“THIS IS WHAT WE’RE HERE FOR”

Difficult situations probably outnumber the success stories at Brother Benno’s; but when someone’s life is made better, the sad stories seem to fade into the background, at least for a while.

Diana Shields, in our intake office, had an especially good week in the middle of March. First was her encounter with a homeless man who came to the Center only once and then disappeared. “He was the most disgusting looking person we’d ever seen,” she said, “so dirty, and the soles on his shoes flopped as he walked. And the smell! I’ve never experienced anything so awful.”

She and others gave him something to eat, found some clothes and a decent pair of shoes, and gave him a donated suitcase with wheels for his few possessions, as he was obviously traveling. One volunteer even fixed the wobbly wheels on the suitcase. “Everybody pitched in,” Diana said. “It was nice to see.”

What happened next was unbelievable, according to Diana. She was standing near the man as he got ready to leave, and he suddenly reached out and embraced her. “Not just a little hug,” she said, “but a full-blown, long embrace. I wanted to pull away, the smell was so bad. But I didn’t. And the smell went away! It absolutely went away!”

The others watched the scene in amazement. After the man left, they asked Diana how she could do that? And all Diana could think was, God is reminding me why I’m here. It also made her think of Kay Kutler, who was known far and wide for hugging everybody, many who were also dirty and smelly. At one point Diana thought, If Kay could do it, so can I. When the smell went away, she felt it was a sign of some kind. Upon reflection, she wondered if God was testing her; maybe the man was “an angel in disguise.”

Diana’s second experience, also shared by many others, involved a woman who came to the Center just for a food box. She mentioned that her 12-year-old daughter was having a birthday the next day, and she wanted some food for a small gathering. Since Brother Benno’s often gets fancy cakes donated by various stores, they were able to find a beautifully decorated cake. One of the men in the Center pantry gave her a box of cookies and a bag of chips, and another man in the kitchen added a package of chicken.

Was there anything else she needed, they asked the woman? The answer came shyly. Well, her daughter had been hit by a car in the parking lot at their apartment, and she was on crutches. But the big problem was her bed. It was just a box spring, no mattress, and very uncomfortable. Voila! The Brother Benno guys found a donated sofa-bed in good condition, plus sheets and blankets.

“That woman could not stop crying,” Diana said. “She just kept thanking us and crying!” A look of joy lit Diana’s face as she remembered these two experiences. “This is what we’re here for,” she said. “This is why I love to come in every day. I know it’s where God wants me.”

Ω
EXPERIENCING THE BROTHER BENNO SCENE
by Barbara Ladwig

Artistic Benefactor. Donors have so many creative ways of giving to Brother Benno’s! I learned recently that Walter Bruning, an Oceanside resident and prolific watercolor artist, is donating all the profits from the online sales of his paintings to Brother Benno’s. I scrawled through his impressive “gallery,” and I’ll be buying several of them as gifts, as soon as I can make up my mind which ones to choose.

I met Walter on the phone years ago, when he agreed to be one of the readers for the manuscript of Harold Kutler’s book, Soup Soap Hugs Hope, the Story of Brother Benno’s Life-Changing Soup Kitchen. As a writer himself, he was able to give us many practical suggestions for improvements to the text—and now I’ve learned he has another artistic skill.

To see Walter’s artwork, go to abigbrushwithnature.com

Walter’s wife, Joanne Larato, is also a big supporter of Brother Benno’s. We met years ago when we both served on an education committee, and now I see her whenever I visit Prince of Peace Abbey, where she manages the gift shop.

More Good News. Julie Petrie in our Intake Office gave me an update on a man we featured in last month’s newsletter. He had written a letter of appreciation for all the help he received from Brother Benno’s following his release from prison, including the contact he was able to make with his sister. Julie adds:

“He has now been able to connect with his son after 14 years. . . . He is so thrilled and thanks God every day for this wonderful miracle. He came in today and said that he texted his son, and it was such an amazing grace to receive a text back that started, ‘Hi, Dad!’”

Extended Hours. Stew Morrow in our Production Avenue furniture warehouse wants everyone to know that furniture sales will now take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday through Saturday. There are lots of bargains to tempt buyers, and new items come in almost every day.

Valuable to Someone. Several important documents were found with some donated clothing. After several unsuccessful attempts to locate the owners of those papers, we are hoping one of our readers can help us. The names on the documents are Helen E. Nelson and Gayle E. Nelson, and they appear to have been drawn up in the state of Michigan. If you know either of these women, please contact Dan Boone in our Accounting Office (760-439-1244, ext. 120).

