



Brother Benno's Newsletter

“Uplifting The Dignity of Those We Serve”

Volunteers Making a Difference

January 2021



A TRUCKLOAD OF LOVE

We didn't know what to expect when a truck pulled into our driveway in mid-December, but it turned out to be a huge load of donations from the good people at Ocean Hills Country Club in Oceanside. “It just made our spirits much, much brighter,” said one of our volunteers.

The truck contained more than 40 boxes of clothes, blankets, and other much needed items for our Guests, as well as nearly \$3,000 via personal checks and gift cards.

Myra and David E. initiated a neighborhood drive for donations because they wanted to “try something different,” so they decided they'd put the time and resources they'd normally spend on family celebrations and holiday parties into helping the homeless in our community. They reached out to their friends and neighbors; and within a week, a truckload of love and support was on its way to Brother Benno's!



We can't say it more clearly—they've warmed our hearts and those of our Guests who will be receiving these heartfelt gifts. We are grateful beyond measure.

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We wish everyone
good health,
close family ties,
peaceful times,
meaningful work,
loving friends,
and many blessings.

WOMEN'S HANDIWORK PROVIDES WARMTH FOR OUR GUESTS

Every December, a group of about 20 women from First Presbyterian Church in Oceanside donate to Brother Benno's a huge supply of hats and scarves that they've knit or crocheted throughout the year. According to **Greta Gilli**, a member of the group that call themselves the Mission Stitchers, during "normal" times, they get together to create these items, but this year they've had to work separately at home.

The women usually supply the yarn themselves, but if they don't have any, they can get it from a gigantic stash that was donated to the church. "It literally filled my livingroom," Greta said. "We probably have a ten-years' supply of yarn!"

Below is a picture of Greta (on the left) with Brother Benno volunteers **Kelly** and **Douglas**.



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"A beggar one day came to me and said, 'Mother Teresa, everybody gives you things for the poor. I also want to give you something. But today, I am only able to get ten pence. I want to give that to you.' I said to myself, 'If I take it, he might have to go to bed without eating. If I don't take it, I will hurt him.' So I took it. And I've never seen so much joy on anybody's face who had given his money or food as I saw on that man's face. He was happy that he too could give something. That is the joy of loving."

~ Mother Teresa

REFLECTIONS ON BLESSINGS

by Barbara Ladwig

I'm writing this four days before Christmas. Last year at this time, my husband Bob and I were celebrating our 85th birthdays and 60th wedding anniversary with our children and grandchildren. We spent four days together at a lovely vacation rental overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and we felt so blessed, with no idea what we'd be facing in just three short months.

Now I'm thinking about the blessings that still come my way—those things that in addition to my family make life so worthwhile—and being part of the larger Brother Benno family is near the top of the list.

As the articles for this issue of the newsletter came in, I realized once again that there are literally hundreds (maybe thousands!) of people who continue to reach out to others in simple but profound ways. No matter what people give of their time, talent, and treasure, it all adds up to making someone else's life a little happier or more comfortable. Volunteers and staff members at Brother Benno's continue to do their jobs with care and commitment, even though they've had to make many adjustments to the usual way of doing things.

Supporters, too, continue to be part of our outreach by sending in their checks or donating via Paypal. Frequently or occasionally, large or small, these donations make all the difference in the world regarding what we are able to accomplish. They also let us know that we who are "in the trenches" are backed up by a multitude of generous, like-minded people.

As we begin a new year, I'm sure we all hope that the turmoil of the pandemic and political unrest will gradually fade away. But I also hope we remember the goodness we've experienced, both personally and as a nation, from family members, friends, neighbors, and even strangers who took the time and energy to make a difference in other people's lives.

Harold Kutler used to say that as long as God wants Brother Benno's to exist, it will be here. And with the dedication of everyone involved in whatever way they choose, I'm confident that the future will be abundantly blessed.

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SPOTLIGHT: MEET CRAIG "PELON" MERCER

by Frank Doherty

Pelon is the Kitchen Manager at the Brother Benno Center, the man behind the scenes, the person responsible for all meals and bag lunches for our Guests. He's someone you don't hear much about; however, he's responsible for one of the most important things we do—feeding the poor.

