FROM CAR TO APARTMENT, HOW BROTHER BENNO’S HELPED

“Darren” and his wife often came to Brother Benno’s for breakfast. They’re in their late 50’s and had lived in their car for almost a year. Both the front and back seats were crammed with clothing, food, personal items, medications, and their two small dogs.

They get a small Social Security check and an equally small disability check. Because Darren is a veteran, they were able to get a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher* from the County, but the waiting list is at least three months long. He has serious health issues, so their living situation was especially troublesome for them.

For lunch and dinner, the couple sometimes warmed up packaged meals in a microwave at a convenience store or tried to find a barbecue in a park with leftover coals where they could cook a burger or hot dog.

Darren said most people take it for granted that they have a bed to sleep in, a stove to cook on, and a fridge to keep their food fresh. They don’t think of these conveniences when they see a homeless person; they see only a nuisance who parks his car overnight in a neighborhood that just wants them gone.

One of our Staff members worked with Darren over a period of several weeks, discussing his particular needs and trying to figure out how to get him and his wife into an apartment. Their efforts finally paid off when two people from the Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs came to Brother Benno’s to meet with them.

Darren and his wife are now in their apartment, and Brother Benno’s has given them several pieces of furniture to complete what the couple had in storage. Just being able to get rid of their storage unit gives them more cash to work with. Making that little extra effort is what Brother Benno’s is all about.

* A Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher pays the balance of a rent payment that exceeds 30% of a renter’s monthly income. (Thanks to Alison St. John of KPBS for some of the facts in this story.)

OUR WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS!

The week of April 23 to 29 is National Volunteer Week, when volunteers are recognized for all their hard work and dedication to their organizations.

In Harold Kutler’s book, Soup Soap Hugs Hope, the Story of Brother Benno’s Life-Changing Soup Kitchen, he states: “Volunteers are the heart and soul of Brother Benno’s.” This was true in 1983 when Brother Benno’s served its first meal, and it is still true in 2017 with our four millionth meal having been served a few weeks ago.

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes and possess the desire to help others. Truck drivers, food-box packers, thank-you note writers, accountants, receptionists, grant writers, intake office workers, sandwich makers, food-line servers, Thrift Shop sorters, computer room workers, housing and rental aid volunteers, Auxiliary members, Board members, and those who fly under the radar, WE HONOR AND THANK ALL OF YOU FOR GIVING US A PRECIOUS GIFT . . . YOUR TIME!
We Remember. Long-time volunteer Harold Pirlot died recently, and he is truly missed at Brother Benno’s. He started volunteering once a month many years ago as part of a serving team with a group of friends from Pilgrim Creek Estates in Oceanside, and from there he “branched out” by becoming one of our volunteer barbers. How that happened is one of our favorite stories.

Kay Kutler, in her typically sweet arm-twisting style, chatted with Harold one day and asked him if he’d like to do some barbering. Harold’s response was that he’d never cut anybody’s hair in his life. Kay is reported as saying, “Oh, you’d do just fine, Harold!” She searched through boxes of donated items in the warehouse, and lo and behold, found an old set of barbering tools, which she gave to her new recruit.

After “practicing” on a few of our Guests, Harold told Kay the tools were too beat up and impossible to work with. Not about to give up, she went out and bought a new set of barbering items and pressed them on him again. Being the gentleman that he was, he tried once more, found out that he was pretty good at it, and that he actually enjoyed the job. Thus was born “Harold the Barber” at Brother Benno’s.

Judging from the many donations being received in Harold’s memory, he had many friends who are missing him as much as we are.

Peace Award. The Rotary Club of Carlsbad presented its 2017 Peacemaker Award to the Brother Benno Foundation in February. According to its website, “The Peacemaker Award is designed to honor members of the community who have made a significant difference in promoting tolerance, understanding, conflict resolution, and peace-making through their contributions and efforts for Peace Building.”

Board Member Richard Giroux and D., a Staff member, were at the dinner meeting to receive the award and to share their experiences and contributions with those in attendance.

Fourth Million! Early in March we reached another milestone: serving the four millionth meal to one of our Guests. Starting with 18 homeless men who were served our first meal in 1983, we have consistently reached out to those in need; and for that we are grateful to our many friends, volunteers, and supporters.

At the historic four millionth meal, one of our volunteers shared how Brother Benno’s has been a Godsend to him; and several Guests followed with their own stories. One woman remembered that when she was a child, Brother Benno used to drive through her neighborhood distributing his home-baked bread, and that now as an adult, she still occasionally needs the help we offer. Someone said, “The sharing was low-key, but the spirit was high.”

