

THE NATIVITYMIGUEL MIDDLE SCHOOL OF BUFFALO

Recently, Nancy Langer, President of The NativityMiguel Middle School of Buffalo, met with Minnie Wyse, Regional Director, Ignatian Volunteer Corps Buffalo (ICVB), and Marcia Noto, an IVC Buffalo volunteer, who is assigned to NativityMiguel.

NativityMiguel is a faith-based middle school that transforms the lives of underserved students in a secure and nurturing environment on two single gender campuses: the St Monica Campus for girls and the St. Augustine Campus for boys. In close cooperation with the students' families, the school delivers a uniquely effective education that includes an extended school day, week and year, dedicated and caring teachers, personal mentoring and continuing support through high school graduation. In addition to offering a study hall every day to encourage students to do their homework, NativityMiguel places a heavy emphasis on sports, which helps build a sense of community for its students.



(left to right) **Minnie Wyse**, Regional Director, Ignatian Volunteer Corps; **Marcia Noto**, IVC volunteer; and **Nancy Langer**, President of the NativityMiguel Middle School

NativityMiguel has been an important part of the fabric of Buffalo's education system since September 2004 after Fr. James F. Joyce, S.J. came to Buffalo in the late 1990's to conduct a study of attitudes on the problems surrounding St. Ann's Jesuit Parish in the Broadway/Emslie

neighborhood. Father Joyce discovered the main concerns were "Drug Abuse and Sale" and "Poor Grammar Schools." As a result, he proposed bringing the Nativity model, which was already successful in Manhattan and Harlem, to Buffalo. Since then under the guidance of Father Edward Durkin, S.J., founder of the original NativityMiguel School, NativityMiguel Middle School of Buffalo has offered intervention for students in grades 5-8. The Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first congregation for African-American women in the United States, and Sister Timothy Howard, OSP, have offered their unwavering support to Father Durkin through their emphasis on education as the key to a student's future.

Langer discussed NativityMiguel's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. Key to the Plan was developing an effective leadership team. This would include creating a Director of Operations position to enable the President to devote more time to fundraising (tuition only covers 5% of the budget) and to ensure a more cohesive volunteer effort. Over the last year, Marcia Noto has stepped in to create that operational position by doing it. She has developed a database, which now has contact information for over 125 volunteers who actively support NativityMiguel's 20 employees and 80 students. When IVC Buffalo began operations in 2016, Marcia's work became IVC Buffalo's first volunteer engagement. Nancy believes Marcia's efforts have made a real difference to Nativity's performance.

Her work has had an impact not only on NativityMiguel, but also on Marcia. Prior to joining IVC, Marcia helped her husband run their insurance agency, which was purchased by M&T Bank in 2009. While at M&T, she specialized in bank compliance and operations; however, after 6 years, Marcia needed a change and began her work with NativityMiguel. She says that IVC has provided a structure of reflection, focus and spiritual dimension to her

volunteer efforts. Even though she has limited direct contact with students, Marcia makes a difference by stepping in to handle operations that Nancy does not have the time to complete.

“Being part of IVC, I feel an added commitment to devote time every week to Nativity, and I help change lives. What I am doing is hugging a kid indirectly.”

Minnie has also seen the immense benefits of IVC Buffalo. She asserts that IVC Buffalo volunteers “take the volunteer commitment seriously because of the structure provided by IVC.” Through her role as Regional Director,

Minnie also sees that IVC Buffalo has been well received by local non-profits, who appreciate the value of IVC’s highly skilled volunteers such as Marcia, who are professional, motivated, and experienced. Because of the quality and commitment of IVC volunteers, non-profits, volunteers, and clients are able to form a meaningful bond that allows all three to leverage their resources for a successful experience. The IVC Buffalo volunteers meet once a month to reflect on their assignment, which helps develop a deeper appreciation of the overall volunteer experience and the positive impact it has on the volunteers themselves.