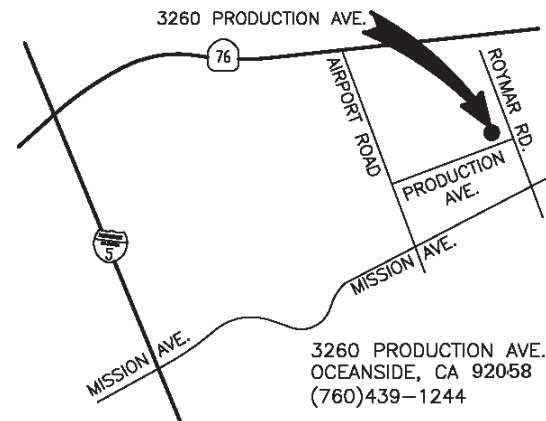


Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation to the Brother Benno Foundation

Your donation is used each month at our main center and eight operational houses to provide: meals, clothing, personal hygiene items, blankets, showers, laundry facilities, bus vouchers, case-worker referrals, nights of lodging, medical and mental health referrals, prescriptions, ID replacement, mail services, food packs, shelter for women and small children, men's drug and alcohol recovery program, shelter for women in recovery, and assistance with rent, jobs, Social Security, and veterans' issues. We thank you for your continued support. 100% of your contribution goes directly to assist those we serve. Our modest administration costs are paid for by our Thrift Store revenues.

www.brotherbenno.org



Brother Benno's Newsletter

"Uplifting The Dignity of Those We Serve"

April 2011



FAILING GRACE

by Mary Robinson

It was a cloudy, rain-predicted afternoon when I failed Grace. In fact, somehow we all failed Grace by accepting a system where the mentally ill collide with homelessness, and there are too few solutions we can offer on an emergency or even long-term basis.

Homelessness and mental illness too often go hand-in-hand. They complicate even temporary solutions for mentally ill people who sometimes beg for help, yet are too unstable to willingly participate in a plan of action. It becomes a Catch-22 because in our great country we proudly enjoy the freedom of "our rights." But what about those who share the same rights, yet aimlessly wander the streets without the capacity to understand how they actually become a barrier between themselves and finding shelter and food and living a life that provides the safety and security they need? In other words, when you aren't mentally stable enough to understand the cause and effect of exercising your rights, are those rights really in your best interest? This is shaky ground for those who love, care for, or work with the mentally ill. It seems we are always left asking questions for which there just may not be answers.

From what I could surmise, Grace was about 30 years old and had been dropped off at our Center door late that afternoon. With her were what appeared to be her worldly possessions—a suitcase, a paper bag filled with prescription medications, and some money that was folded and sticking out of her shirt pocket. All of this, combined with her level of mental instability, made Grace a prime target for people who prey on the defenseless. What made matters worse was that Grace seemed to know this. She

was too familiar with the perils of being on the streets as she fearfully described to me how she would probably get raped and robbed "like what happened before." Sadly, I also knew that what she was saying was all too possible.

I sat with Grace in the doorway to our Center and tried to piece together how she got there. I was hoping this would offer some clues into finding out who may be responsible for her. She produced a lot of paperwork, indicating that she had just been released from a crisis center, which led me to believe there had been a recent serious episode that had landed her there. It was Grace who later told me she had tried to commit suicide and that her mother had dropped her off at our Center after "stealing" her wallet.

In the end, it's hard to know how much of this was accurate; but Grace did share that she'd been "in and out of places" where they would hurt her. Not only did I feel Grace's pain, but oddly, I also felt a twinge of sorrow, imagining a mother who may have tried for years to do all that she could for her daughter. For some reason—maybe her own ailing health, fear, expense, or years of hopelessness—she had finally succumbed to Grace's mental illness by way of sad resignation. Perhaps she finally had to admit to her total inability to continue to care for her mentally ill daughter. It's sad, but it happens more often than people think.

I can barely imagine a worse way to lose a child. I've seen and talked to many mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who have had to live with the burden of knowing that their mentally ill loved one had decided to take their care and

continued on page 2....

Brother Benno's Services:

	February 2011	Our 28th Year		February 2011	Our 28th Year
Meals	11,627	3,069,816	Loads of laundry	23	25,676
Nights of lodging	1,177	208,461	Food packs	2,178	157,024
Articles of clothing	4,443	857,093	Blankets	126	31,544
Showers	779	154,358	Prescriptions	48	6,320
Haircuts	102	12,274	ID Vouchers	10	8,103
Bus passes	96	74,078	HUGS	1,800	798,394

Our services are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.

