

“Forget your troubles, come on get happy - better chase all your cares away. Shout Hallelujah, come on get happy. Get ready for the judgment day.”

Mt. Irenaeus campus and core teams: Mary Schlosser, Joe Kotula, ofm, Bob Struzynski, ofm, John Coughlin, ofm, Martin Spear, Kevin Kriso, ofm, Michelle Marcellin



**Possibly you arrive home in the same airport I do, sometimes late at night.
Do you recall what greets you, welcomes from your journey back to home?
Have your eyes been drawn up and have you seen a multi-image screen catching your attention?
Have you ever heard the song?
Let your tired soul be serenaded?**

“Forget your troubles, come on get happy - better chase all your cares away. Shout Hallelujah, come on get happy. We are waiting for the judgment day!”

There is so much to take in from our journeys, our travels. So, we need to take time with our arrivals. We “claim our baggage,” finding who will greet us and what helps us to come home. What holds our tired selves, our troubles as we journey, travel home? Who holds us so we can sing our own song forgetting troubles on our journey toward happiness?

We are far more apt to greet others well if we find and believe, know and experience that there is One who greets us, each of us, and holds us ... holds us all the while and truly is our home.

Over the years I have flown back into Western New York, arriving in Buffalo from some journey. Landing in the Buffalo Niagara Regional Airport I am walking down through a late-night empty corridor with shops which closed some time before we arrived. Heading with other passengers ... fellow travelers ... I see and am caught up sometimes by and stop to observe, listen and smile as I might have quickly passed under a very large and lively video screen. This regional display is mounted overhead with multiple screens catching my eye as it dances, now moving, attracting me to beautiful visages of the Niagara frontier. As we are serenaded in the midst of this now sleepy corridor, this lively recording of a vocalist stirs us to a sense of place and presence, a welcome home. She is accompanied by rich, warm instruments which create an intimacy in an otherwise vacuous setting. I sense warmth and belonging and companionship – all of this – simply this, while people are hurrying to their luggage, to their taxi, to their waiting friend or van, heading out into the cold Buffalo air!

“We cannot help seeing – gazing – on the crucified God for long without being changed. And this change, this gazing on the God of self-giving love, must eventually impel us to love by way of self-gift.”
– Ilia Delio, “Franciscan Prayer”

We are all invited, whether we have stopped to pay attention or not to this preview/ review of the region, whether we have listened or seen the message singing, splashing lively above. It invites our attentiveness. It is there to lift us up from our arrivals and help hold our moment of hope so that we can “forget all our troubles.” The contrast is significant for it sounds more like a late-night tune from a café or a song sung in a bar just as we head home from there. I find myself smiling and wondering about the message, wondering and feeling invited to let my tired body,



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mind and heart return to this region of beauty and households of welcoming people and down through an hour and a half of country roads, while possibly still humming out of this empty corridor, a song full of hopefulness, a soulful greeting and a call to shout out "Hallelujah and come on, get happy!"

If it is a daytime arrival, we might see the whole beautiful coastline of Lake Erie with its cities and settlements, bays and peninsulas in Canada and the United States – Ah, the Great Lakes! Old shipping routes and sleeping cities, once famous and fashionable, still with great architecture, some with significant troubles while finding new life, "forgetting their troubles"; "getting happy"; with great longings, quietly awaiting and vigorously working for a new time.

Recently, a guest at our table at the Mountain, while his daughter was visiting Bona's, taking a prayer overnight for himself said, "Things are getting better in Buffalo. More and more we believe again in our city with its wonderful neighborhoods full of wonderful people and the renewal of businesses, new ideas and new ventures." Something is budging, something is happening, some people are getting over their blues and getting happy ... a lot of hard work and it is working!

We might, then, risk moving from the emptiness of our lives and vacuous corridors of old times and old patterns of thinking to a new way of seeing and hearing. We open empathetically and, yes, with sympathy for one another as we hear across the world a longing, a languishing, a crying out that wants to stretch to a new Hallelujah.

