

THIS IS ONEIDA COLD WEATHER? PROBLEMS ARE BLESSINGS

The cold weather has been unbelievable so far this winter. Perhaps my years in Florida made me a little weak in dealing with cold weather, but I have been freezing to death this month! In my 25 previous years in Oneida, I don't ever remember weather as cold as we have had recently, but I am still so thankful to be back and to be serving in such a wonderful place.

On the night of the college football national championship game between Auburn and Florida State, I must have momentarily thought I was still living in Florida. A couple of other staff members and I decided we would grill out for the game. That might not sound too unusual to you, but the temperature that night was below zero and the wind chill was -15 degrees. As we were making repeated efforts to light the grill, one of us made the comment, "This might not be the smartest thing we have ever done." Another said, "If we live to tell about it, this will make for a fun memory and story later." I did wimp out a time or two and return to the warmth of indoors to check on the baked potatoes, but for the most part the three of us were outside for nearly an hour that night. A couple of other staff members drove by as we were grilling and gave us bewildered looks as if to say, "You guys have lost your minds."

This crazy night of sub-zero tailgating got me thinking about the young people who decide to come to Oneida. Entering our boarding school environment in such a remote location has to be shocking to their systems. As I conduct orientation and interview new students, I can often see their anxiousness and uneasiness about their new home and school. Our rules and structure must shock their systems much in the same way as the cold weather did mine as we grilled out that frigid night. Once our young people overcome homesickness and culture shock, they then have the opportunity to achieve and improve their lives.

We often experience trials and problems with many of our young people, but it is such a blessing when we see them turn the corner and begin to accomplish great things. I encourage our faculty and staff to treat problems as opportunities to minister. Those opportunities to minister then become blessings. In essence, problems are blessings if we handle them the right way.

I typically ask our young people during their interviews, "What are some goals you would like to accomplish while you are a student at Oneida?" Responses can vary, but most answers are usually along the lines of improving grades, making new friends, graduating and going on to college, and becoming more independent. Recently a young man shocked me with his answer when he responded, "I would like to one day be an ambassador for this school." It makes us so proud when our young people succeed and go on to great things in life. Often times we have worked through problems with these young people and then we experience the wonderful blessing of seeing how the Lord is using them for His work and kingdom. We are all called to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ.



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