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 support, 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 all 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 to continued on page 2....
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 frightened me away. And even though Grace was very childlike, there were flashes of anger that spoke to me and for Grace to find some measure of stability and peace.

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.

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

Brother Benno’s Newsletter

Memorials

Brother Benno
Bob Gleason
Margaret Stephan

Pope John Paul II
Jane Pfauf
Bill Boster

Mother Teresa
Ron Alexander
Louise Foussat

Ann Sauer
Mary Peterson
Tom Hayward

Joe & Ida Friend
Frank Barnet
Richard Kurtz

Mary Nordstrom
Frank S. Dolley
Helen Lucas

Myron Eichen
Phyllis H. Dierlam
Bill & Joan Maloney

Alice Jordan
Monty Nares
Dora Ramirez

Roscianne Dreiblebis
Margaret Rossini
Dick & Terry Riley

Richard Farquhar
Dorothy M. Donahue
Bill Buckner

Deacon Art & Mary Carr
Mary Teresa Carr
Mary Shankle

Don & Dorothea Daybell
Ruth Hazel Pierson
Walter Ulloa

Catherine L. Quinlan
Elizabeth Holmes
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

Bus & Blanche Ogle
Anita H. Donahue
Naomi Shelton

P.F. Daheim
Bernie Weiler

Elizabeth Kangun
Laverner Peters

Richard Kurtz
John Maseon

Floyd & Rose
George Schmidt

Caldwell
Kristy Ishmael

Brother Benno’s Newsletter

April 2011

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.
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.

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 _______