Easter begins to dawn even in the darkness of late night airports during early Lent arrivals. Look ... try out the song as its tempo consoles you even now.

As our own cities and other places on our Earth where people languish, we can be hesitant rather than waiting; we can pause, but still be in a hurry, even fearful of and wondering who might help us. There is a song singing out and it isn't only overhead, but it is in our heart and stirs us to find the growthfulness rather than the woefulness regarding change and new life.

"Engagement with the other becomes an engagement with God. Contemplation is not directed toward heaven but toward the fullness of the Incarnation." - Ilia Delio

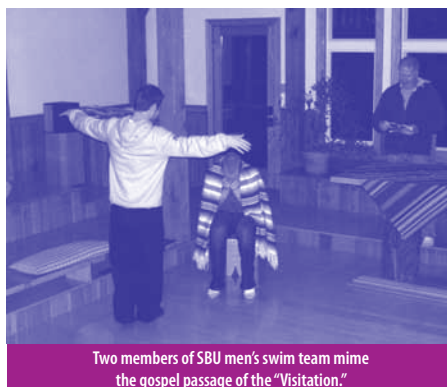
I woke this morning, now back at the Mountain, moving from a place of worry and "troubles," to finding again Psalm 31, 30, 27 and 40, pathways, windows, openings - each of them calling out to me, freeing all of us to let go of, to "forget" our troubles and be re-membered, brought back into the face of God and the peace of Christ and the beauty of the earth and landscape that calls us into new risk taking for new life.

This is precisely where and when it is not easy. This is where change, especially change of heart and new life needs to enter this new springtime, not only the screens above us or the views or songs around us. Lent rises up – lifts us up into new disciplines and practices, precisely so we are delivered and deliver ourselves, have what the modern world calls "deliverables" as we are lifted up in the wonder of Easter.

On our kitchen wall in our House of Peace on the Mountain is a beautiful expression, "If you can talk, you can sing. If you can walk, you can dance."

And here is where perception and precision come together. Not so much as a "logic" of our mind or the precision of a machine, but of our hearts knowing and our willingness in going together. It is precisely that we risk the transformational moment, the movement that comes from a new perception, a new way of seeing, a risk of forgetting and finding a new path that calls us to a deeper remembering of the One who has always held us and holds us now, who invites us to hold each other well.

As I passed under this lively screen and listened to a song that might not have been in my heart, as I held onto my backpack, getting ready to clutch my suitcase, what else am I holding onto that I need to let go? As I clutched what I have and hold onto my worries, do I know what holds onto me, what holds me tenderly at this very moment? Do I believe in the One who holds all of us in love and holds everything, freeing us from our troubles? As these questions open into the brightness of day from a dark night, a gratefulness rises in me and life lifts me up. The scenes on this screen have invited me to be a part of this local world. The deep darkness of love rises in my heart, freeing me from a perception of empty corridors, rather, now takes me into the fullness



Two members of SBU men's swim team mime the gospel passage of the "Visitation."



Bona students shaped this wreath which has hung on the House of Peace through our winter months.

"Just as CHRIST was RAISED FROM THE DEAD
By the GIFT of the FATHER
We too MIGHT LIVE in the RESURRECTION of LIFE +
Rom. 6:4

of a city coming alive, a Gospel of new life for all of us. The deep happiness for a God who holds us as we are weary and helps us find rest in our restlessness, senses our tiredness and invites us to new life.

Do we believe we will be held if we let it go?... If we forget "our troubles" will One help us, lead us on a new path to new remembering?

Behold the "new," "join with Jesus Christ in making all things new," begin to realize that happiness is to know we are held, embraced, loved and enfolded in God's own "arms" through it all. Metaphor reaches for, barely touches, but can't contain the One who is holding us now. Even as our minds and thoughts reach to know, we rest in the One who is ... we receive and are held by the great grace that is wholly embracing us *now*.

To behold. To be held. To be beholding of others, their visage, their own shining self!