Happy Birthday! The new Brother Benno Thrift Shop has been in business for one year, and the staff and volunteers celebrated the milestone on March 15 with a huge sale. They even marked down the brand new items that had been donated by Kmart from $2 to 25 cents each. “We had the second highest sales day in (our) history, making $5,300!” said Shop Manager Michelle Hoppe. Customers were treated with ice cream cones and popcorn on the sidewalk in front of the store. Kudos to everyone connected with our fabulous Thrift Shop!

P.S. Michelle is still hoping someone will be able to donate a stackable washer and dryer and a small portable dishwasher for the Shop. (Please see the back of this newsletter for hours, address, and phone number.)

continued from page 3

She says she’s gone too far to give up now, and she is confident that justice will eventually prevail.

Those of us who live “ordinary” lives hardly ever have the privilege of meeting people who are overcoming unbelievable odds, people whose inspiring examples prove the strength and resiliency of the human spirit. Many who serve at Brother Benno’s, one of God’s vineyards, do have that extraordinary privilege.
Brother Benno’s has certain criteria for accepting women into one of their Houses. What happens, then, when a woman comes to us with an obvious need for help, but she doesn’t qualify? Giovanna Vinsconi was one of those women. She didn’t need help for substance abuse, and she wasn’t a typical homeless person. She did need a place to live, however; and she had suffered greatly by being incarcerated for more than three years for a crime she did not commit.

Gio’s arrest came as the result of her employment with a company that was found to have been involved in fraud. Even though she herself had no connection with the fraudulent actions, she found herself caught up in the mess—and was subsequently put in prison.

Because of over-crowding, there was no room for her at a minimum-security facility, so she was sent to a maximum-security prison for the first four months of an eight-year sentence. She said she lived in extreme fear the entire time because of frequent brawls among the inmates, many of whom were murderers. She also saw the results of a lack of health care—a simple infection sometimes led to the amputation of an arm or leg, and a cold might turn into pneumonia.

When she was moved to a minimum-security prison, basic conditions improved; but hers was still a life of fear and deprivation. She did, however, have access to their law library, where she spent as much time as possible, learning about and building up her case to have her conviction reversed. During that time, she said she wrote letters to everyone she could think of, who might be able to help her—including the President. Two women came to her aid: State Senator Carol Liu, and Cynthia Chandler, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Justice Now, a human rights organization working with women in prison.

Gio was released from prison in April, 2012, but she still had the wrongful conviction hanging over her head. And she had no money, and no place to live.

Her first “guardian angels” came from Serenity House in Escondido. Even though they serve women with addiction problems, they agreed to give her a place to live while she began to put her life back together. During her ten months there, Gio went to school to get a license in esthetics (skin care).

When Serenity House could no longer house her, they referred her to Jan Roberts, Brother Benno’s Manager of our Women’s Houses. Again, Gio didn’t qualify, and again the rules were relaxed so she could continue to receive help.

“Serenity House gave me the opportunity to go to school,” she said. “And Brother Benno’s took away the stress so I could move forward and put my life back together. For a year, I didn’t have to worry about a place to live, and how I’d feed myself, and how I’d have the energy to go out and find a job. I was in ‘life recovery,’ and that’s what Jan and Brittany, (Poor, former Assistant House Manager) and Mary (Robinson, Board member), gave me—my life.”

Whenever Gio mentions Brother Benno’s and the women responsible for giving her the help she desperately needed, she tears up. Because the rules were relaxed, a woman with nowhere else to turn is once again a confident and productive member of society. She has a good job, is in the process of finding a place to live, and is still working hard to have her conviction overturned.
A big thank you to all the officers and members who helped to make our New Member Drive a success. The tour went well, and our meeting was good. We presented Harold Kutler with a check from the Auxiliary to the Foundation for $26,000. Very well done to all Auxiliary members who helped in every way to make this happen. We will gain a few new members, too, from that day. Also to all the staff at the Thrift Shop, thank you for being so helpful and generous in letting this event happen. We appreciate everyone, especially Michelle Hoppe and Helen Parsons for all their help.

A thank you, too, goes to all the members who helped with our Applebee’s Fundraiser. We had fun serving a delightful breakfast to our guests—it was delicious! Every event helps the Auxiliary—can’t thank you enough.

Next event will be an outing to Prince of Peace Abbey on May 1. We’ll have more discussion at our next meeting.

The next meeting will be at the Center on April 23, starting at 1 p.m. for our social time, meeting at 1:30. Please come and enjoy some time together and hear what is new. We’ll also talk about our Annual Luncheon to be held on Saturday, November 1 – please put it on your calendar!

A healthy lifestyle is a big part of recovery, and this new service can certainly contribute to that goal.