Waste Not. I always assumed that “dead” vehicles ended up in the junkyard. Not so at Brother Benno’s. Two large trucks that no longer run are now parked behind the Thrift Shop and serve as storage units. We don’t waste anything!

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LUNCHEON BRINGS TOGETHER THE BROTHER BENNO FAMILY
by Barbara Ladwig

A party at Brother Benno’s on Sunday, March 19, was like a family reunion. The invitation said it was to be a luncheon to honor our Board of Directors, and that intention was at the forefront; but there was so much more.

Included among the guests were long-time volunteers, and the entire event was hosted by a group that calls itself the Brother Benno Alumni—men and women who have successfully completed our Recovery Program. Lunch was a wonderful array of Italian dishes, finished off with a tempting selection of desserts.

Our dear Founder, Harold Kutler, was there with his son Jim. His wife Kay, who died in 2012, seemed to be there too, as her lovely voice on a CD led us in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Serenity Prayer, and her rousing version of Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah—just like it does every morning before our Guests sit down for breakfast.

In a casual moving-the-microphone-around-the-room, Board Members and other volunteers told about how they were “recruited” to become part of Brother Benno’s, often by Harold himself. Admitting to caution at first, everyone agreed that there’s just something special about being part of this seemingly dysfunctional family that accomplishes so much in spite of itself!

Program alumni spoke about a common theme—the acceptance they felt the minute they walked through the door, usually manifested by hugs from Kay; and they said that the acceptance continued, no matter how often they messed up along the way. They shared that they’ve been clean and sober for 11, 17, 20 years. Some are now on staff at Brother Benno’s; others continue to come back to volunteer. They also mentioned that it was hard for them to believe that no one—not even the Board—gets paid.* That was not part of the world they were used to, where everyone seemed to be out to get as much for themselves as possible.

As we said our good-byes, I had two thoughts: I’m so lucky to be part of this family, and I can’t wait to get back to “work”!

*(Because of IRS regulations, it is now necessary for some of our volunteers to become paid staff; but the vast majority continue to work for no pay.)*

PLEASE HELP OUR HELPERS!

Handling, sorting, and storing the hundreds of donations that come into the Center every week is sometimes a daunting task. Add to that the fact that many Staff members and volunteers are involved in the process—not always the same people every day—so keeping track and being efficient are top priorities.

We know that people sometimes prefer their donations to end up with particular recipients. Items given to the Thrift Shop will be sold, and the proceeds are then turned over to the Foundation, where they are used for the various needs of running the Center and the Houses. Items targeted for Program Men and Women are used for their day-to-day needs and often include gift cards for Walmart and Target so they can buy hygiene items and clothing such as underwear. And the third category of donations go to the working poor and homeless and can include a myriad of different items, including—but not limited to—food, new or used clothing, and hygiene items.

At a recent meeting of our Communications Group, it was suggested that we ask our donors to clearly mark their donations as follows:

**THRIFT SHOP**
**PROGRAM MEMBERS**
**POOR AND HOMELESS**

If you have no preference, no need to mark your donations at all.

continued on page 4....
Our first fundraiser was held at Applebee’s in Oceanside on March 25. So many hands working together made this a successful and fun event. We wish to thank Applebee’s for sponsoring this event, and Chairperson Judy Harris and her crew of volunteer servers. Lastly, a heartfelt thanks to all of you who supported our efforts by buying a delicious breakfast and leaving such generous tips, all of which were add to the funds raised.

Once again this year we are coordinating with the National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive on Saturday, May 13. New Auxiliary member Sue McQwoun has volunteered to be the Auxiliary’s coordinator for this service project. The food donated at the La Costa Post Office goes directly to the Brother Benno warehouse via our own trucks. It is used in food packs for the homeless, working poor, and seniors, and is food that Brother Benno’s does not have to buy.

We’re going to need many volunteers to help unload the donations from postal vehicles and place them in boxes for loading onto our trucks. More details on how you can volunteer will be posted on the Brother Benno Facebook page and also in the May newsletter. You can also send an email to Auxiliary@BrotherBenno.org requesting more information. (Please put “Stamp Out Hunger” Volunteer in the subject line.)

Claire Carter is coordinating the items needed for the Mother’s and Father’s Day Gift Bags. The bags will be assembled before the April and May Auxiliary meetings. About 50 bags are distributed at the Center the Saturday morning before Mother’s Day and another 50 the Saturday before Father’s Day. We are collecting men’s and women’s socks (any style) plus “soft-chew granola bars through the end of May. Members—please bring these items to the April and May meetings. Contact Claire Carter (949-836-0438) for more information.