The Thrift Shop

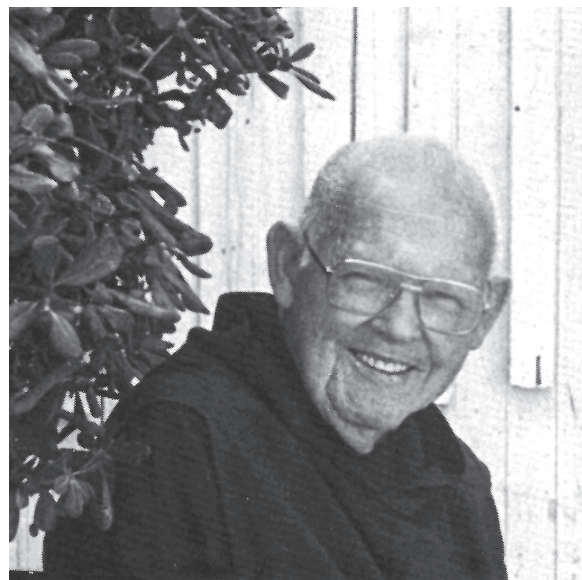
3965 Mission Ave. (East of Albertsons) 760-967-7505

Shop open Mon-Sat 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. -- Stop by to check out our Special of the Week Sales!!

Brother Benno Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 308, Oceanside, CA 92049

Non-Profit Organization
**U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID**
 Oceanside, California
PERMIT NO. 166



...continued from page 1

future into their own incapable hands by exercising their rights. These rights are based on the question, "Are they a danger to themselves or someone else?" The problem is that when that becomes clear, some pretty bad things have already happened in the process.

Grace and I talked for awhile and the weather began to worsen. I'm not a trained counselor of any kind, but years of working with the poor, troubled, and homeless have taught me that if you let people talk, eventually there are enough common or uncommon threads that you can string together to see what you may be dealing with. It was at 5 p.m. on a cloudy Tuesday when I realized that I would have to fail Grace.

For some reason, Grace was very unstable on her feet, which meant walking wasn't an option. I offered to call the paramedics but she frighteningly refused. And even though Grace was very childlike, there were flashes of anger that spoke to my instincts and made me realize I needed to be cautious for my sake and for hers.

Grace's one and only request was for a place to stay—a place where she could feel safe. But her demeanor also posed the question, "Would others be safe with Grace?" None of the winter shelters were open yet; and even if they were, I was certain Grace would have had a hard time navigating all that it took to get into the shelter and comply with the rules. She clearly needed to be cared for; and somehow, between being released from the crisis center and showing up at our door, someone had already been unable to get Grace to comply enough to be taken to the next logical step in after-care.

From what I could see, Grace's strong will and mental illness had probably spurred her on to "exercise her rights"; and as long as she was no longer deemed to be a danger to herself or others, she was free to roam the streets begging for shelter that was very difficult to arrange. There are places for people who share Grace's issues; but on an emergency basis, that usually involves the police, a hospital stay, and an evaluation. Grace made me promise not to call the paramedics or the police. Sadly, I knew what my options were; and I felt a rising sense of anger for what I was about to have

to do.

It was anger at our system and our lack of emergency services, anger at whoever dropped Grace off, and—honestly—anger that I wasn't fearless enough to take Grace home where I had extra bedrooms that would shelter her from the oncoming storm. It's at moments like these that you don't want to ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"

The chilly wind began to blow harder and the rain was upon us. I helped Grace walk to another doorway at our Center that would provide much better shelter from the weather.

I went back into the Center and got a sack lunch, juice, a heavy jacket, blankets, a pillow, plastic sheeting and—God help me—a teddy bear to hopefully comfort Grace before I had to leave her alone. As I brought these items toward Grace, her eyes lit up when she saw the teddy bear. I had to turn my head to hide the tears. My bringing these items outside finally convinced Grace that there would be no shelter that night, but I told her the following day we could begin to work on that together. We made her a waterproof and fairly warm sleeping area; but as we did, I prayed she wouldn't be using it.

When it was time to leave Grace there in the drizzle and growing darkness, she asked me if I would give her a hug. I did, and I told her that things would be better tomorrow. Then, right before I left the Center, I did something I promised Grace I wouldn't do. I called the police, explained the situation, and pretty much begged them to pick her up before something happened to her. I admit that I couldn't bear to wait and watch the police take her away, even though I knew it was the best thing for her.