In the world that we are in there is such a longing to be held well, and often a doubt on the part of those who long for it that they might ever truly have lasting intimacy. It is important to say it. Some of the reasons why people come to the Mountain is to find friends, to find the depth of what friendship is, to enter into the quiet to let go, at least, of our troubles and our burdens and enter a place that seems to immediately invite us to be part of a family. A family that holds us and cares for us. So much to let go of and believe in at the same time! Not so much in words, but in practice, in the place, in the passion of the Earth, the quiet passion of the participants in our daily life - that truly life holds us and indeed not only life but within what life means. In the deeper sense of life there is One who is the ground of all creation; the creator who has dreamed from the very beginning of our being and still beholds us in the mind of Christ, re-remembering us in Christ.

Long ago when we were longing for the Mountain we realized we were longing not only for "a place," but also a "family." As people from different backgrounds, young and old, there was this common awareness that at times our structured sense of reality, indeed our structured sense of religion, was not holding what we longed for. In fact, it seemed not to have "hold on it" enough to be able to hand it to us easily. The transfer, the movement between people and institutions for real meaning, the longing for intimacy is large - not only what we will call interpersonal, but between persons and their meaning. The expression I love that arises up out of different cultures and blooms in our Easter time is "low and behold," see and be held, see and hold well what cannot be held. It immediately gives us this wonderful non-dualistic sense of presence that is so richly ours and this is so much the gift of the Mountain for us.

It is interesting that our Franciscan forbearers would help us understand the language of the heart by letting go, by traveling without burdens or baggage and in a time of troubles, finding joy. The language that takes us through mistrust and places of fear, through radical change and up rootedness, on journeys that seem to lead us through empty airports would also present us with new scenes and ways of seeing, new songs that would delight our heart, new bridges between people, places and meaning when violence is about to break out again. It is a word that is truly incarnate, it is the incarnate that is our new language; the bodied forthness, the holding each other in the arms of a loving God.

The contemplative practice of the Mountain is both this simple and this large.

The depth and height of contemplation is beyond the seeing of screens or imagining of scenes of any thing. It is more than gazing ... it is graceful grazing; finding the food of the One who holds us and enfolds us, knowing we are hungry ... the One who is bread for our journey home.

Welcome home from your travels my friend! Claim "your baggage" as you wish, find a new spring... a new springtime, a new spring in your step! Here on the Mountain and everywhere, our hearts are opened. More than a prayerful activity, contemplation is the realization that One holds us and has always, and that the One who is "living waters" - even greater than Niagara Falls! - has "washed all our blues away!"

"When we can accept God's love in ourselves then we can gaze on the love of God in our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, the tiny creatures of creation, the sun, moon and stars and yes, even our enemies." - Ilia Delio

Easter Light = Life Dan Jones

CHRIST OUR LIGHT
thanks to God



Our annual Christmas supper at Maraget Bryner's giving thanks with our auction committee.



SBU women's swim team along with other athletes and groups from Bona's enjoy as well as lend their own spirit to the Mountain.



Stained glass of Mary and the child Jesus given to us years ago by Naomi Burton Stone, a close friend and editor of Thomas Morton.



IN THE VALLEY

A few Thanksgivings ago when Fr. Dan Hurley was still alive, we were discussing the hype and energy about "Black Friday" sales. I asked Dan if he wanted to get up at 4AM to go to the mall on that day. He exclaimed, "What would I want to do that for?!" I said to him, "Because that's where the people are!" He got a big kick out of that answer. However, we did not go to the mall that day.

In reality, only about half of the Mountain's outreach takes place at the Mountain. We follow the ancient Franciscan practice of spending part of our time "in the woods" in contemplation and hospitality to the people who come to us. The rest of our time is spent going out to where the people are. Various one's of us spend a lot of time with students and others in scripture sharing programs, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Mountain on the Road and in Your Home, Protecting God's Children (a Catholic program to prevent child sexual abuse), retreats to people in Twelve Step Recovery, Mountain Community Leaders, St. Bonaventure New Student Orientation and Residence Assistant Training, Meditation Groups, Prison Ministry Trips, as speakers in University classrooms and to Confirmation classes to name a few.