The Auxiliary’s Brother Benno Breakfast Club is growing! So many members are willing to serve that we’ve added a second day. We are now serving on both the first Wednesday and the third Wednesday of the month. Thank you to Penny Sallee for coordinating the third Wednesday team.

The next Auxiliary meeting is Wednesday, April 26, in the Center Dining room. Social time and snacks are at 1 p.m. followed by the meeting at 1:30. Why don’t you check us out? We welcome all interested men and women to join us at any time.

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Information & Online donations: brotherbenno.org
Follow Brother Bennos online:
Facebook.com/BrotherBennos

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If possible, drop off your Thrift Shop donations at the Shop, and the donations for Program Members and Poor and Homeless at the Brother Benno Center. (Please see addresses and directions on back page.)

And as always, Thank You!

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Memorials

Ron Alexander
Dixie & Lou Bales
Frank Barnet
Brother Benno
Edith Blaiser
Andrea Boersma
Roland Bond
Bill Boster
Agnus & Joan Boyd
Bill Buckner
Deacon Art & Mary Carr
Mary Teresa Carr
Anna Correia
Don & Dorothea Daybell
Phyllis H. Dierlam
Frank S. Dolley
Anita H. Donahue
Dorothy M. Donahue
Fr. Luke Dougherty
Roseanne Dreibelbiss
Fr. Abbot Claude
Ehringer, OSB
Myron Eichen
Richard Farhquar
William & Vennta
Flanagan
Louise Foussat
Joe & Ida Friend
Mary Gerrity
Bob Gleason
Tom Hayward
Elizabeth Holms
Alice Jordan
Ben Kouns
Richard Kurtz
Carole Kutter
Kay Kutter
Bill & Louise Lakoff
Ben E. Lewis
Helen Lucas
Bill & Joan Maloney
Helene McGill
Michael & Monty
Nares
Mary Nordstrom
Bud & Blanche Ogle
Bud & Blanche Ogle
Ben Osgrove
Pope John Paul II
Kathryn D. Pent
Mary Peterson
Jane Pfau
Ruth Hazel Pierson
Alan Port
Mary Pullman
Catherine L. Quinan
Dora Ramirez
Dick & Terry Riley
Margaret Rossini
Ann Sauer
Mary Shankle
Naomi Shelton
Bernice, Samuel &
Milton Silver
Will Skinner
Ann Grier Smith
Mike Stendahl
Margaret Stephan
Virginia Sylwestrzak
Mother Teresa
Harold Thompson
Rosemary Tucker
Walter Ulloa
June Williams
Fred Williamson
Zeferino & Dancy
Nares
Nysewander Family
Squirrel Family
Janice Tait
David Bunnell
Theodore & Elizabeth
Hillery
Rose &Floyd Caldwell
Harold Pirlot
Mona Strunk
Christine McCoy
Merle Beckman
Bruno Acosta
Marie Atkinson
Mary Kennedy
Andrew & Horst Zuther
Gerald Becker
Opatkiewicz Family
Molly Wilbur
Peter Signori
Donald Deffenbaugh
Anastasia Dietz
Bob Strawbridge
Dick Ellis
Clay
Jack Gillen
Margaret Gregoire
Molly & John Samuelsen
Gilbert Brown
Edward Essenmacher
Rusty Walker
Norma Gilley
Daisy & W.X. Ross, Sr.
Juan Chapa
Robert Buchach
Ann Smith
Happy Birthday
Peggy Parham
In Honor Of
Julie Anderson

Needs

Gently used furniture
Sunglasses
Adult and Baby Diapers (sizes 2-3-4-5-6)
Ladies’ socks
Men’s hoodies, jackets, belts,wallets, jeans (sizes 30 - 36)
Men’s and Women’s Razors -- Gillette Mach 3 and Gillette Venus
Gift cards for Walmart and Target

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Furniture Sales at the Center
3242-B Production Ave., Oceanside 760-529-5481 ext. 200 Open Tues. - Sat. 9 am to 1 pm
We welcome your saleable furniture items. Please call 760-439-1244 ext.102 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, men and women’s drug and alcohol recovery program, 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 Tue-Sat 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. -- Stop by to check out our Daily Specials!!
3955 Mission Ave. (East of Albertsons) 760-967-7505

Brother Benno’s Services:

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