AUXILIARY NEWS

SMOOTHIES COME TO BROTHER BENNO’S

by Dennis Pinnick

A new service is being provided to our Guests each Saturday morning by Project Raw, headed by Dr. John McGuire and Cole Liniak. These fine folks set up shop behind the dining room, where they make smoothies. Our Guests can pick up a freshly made smoothie with their meal.

Project Raw’s special blends are tasty as well as healthy; and they are now using vegetables, fruits, and nuts that are donated to the Center. Project Raw even provided blenders for the kitchen and the prep area at the Center. Blenders were also made available to one of the Men’s Recovery Houses, one of the Staff Houses, and one of the Women’s Houses as part of an effort to offer the opportunity for better nutritional choices. They have also offered to educate our Program Members and Staff on nutrition.

A healthy lifestyle is a big part of recovery, and this new service can certainly contribute to that goal.

Information & Online donations:
brotherbenno.org

Follow Brother Bennos online:
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Twitter.com/BrotherBenno

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_______________________
Memorials

Brother Benno
Pope John Paul II
Mother Teresa
Kay Kutler
Ann Sauer
Joe & Ida Friend
Mary Nordstrom
Myron Eichen
Alice Jordan
Roseanne Dreibelbis
Richard Farquhar
Deacon Art & Mary Carr
Don & Dorothea Daybell
Catherine L. Quinlan
Kathryn D. Pent
Mary Pullman
Joan Boyd
Agnus Boyd
Harold Thompson
Bud & Blanche Ogle
Bob Gleason
Jane Pfau
Ron Alexander
Mary Peterson
Frank Barnet
Frank S. Dolley
Phyllis H. Dierlam
Monty Nares
Margaret Rossini
Dorothy M. Donahue
Mary Teresa Carr
Ruth Hazel Pierson
Elizabeth Holms
Edith Blaiser
Ben Kouns
Bill Lakoff
Bernice, Samuel & Milton Silver
Anita H. Donahue
Margaret Stephan
Bill Boster
Louise Foussat
Tom Hayward
Richard Kurtz
Helen Lucas
Bill & Joan Maloney
Dora Ramirez
Dick & Terry Riley
Bill Buckner
Mary Shankle
Walter Ulloa
Fred Williamson
Carole Kutler
Will Skinner
Fr. Abbot Claude Ehringer, OSB
Fr. Luke Dougherty
Naomi Shelton
Rosemary Tucker
Ben E. Lewis
Roland Bond
Anna Correia
Geraldine Howard
Helene McGill
Andrea Boersma
Ben Osgrove
William & Vennita Flanagan
Mike Stendahl
Jack Brown
Alan Port
Tullio Giudici
Leo & Grace Hutter
Gilbert Brown
Barbara Duke
Raymond & Stella Thill
Basil & Gloria Lester
Patricia Miller
Robert Brower
Anna Sotelo
Dancy & Zeferino Nares
Rose Batis
John Hanus

Needs

Gently used furniture
Diapers
Disposable razors
Individual water bottles
Coffee...regular not instant
Bags of rice and beans
Tarps....9x12 is our usual size but appreciate all

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 2014</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>St. John The Evangelist</td>
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<td>Brother Benno’s Auxiliary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>St. Mark’s San Marcos</td>
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<td>Christ Church &amp; Zion Lutheran</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Welk Resort</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Soroptimist International</td>
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Furniture Sales at the Center
3242-B Production Ave., Oceanside 760-967-2742 Open Mon. - Sat. 9 am to 1 pm
We welcome your saleable furniture items. Please call 760-439-1244 ext.115 for free pickup.
Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation to the Brother Benno Foundation. If you are viewing this online you can donate by going to brotherbenno.org and click on Donations. This will allow you to make a secure donation using PayPal or a Credit Card.

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, nights of lodging, medical and mental health referrals, prescriptions, ID replacement, mail services, Social Security, and veterans’ issues, food packs, shelter for women and small children, men’s drug and alcohol recovery program, shelter for women in recovery, rent and utility assistance when funds are available. 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 Thrift Shop
(Helping the poor, one sale at a time)
Clothing, Household Goods, Furniture
Shop open Mon-Sat 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. -- Stop by to check out our Daily Specials!!
3955 Mission Ave. (East of Albertsons) 760-967-7505

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www.brotherbenno.org

Brother Benno’s Services:

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<th>Service Type</th>
<th>February 2014</th>
<th>Our 30th Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>12,544</td>
<td>3,540,464</td>
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<td>Nights of lodging</td>
<td>838</td>
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<td>Articles of clothing</td>
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<td>Showers</td>
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<td>Haircuts</td>
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<td>Bus passes</td>
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<td>Loads of laundry</td>
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<td>Food packs</td>
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<td>Blankets</td>
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<td>ID Vouchers</td>
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<td>HUGS</td>
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