



Franciscan Center for Social Concern  
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# Furthering Francis



## The Year of the Pivot!

By Alice Miller Nation

If there is one thing I could change about my life, it would be my understanding of change. I am referring to the changes in my life and the situations around me. In my younger years, I spent way too much energy resisting change rather than understanding and seeing changes as opportunities and potential for my growth and the growth of organizations.

I often learn from our students. This year has been no exception! The Bona Buddies student leadership team totally reimagined what could be, rather than dwell on what was lost due to the pandemic. The Warming House has been serving a takeout meal service since March 13, 2020. Once again, it was the student leadership team along with me and the guidance of university administration that planned and implemented a COVID-19 safe meal service for our guests and student/community volunteers. Silver Wolves and Friends with Sisters partnered with BonaResponds to continue to engage with elders in the Olean community so that the isolation that the elderly often experience could be minimized.

All outreach programs needed to undergo extensive changes in order to continue this academic year. Our student leadership teams thoughtfully evaluated each of their programs while determining what was essential. From there, brainstorming and dreaming began. What could be? What are best practices at other schools or other areas of the country? And finally, let's come up with a plan. The plan might have several iterations, but let's start! If it doesn't work, we will stop, re-evaluate and pivot a bit to keep what is essential and get us closer to our end goal.

This evaluating, planning, implementing and re-evaluating has occurred repeatedly the last nine months. Wow! I wish I'd had such a clearly defined method for approaching challenges at my fingertips when I was in my early 20s.

It has often been said that the Warming House is as much about feeding the most vulnerable in the Olean area as it is about offering St. Bonaventure students a place to understand and practice living Franciscan values. When our students leave the SBU campus, it is our dream that not only do they walk away with

a well-earned academic degree, but also the ability to implement and carry these values we hold dear to classrooms, boardrooms, athletic fields and cul-de-sacs. Living lives with Franciscan hearts is what will offer hope and light to our world.

As each of us makes our way in a national landscape that is challenging at best, let's remember that we are Bonnies. Bonnies are loyal and generous, ready to respond when opportunities arise. May we each have a part in bringing hope and goodness to the world in which we live.

Peace and All Good,

Alice Miller Nation



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



# Bona Buddies 2.0

By Gabby Runfola '22, Grace Weber '22, and Catherine McNamee '22

Since March of last year, it has been COVID this and COVID that.

Fall semester '20 began with a new campuswide “no visitors” policy to ensure the safety of the campus community, forcing our daily business-as-usual lifestyles to be anything but normal.

This necessary policy change created problems for the Bona Buddies program. For many years, the buddies came to campus each week to meet with their mentors. Many people would take the new ban on campus visitors as a sign to put the program on pause for a semester or two. Instead, the Bona Buddies student leadership team went straight to work.

We started meeting on Zoom in July. Our first order of business was finding a way to end the spring 2020 semester right by creating summer letters to be shared between mentors and buddies, since their time together was cut short. We then met once a week almost every

week for the rest of the summer, brainstorming and making a game plan to keep the program running during the pandemic while also following the university’s “no visitors” policy. It was not easy.

So much time and effort by the student leadership team went into planning for the fall semester. It was a challenging and eye-opening experience. We were a group of students who had just met one another, with some of us having less experience running the program than others. We had to come together and create a game plan for the upcoming semester.

We developed a few ideas that allowed us to keep the mentors and buddies connected and involved. First, we created activity bags, designed for the buddies by their mentors, that we delivered to the buddies. We were able to see and talk to the buddies, while following social distance protocols, of course.

Second, we started a pen pal letter



writing campaign, which allowed the buddies and mentors to communicate with each other.

Lastly, we started a Zoom tutoring service that many buddies utilized.

It was a very different semester, compared to Bona Buddies practices of previous years, but we were able to create ways to maintain 64 matches of SBU students and buddies during the pandemic.

The silver lining to this story is that as coordinators, and as a program, we were able to come together and create something great during these difficult times. The future is unpredictable and constantly changing, but with our group of coordinators and the strong support system at St. Bonaventure University, there is no doubt that we can continue striving for great things for Bona Buddies.