This is what Jesus meant as he called his first disciples to spread the Good News. He told Peter in particular that he would become a "Fisher of People." There are so many people who are looking for the Good News, a good word about God's goodness and their own worth as sons and daughters of God. The News is so good and important that we can't only wait for people to come to us. Sometimes we have to go to them.

~Kevin Kriso, OFM

COMMUNITY 101

Last semester and this semester we have had numerous student groups come up to the Mountain

RECEIVE the HOLY SPIRIT

for a late afternoon/evening visit or for a weekend overnight. We have had men's and women's groups, classes professors brought up, sports teams, and many other groups. These are students whose schedules are loaded with classes at St. Bonaventure University. Learning in formal classroom settings is what they expect. Many people are familiar with the notion of *thinking outside the box*. We provide students with the opportunity to *learn outside the classroom*. We help them to learn by inviting them into our community life at the Mountain. We turn off our cell phones and other electronic gadgets. We go for hikes on the land, harvest food from the garden, prepare meals, wash dishes, share meaningful conversation, and reflect on what we experienced. We do this all together. The students are often quite surprised by the bonds they have formed and the learning that they have undergone. Formed in a society that puts great emphasis on individualism, one of the most important things the students learn is the value of *community*. Discovering that they are connected to and belong to a greater whole, that their lives effect those of others and the planet, that they were meant for intimacy not separation will only help them to more fully use what they learn in the classroom. Fr. Bede Griffiths, a notable 20th century Benedictine monk, once said, "Community will be humanity's salvation." From what I have seen in my year and a half at the Mountain, the students who bless us with their time and presence are assimilating and spreading that wisdom.

~John Coughlin, OFM

The Secular Franciscan community of St Irenaeus Fraternity at the Mountain continues to grow in life with one another and the life of Mt Irenaeus.

We are pleased to have welcomed John Coburn of Alfred Station, NY at his profession to our Fraternity on February 2, 2013. Our small but dedicated fraternity, officially established in 2006 now has 12 professed members coming from many locations, including one who travels from out of state to be with us.

We are blessed by one another and the growth we have experienced. Our ministries are as varied as the individuals, many carried out in our local areas, with our on-going ministry being one of support and sharing in the life and hospitality of Mt Irenaeus.

The regular meetings are on the 4th Sunday of each month as we gather for Mass, brunch, a time of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and our meeting. We welcome all to "come and see" life as a Secular Franciscan or to contact the Mountain or myself for further information.

~Agnes Brush, Minister email: june1563@gmail.com

I did not know what to expect as I took my first 40-minute trip up to the Mountain during Welcome Days as a freshman. But after spending a day in the company of five friars who embraced me as lifelong friends the moment we met, I knew I wanted to be part of the Mountain, part of what the friars and that holy place stand for, part of making things new.

As four years has come and gone, I find that it was not always easy making the Mountain part of my life when I was not on that parcel of serene, gorgeous land. Between classes, activities and friends, life got in the way. I felt the only way to live the "Mountain way of life" was if I was physically there with the friars, with my friends, living and breathing that very unique, calm, contemplative style of life.

As much as we all would love to live at the Mountain for the rest of eternity to escape our current trials, it is an unrealistic option. We need to learn and embrace the Mountain spirit no matter where our lives take us. And we need to learn to spread that Mountain spirit because I think everyone could use a bit of Mountain hospitality.

I may not have the answers as to how to live out the Mountain ideals in our own lives when we are physically separated from the Mountain, but I have some thoughts ...

- Take a moment to breathe in some natural air – take a walk outside, sit on a park bench, enjoy God's beauty with all your senses.
- Live in the current moment – do not let the sixteen pieces of technology we all own run your life, spend some time without them, allow the power of God and spontaneity guide your day instead of a calendar on your phone.
- Find the goodness in everything you encounter each and every day – appreciate even the smallest act of kindness, live as an example for others, remember that everything happens for a reason and God has made this beautiful life for you to enjoy and learn from.

