the things I love about ministering at St. Bonaventure is the freedom and ability I have to “customize” similar experiences based upon the goals of the individual students. The Farm to Table experience is the perfect example.

Each student came, knowing they would be working at Canticle Farm and the Warming House, participating in community experiences, professional development and learning about integrating mission and values into daily experiences. And yet, the experience of each has been so different.

Challenge by Choice – each student sets goals and works toward them with support and encouragement. I find great satisfaction as I watch young adults challenge and stretch themselves in ways they can hardly imagine. This is just one of the many ways SBU helps prepare students for their futures.

From what I have experienced, our future is in good hands.



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

# At SBU, we call it a Franciscan Heart

By Audrey Welcyng, Finance, '26



As my freshman year came to a close, I realized I wasn't ready to part with campus quite yet. There was something inspirational about being in the St. Bonaventure atmosphere.

In search of employment to occupy my summer, I discovered the Farm to Table program through the Franciscan Center for Social Concern (FCSC). This program presented a unique

opportunity to serve others, explore some of my hobbies, and grow in new ways. Between farming and working at the Warming House, it was safe to say I found something to keep me busy.

I never anticipated that I would work on a farm throughout the summer, and I have to admit the idea of sweating away my mornings harvesting kale or planting a thousand lettuce heads was not what I had in mind when staying on campus. However, slowly I learned to enjoy the peace brought on from being surrounded by nature. From nurturing food from its very beginning to seeing our community sustained by that same food has left an irreversible impact on me.

During the academic year, I volunteered once at the Warming House and I stayed in the kitchen baking the entire time. I didn't know what I was missing! After spending most of my summer at the Warming House, I have formed unforgettable relationships and memories with guests. From watching Sully (another member of the Farm to Table program) light up the entire room while Irish dancing with a guest to catching up with those we deliver to, the Warming House is never dull.

As the summer passed and my experience grew, I realized the focus wasn't on the meal itself but on the people we were serving. Working in the Warming House as part of the Farm to Table program connected me to a new community, one I am not sure I would have had the opportunity to bond with without this experience.

My eyes were opened to the struggle that was just under my nose. It was a truly humbling experience and has changed the way I view others. Just as I've experienced growth in patience and empathy, I've witnessed our guests developing as well. Working at the Warming House you learn to celebrate small victories just as much as the big ones. I learned to identify with others, even in the minute parts of life, celebrating the good times and sticking together through challenges. Although this summer was unlike anything I could have anticipated, it has been perhaps one of my favorites thus far.

With summer winding down, my excitement builds for the upcoming semester. I know the experiences I've had will carry over not only into the classroom, but into who I am as a person and how I show kindness and compassion to those I encounter.

# Food, Friendship and Taylor Swift

By Kevin Eberth, Public Health, '26



Going into my freshman year at St. Bonaventure, I knew that I wanted to receive more than just my education. I wanted to make a difference. The easiest way to make a difference is to get involved with on-campus opportunities, and I found the Warming House.

On the outside, the Warming House looks like a soup kitchen. Once you are inside, you quickly realize it is much more. The Warming House is a place where people come not just to eat but to feel welcome. And I don't just mean our guests, but our volunteers and meal coordinators, too.

The Warming House helped me make the transition from home to college easier. I am not sure exactly what helped me the most but knowing that my time there serves a greater purpose is very gratifying.

As my freshman year progressed, I became aware of my own growth. This growth was not just in my kitchen skills, but also as a person. The biggest change I saw in myself was I went from being nervous that I would mess up in the kitchen to being able to lead volunteers and new coordinators with meal preparation. During my

year of being a Warming House coordinator, I went from knowing only a few recipes and barely knowing how to cook to being able to cook anything that is on the menu for the day. I now have a new sense of confidence.

One thing I wasn't prepared for but am eternally grateful for is the relationships that have formed.

The relationships with our guests mean the world to me. When I recollect the name of a guest who I haven't seen for some time they are often surprised, and a bright smile appears. It makes me feel good when I can make their day or at least bring some enjoyment to their day.

My favorite part about the Warming House is the way it brings people together. It not only brings new friendships among our guests, but between meal coordinators and volunteers.

All of the meal coordinators and

volunteers have the same goal, to serve others. The common ground and bond of giving back to a community gave me a second family. I don't just see these students at the Warming House, we hang out outside of it as well. It's nice knowing that others have your back in a new place.

One of my favorite memories is of Tuesdays at the Warming House. One of the meal coordinators always plays Taylor Swift in the kitchen. Betsy Gingerich (the university president's wife) volunteers each Tuesday and I am pretty sure that by the end of the semester, she was secretly singing along as well!

Although the Warming House is a job, it doesn't feel like one to me. It's a place where I have friends and always feel welcome. Even on the most stressful of days I always look forward to going to see my second family.



January 2024 will be the 50th anniversary of the Warming House! It's time for a birthday party! Throughout 2024 there will be occasions to celebrate this milestone. We are gathering the names and contact information of students who volunteered and/or worked at the Warming House during the past 50 years.

If you or someone you know was part of the Warming House team, please reach out to us with names

and contact information.

To ensure the Warming House will be around for another 50 years, the Warming House Sustainability Endowment has been established. A gift to this endowment will provide operational support for the Warming House long into the future.

If you want more information about this endowment, feel free to reach out to Alice Miller Nation, [anation@sbu.edu](mailto:anation@sbu.edu), or Joe Hoag in Advancement, [jhoag@sbu.edu](mailto:jhoag@sbu.edu).



## Welcome to the Team, Mike!

The Franciscan Center for Social Concern (FCSC) welcomes Mike Waseda as the assistant director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern. Mike is a familiar face to many. He began volunteering at the Warming House at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and worked his way up to graduate assistant at the Warming House while he was pursuing his MBA.

Mike's primary focus will be assisting students as they run each of the outreach programs of the FCSC. We are so happy to welcome Mike to the University Ministries team!