We never saw Grace again. This is a fairly sure sign that the police did pick her up, and hopefully she was re-entered into a system that would not leave her to roam the streets. I had to fail Grace in so many ways, but I have a feeling there were those before me and there will be others after me who will have to do the same thing. There's no easy answer, except to pray—pray for the grace to comfort these people when we can, and for Grace to find some measure of stability and peace.

Ω

Memorials

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Brother Benno | Bob Gleason | Margaret Stephan | P.F. Daheim |
| Pope John Paul II | Jane Pfau | Bill Boster | Bernie Weiler |
| Mother Teresa | Ron Alexander | Louise Foussat | Elizabeth Kangun |
| Ann Sauer | Mary Peterson | Tom Hayward | Laverne Peters |
| Joe & Ida Friend | Frank Barnett | Richard Kurtz | Richard Kurtz |
| Mary Nordstrom | Frank S. Dolley | Helen Lucas | Floyd & Rose Caldwell |
| Myron Eichen | Phyllis H. Dierlam | Bill & Joan Maloney | John Mason |
| Alice Jordan | Monty Nares | Dora Ramirez | George Schmidt |
| Roseanne Dreibelbis | Margaret Rossini | Dick & Terry Riley | Kristy Ishmael |
| Richard Farhquar | Dorothy M. Donahue | Bill Buckner | Brad Postelle |
| Deacon Art & Mary Carr | Mary Teresa Carr | Mary Shankle | Joe Higuera |
| Don & Dorothea Daybell | Ruth Hazel Pierson | Walter Ulloa | Bud Lewis |
| Catherine L. Quinlan | Elizabeth Holms | Fred Williamson | |
| Kathryn D. Pent | Edith Blaiser | Carole Kutler | |
| Mary Pullman | Ben Kouns | Will Skinner | |
| Joan Boyd | Bill Lakoff | Fr. Abbot Claude | |
| Agnus Boyd | Bernice, Samuel & Ehringer, OSB | | |
| Harold Thompson | Milton Silver | Fr. Luke Dougherty | |
| Bud & Blanche Ogle | Anita H. Donahue | Naomi Shelton | |

Birthdays

Martha Larkin

Needs

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Men's clothing- socks, pants & jackets | Soup, pasta sauce, peanut butter |
| Used furniture- couches | Aluminum cans for recycling |

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
April 2011					1 San Luis Rey Mission	2 St. Thomas More
Monthly Serving Team Schedule	4 St. Elizabeth Seton #1	5 St. John The Evangelist	6 Brother Benno's Auxiliary	7 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	8 St. Patrick's	9 Brother Benno Alumni
	11 North Coast Methodist	12 Friends from Vista	13 Naval Hospital	14 Oceanside Civitans	15 St. Elizabeth Seton #2	16 Girlfriend's Care
	18 Sunrise Kiwanis of Vista	19 Christ the King Lutheran	20 Grace Anglican	21 Carlsbad Rotary	22 Fallbrook Presbyterian	23 Catholic Daughters
	25 5/11 Marines	26 St. Mark's San Marcos	27 San Luis Rey Methodist	28 Pilgrim Creek	29 King of Kings Lutheran	30 Shiloh Church of God In Christ

Brother Benno's Furniture Sales

3242-B Production Ave., Oceanside (next to Center) 760-967-2742 **Open Mon. - Sat. 9 am to Noon**
 To view photos of our wonderful used furniture: go to brotherbenno.org,
 click on Thrift Store, then click on the 3 >>> above Thrift Store, scroll down to view photos.
 We welcome your saleable furniture items. Please call 760-439-1244 ext.115 for free pickup.

NEW SERVANT OF THE POOR SHARES HER SPIRITUALITY

Denise Seymour volunteered at Brother Benno's for a year, "in a search for more purpose in my life," she said. Her duties included decorating the dining room, making up holiday gift bags for guests and the residents of our various Houses, and putting together lunch bags to be delivered to migrant workers. During that time, several staff members became aware of Denise's dedication to her work and the spiritual dimension she brought to it. She was recommended to the Board as a good candidate to become a Servant of the Poor, and she accepted that responsibility last August.



Like all of our Servants, Denise takes on whatever duties are asked of her. At the present time she is working in the intake office with **Joe Casagrande**, another Servant, helping guests get the services they need. Of this job, she says, "My main focus is to be present with all I encounter with compassion and an open heart." She also helps Volunteer Coordinator **Suzy Martinek**, which brings her in contact with many of the people who want to learn about Brother Benno's and then become volunteers themselves.