These are all things I've learned from experiencing the Mountain, and I know these are things we can all do even when we're not at the Mountain. While we might not be physically with the friars that does not mean we cannot have that Mountain spirit pulsing through our bodies – bring the Mountain with you wherever you go, and I promise you, good things will happen.

**~Maddie Gionet, SBU '13
Mountain Community Leader Coordinator**

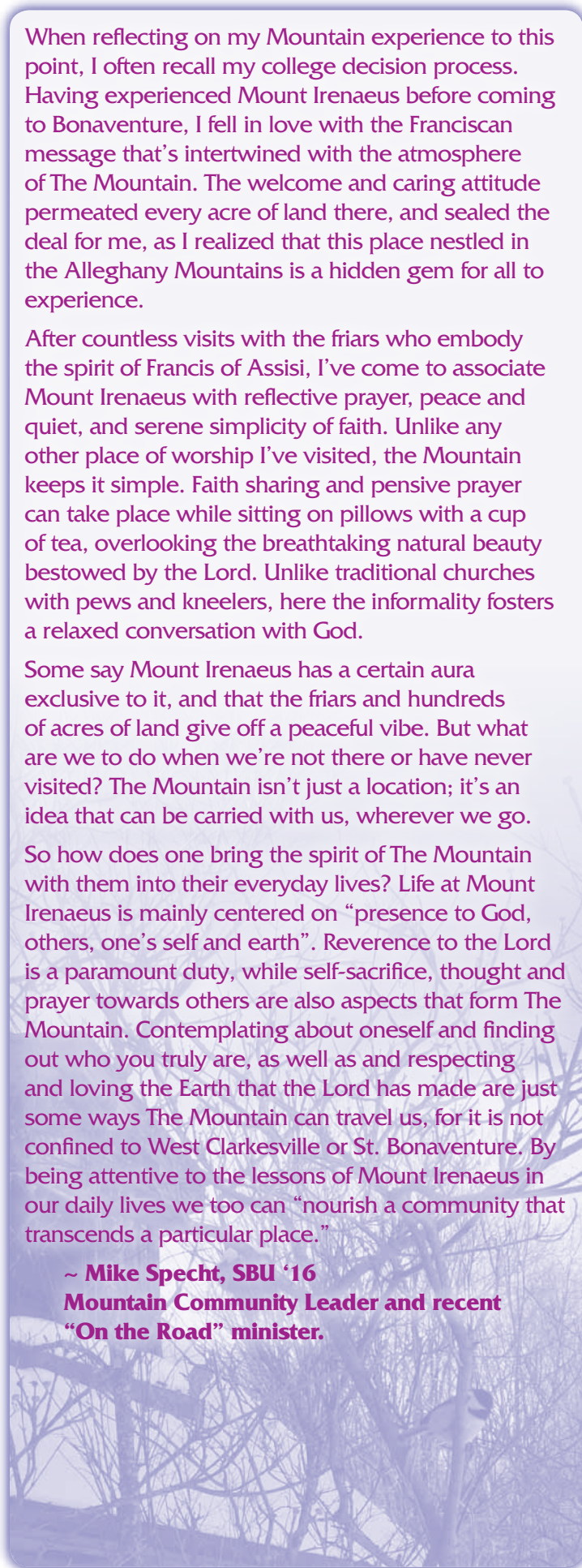
When reflecting on my Mountain experience to this point, I often recall my college decision process. Having experienced Mount Irenaeus before coming to Bonaventure, I fell in love with the Franciscan message that's intertwined with the atmosphere of The Mountain. The welcome and caring attitude permeated every acre of land there, and sealed the deal for me, as I realized that this place nestled in the Alleghany Mountains is a hidden gem for all to experience.