# A New Partnership

By Lily Chittenden '21



The COVID-19 pandemic has required us to reimagine many of the programs we run, including Silver Wolves, which is the one I lead.

Silver Wolves is a volunteer club that visits two local nursing homes every week during the school year to play games, do crafts, and spend quality time with the residents. Our time with the residents has resulted in close-knit and long-lasting friendships with many of them.

With nursing homes not allowing visitors during the pandemic, the residents were lonely and in need of some comfort and friendship.

As a result, we reimagined our program completely so that our friends felt less isolated during such a lonely, scary, and strange time by creating a pen pal program.

# Furthering Francis

We partnered with BonaResponds to create a program for campus RAs and the students on their floors to write letters to the residents. We sent about 50 letters to the nursing homes through this program, creating pen pal relationships that blossomed through fall semester.

The pandemic forced us to quickly pivot, establish a new program, then implement it. It was a group effort with a lot of trial and error. We tried many new things before creating a program that best fit the circumstances. For spring 2021 semester, we will re-evaluate, analyze our downfalls, and create an even better system.

Nursing home residents are among the most isolated groups during this pandemic. We hope our program brings smiles to the residents’ faces when they open our letters, shows them that they are not alone, and reassures them that they always have a friend.

# More Than a Summer Job

By Lindsey Lytle '22



My name is Lindsey Lytle, and I am a junior at St. Bonaventure, studying environmental studies. Last summer I was part of the Farm to Table program, an FCSC outreach ministry.

This program, on the surface, seemed straight forward: In the morning, you work at Canticle Farm, a community supported agriculture farm in Allegany. In the afternoon, you serve a meal at the Warming House in Olean and learn the importance of local produce to the local community.

However, this experience was much more than that.

A sense of community is a huge part of the experience, and one I didn’t expect to connect with so deeply. I formed a connection not only to my program members and program Director Alice Miller Nation, but also with the community. I met many people in the area including employees at the farm, and volunteers and guests at the Warming House.

I’m now more than just a student and resident during the school year, but someone who is making a

difference in the lives of others. I have friends and acquaintances across the community, and that makes me feel more grounded during my time at SBU.

Another pleasant surprise of the program was how right it made me feel to be a part of the teachings of St. Francis.

Prior to coming to Bona’s, I viewed community service as a punishment or a requirement to excel in certain activities. This program opened my eyes to the importance of serving others. I learned that one’s efforts and caring make a difference in someone’s life, and that often we have a lot more time to give others than we think in this busy world. Serving the community is now an integral part of my life and how I want to live in the future.

The Farm to Table summer program was a formative experience for me, full of lessons in communication, leadership and professionalism.

the “values off the wall” and applying them to the lives we live after college in our respective disciplines. These values include contemplation, love, respect, joy, peace, and compassionate service.

We experienced those values during our visit to the Warming House and throughout the project.



▲ Lindsey Lytle offers a meal to a guest at the Warming House in the fall of 2020.

# Applying Knowledge Outside the Classroom

Papers, presentations, exams, and quizzes might be the first things you think of when you are asked how you were tested on your knowledge in a class. It’s a similar situation in the School of Business’ MGT 301 course, but with a twist.

Each semester, students are put into groups of 3-5 students in which they plan and serve a meal at the



By Jack Steger '22 and Madison Mundenaar '22

Warming House. This project allows for students to take a practical approach to using the skills they learn throughout the semester in the classroom. These skills include planning, time management, setting goals, and working together. This opportunity also allows

for students who have not volunteered at the Warming House the chance to experience Franciscan values in action.



▲ Madison Mundenaar helps prepare meals for guests at the Warming House.

During the process of executing our project we held multiple Zoom meetings, met with Alice Miller Nation, director of the Franciscan Center for Social Concern, and Nate Parish, a student coordinator at the Warming House. We reviewed our plan, so we knew exactly what we were going to be doing. When we arrived