Denise's background is in business management. After earning her degree, she worked for 20 years in various positions—restaurant manager, department manager in a construction business, and manager of a chiropractic office. Her interests are health and nutrition, but her main focus is her spiritual path.

continued on page 4....

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KAY!

Kay Kutler's birthday is April 17. There is no better way to honor her than to share some of **Harold's** loving words about her in his book, *Soup Soap Hugs Hope, the Story of Brother Benno's Life-Changing Soup Kitchen*.

In his chapter titled "Our Secret Weapon," Harold wrote this about Kay:

"We at Brother Benno's are fortunate to have a secret weapon that helps make up for our inability to meet all the many needs of our guests. Her name is Kay the Hugger.

"My wife Kay hugs every human being who comes into our Kitchen, no matter how they look or smell or repel. Our guests come to eat, because that's necessary for survival; but their greatest need is to be accepted and loved. When Kay greets them with a big smile and hugs them, they start to feel human again. The defensive wall they've built up around themselves starts to come down.

"Kay's gift of hospitality isn't just about being a good hostess. It goes far deeper than that. Her gift has the power to transform people. She creates a welcoming space for the stranger, a space where his sense of self-worth can be validated or healed or restored. Her openness breaks down the barriers that separate people so that the seeds of reconciliation can be planted.

"Kay's kind of hospitality is a sharing of power. She doesn't reach down to lift the stranger up, but reaches across and says: *You are my brother, you are my sister. I accept you right where you are, without any conditions.* This attitude empowers the stranger to lift himself up. True hospitality means being fully present to the stranger. The welcomer gets outside herself and puts her focus on the other person."

Ω

Kay loved to sing --
any time and
anywhere.



AUXILIARY NEWS

We will have a new fundraiser on Wednesday, April 13, from 2 to 10 p.m., at the CLAIM JUMPER in Carlsbad. A special flyer is required so that the Auxiliary can receive 15 percent of what you spend for meals and drinks. They are available from any Auxiliary member, or by emailing Alicia Sullivan at alicia.sullivan@att.net. Please pass the word around to your friends and neighbors, and bring your family for a good time and a good meal. And, the money we earn will be a big help to Brother Benno's!

Eighty people (members and non-members) attended our Membership Luncheon on February 26, and we signed up 16 new members! **Harold Kutler** was there to accept a check for \$22,000, proceeds from last year's Annual Luncheon. Each Committee Chairperson told about their events and answered questions. **Chele Ortiz** was announced as the winner of the Alaska cruise for two. **Thelma Hendrix** and her helpers did a great job putting this luncheon together.

Our Flapjack Breakfast fundraiser at Applebee's in Oceanside in March was another big success, with more than 135 hungry people enjoying a great meal. Auxiliary members volunteered as greeters, servers, and bussers. A big thanks to **Judy Harris** for taking care of this event. We hope to do it annually.

There's still time to sign up for the Alaska cruise on June 3 to 10. Contact **Pat Russell** (760-930-9377).

Next meeting is on April 27. Come early to help **Claire Carter** with the Mother's and Father's Day bags.

Ω

....continued from page 3

"At some point, I decided I wanted to find a place that fits with who I am as a person," she said. "The longer I've been at Brother Benno's, the clearer it becomes to me that I am where I need to be. I believe that people do the right thing just because it *is* the right thing. I have found a place that demonstrates that belief."

Denise says that working at Brother Benno's has humbled her and has opened her understanding to more life's experiences. "I believe there is 'Godness' in all things," she said, "and through love, we are shown the way—that is, the choices, direction, focus, and answers we need in all situations."

Ω

Information & Online donations

brotherbenno.org

Your donation enables us to do all the wonderful things we do

My enclosed tax-deductible gift is: \$ _____
(make payable to: Brother Benno Foundation)

In memory of: _____

Please send a card to:

(name) _____

(address) _____

For a special occasion (birthday, anniversary, etc.): _____

Send a card to: (name) _____

(address) _____

Or, donate online at <http://brotherbenno.org>

Soup...Soap...Hugs...Hope:

The Story of Brother Benno's Life-Changing Soup Kitchen

This book is offered as a gift to donors who contribute whatever their budget allows...The important thing... is that you have one...

Name _____

Donation \$ _____

Address _____

Number of copies _____

City, State, Zip Code _____