After countless visits with the friars who embody the spirit of Francis of Assisi, I've come to associate Mount Irenaeus with reflective prayer, peace and quiet, and serene simplicity of faith. Unlike any other place of worship I've visited, the Mountain keeps it simple. Faith sharing and pensive prayer can take place while sitting on pillows with a cup of tea, overlooking the breathtaking natural beauty bestowed by the Lord. Unlike traditional churches with pews and kneelers, here the informality fosters a relaxed conversation with God.

Some say Mount Irenaeus has a certain aura exclusive to it, and that the friars and hundreds of acres of land give off a peaceful vibe. But what are we to do when we're not there or have never visited? The Mountain isn't just a location; it's an idea that can be carried with us, wherever we go.

So how does one bring the spirit of The Mountain with them into their everyday lives? Life at Mount Irenaeus is mainly centered on "presence to God, others, one's self and earth". Reverence to the Lord is a paramount duty, while self-sacrifice, thought and prayer towards others are also aspects that form The Mountain. Contemplating about oneself and finding out who you truly are, as well as and respecting and loving the Earth that the Lord has made are just some ways The Mountain can travel us, for it is not confined to West Clarksville or St. Bonaventure. By being attentive to the lessons of Mount Irenaeus in our daily lives we too can "nourish a community that transcends a particular place."

**~ Mike Specht, SBU '16
Mountain Community Leader and recent
"On the Road" minister.**





Franciscan Mountain Retreat

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Pictured in the background is the SBU women's swim team.

Holy Week



March 28, 2013 Holy Thursday
6:30 p.m. - Dish to pass supper
8:00 p.m. - Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

March 29, 2013 Good Friday
3:00 p.m. - Liturgy of the Passion - Followed by
silence on the land and in the Chapel

March 30, 2013 Holy Saturday
9:00 p.m. - Easter Vigil

March 31, 2013 Easter Sunday
Sunrise service on the Knoll
11:00 a.m. - Easter Sunday Mass

Check our website for each day's full schedule.

"The Mountain is like a pair of glasses or a hearing aid; when I am here it helps me to see and hear God more clearly."

A student recently shared those thoughtful words at the Mountain and many of us can probably relate to the image he shared.

Please consider supporting our Mountain ministry in making "all things new" by giving to our annual Mountain Fund, which supports one third of our yearly operating budget.

Gifts can be made through a number of ways:

Online: Visit www.mounti.com/give-support and find ways to give online.

Phone: Call 716-375-2096 or 716-375-2081

Recurring Gift: Use your credit card or bank account to make automatic monthly, weekly, or quarterly donations. Call us or set this up online.

Mail: Send a contribution to Mt. Irenaeus, P.O. Box 100, W. Clarksville, NY 14786.

In Person: While at the Mountain drop a gift in our donation box in the House of Peace or in the Chapel, or stop by our office in the Merton Center.

Matching Gift: Your employer may match your gift - contact your Human Resource office. Mt. Irenaeus Franciscan Mountain Retreat is a 501c3.

Thank you for your support,

Mary Schlosser, Coordinator of Development and Volunteers

"We are Mountain people readying for the marketplace. We are marketplace people looking for the Mountain."

"Food for the Journey:

Weekends of Renewal for Mountain Companions"

August 2-4, 2013

September 27-29, 2013

Return to the Mountain for a summer weekend of rest, renewal and enrichment as we explore together the joys and the challenges of bringing to the marketplace of our lives the Spirit and Franciscan message of the Mountain with others.

We live in a world that is aching to hear the good news. We live in families and communities longing to hear God's voice and to know God's love, mercy and friendship. We, too, experience this longing in our own hearts. We are called to live in the marketplace as instruments of peace and healing - as servants to others.

Come home to the Mountain and receive food for the journey!
Come and be nourished by the stillness and beauty of the woods and the Chapel!
Come and be nourished around the table of the altar and the main house!
Come and be nourished by the love of friends old and new!

Register and reserve your space on the Mountain at mmarc@sbu.edu.

For more information contact:

Father Dan (mmarc@sbu.edu) or Paul Kline (klinep@bc.edu)

(If you can't complete the whole weekend, join us for an overnight or a day!)