

Lunch Buddies Program Brings Smiles for Miles  
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The Center for Community Action and Research (CCAR) is the go-to office for students who are looking to become more involved within their community. Years ago CCAR partnered with the Successful Learning Center (SLC) to create the Lunch Buddies Program, a program for young adults with developmental disabilities and offers them a college experience.

“Many of the students are around college-age and the program really empowers them to continue to learn,” program coordinator of CCAR Caitlin Kelly said. “We try to familiarize students with mainstream students to show them the community of being at Pace.”

Contrary to popular belief, the students involved in the Lunch Buddies Program/SLC are very involved on campus and during campus functions. Students can be spotted at Pace athletic events sporting Pace gear and cheering on the teams to the fullest extent. The students in the program benefit from it through the support of their peers who show them the ropes of being a student at heart.

“Lunch Buddies really is a social program,” Kelly said. “It’s structured to build interaction amongst our students.”

In addition to the support of individuals across campus, members of the Gamma Sigma Sigma Sorority have been a helping hand in the student engagement of the Lunch Buddies program. The sorority’s members are around to have casual conversations and interact with students during a variety of different campus activities.

“It is a great feeling to be able to just sit with a fellow Pace student for an hour and converse about your favorite actors or music,” senior political science major Marelina Ortiz said.

On Halloween, SLC hosted a Halloween Party for their students and the Pace community. There were games, crafts while interaction and learning more about one another were also incorporated, as socializing is an integral part of the program.

Since students are at Pace for learning as well, a special commencement ceremony will be held for them as well. During this ceremony, students are awarded a certificate for each class they complete. Their classes include but are not limited to art, music, and even a Glee class. Each student is recognized for his accomplishments and the great efforts that have been put into an education.

“The greatest contribution is time,” said Ortiz. “Sometimes all anyone needs is a friend, and having someone to listen to and share experiences with is what college is all about. SLC fosters that type of dynamic and is what makes Pace unique.”

The Lunch Buddies program is a rewarding experience for all of those involved and on November 9<sup>th</sup>, the program is headed to a local bowling alley for a Saturday full of fun.

To register for the Bowling Trip with CCAR and the Successful Learning Center, or to learn how to become a lunch buddy, please contact Caitlin Kelly [ckelly2@pace.edu](mailto:ckelly2@pace.edu).