If you ask Pelon why he's at Brother Benno's, he'll tell you, "The Lord put me here to serve the poor." That's what **Harold Kutler**, one of our founders, told Pelon when he was considering moving on in 2008. Fortunately for us, he decided to stay. He credits Harold and his wife **Kay** with teaching him by their example how to love and serve those in need. At age 66, he's still going strong.

Pelon was born in Wilmington, Delaware. His dad was in the Navy, and the family eventually moved to San Diego where Pelon grew up. He first came to Brother Benno's in 2003 as a Guest in need of help. He saw the good that was going on at the Center and volunteered to work in the kitchen. This evolved into his doing the cooking and eventually being certified by the County of San Diego in kitchen management.

Hardly anyone knows that his real first name is Craig. Someone started calling him Pelon, the Spanish word for "bald," because—according to another volunteer—that person noticed his beautiful shiny head—and the nickname stuck.

What characterizes Pelon is his ability to see people in need and make sure they are taken care of. He knows many of our Guests by name and recognizes the difficult situations they face. He's always there for them when they need some kind of help.

During normal times, Pelon is responsible for preparing a hot breakfast for more than 200 Guests five days a week and a sumptuous lunch on Saturdays, plus a hot lunch for 30 or more Program Members and volunteers. He plans the menus, orders the food, oversees the storage of incoming food, and trains volunteers who come in at 6:30 a.m. to help him. His work has become even more demanding due to COVID-19, with the preparation of take-out sandwiches and other nutritional items to be given out each morning.

Those of us who know Pelon recognize that he is one of the most compassionate and humble individuals at Brother Benno's. And his love and care go way beyond our Guests as he takes care of his 90-year-old mother as well.

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AUXILIARY NEWS

by Joyce Cerimele

Everything is quiet now with the Brother Benno Auxiliary. December is the month when we all sit back and relax from our work and start planning for the new year. January is membership new and renewal month. If you wish to join us, please contact **Doris** at Dnyman5@cox.net or 760-941-1737.

We usually have a New and Returning Membership Brunch in February; but thanks to COVID-19, not this year. Too bad this virus has not heard that visitors should be gone after three days.

Our Christmas in July gift-card fundraiser was a great success this year. We were able to raise enough money for 378 Walmart gift cards and were given an additional \$700 in actual cards. They were distributed to the children and their parents on December 13 at a "drive-by" party. Since the need is great this year, they were appreciated more than ever; and we thank all who donated.

We are continuing with our Zoom meetings; the next one will be on January 27. Join the Auxiliary before then, and you, too, can join us on Zoom. It's a lot of fun!

Again, we hope you are all staying safe, and we will meet those of you who become new members in the near future at one of our regular monthly meetings. Be well.

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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>

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 760 439 1244 ext. 101
 Changing people's lives through the 12 Steps
 of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Information & Online donations: brotherbenno.org
Follow Brother Bennos online:
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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

Ron Alexander	Bob Gleason	Mary Pullman	E. Edward Smith
Dixie & Lou Bales	Chance Hales	Catherine L. Quinlan	Family
Frank Barnet	Tom & Louise	Dora Ramirez	Dorothy Barnell
Brother Benno	Hayward	Dick & Terry Riley	Peg & Beverly
Edith Blaiser	Elizabeth Holms	Margaret Rossini	Miville
Andrea Boersma	Alice Jordan	Ann Sauer	Ron Beckman
Roland Bond	Ben Kouns	Nick Sauer	Al & Clementine
Bill Boster	Richard Kurtz	Mary Shankle	Basteri
Agnus & Joan Boyd	Carole Kutler	Naomi Shelton	Albert Manuel, Jr.
Bill Buckner	Harold & Kay Kutler	Bernice, Samuel &	Robert Buchach
Deacon Art & Mary Carr	Bill & Louise Lakoff	Milton Silver	Linnca Asplind Riley
Anna Correia	Ben E. Lewis	Will Skinner	
Don & Dorothea Daybell	Helen Lucas	Ann Grier Smith	IN HONOR OF
Phyllis H. Dierlam	Bill & Joan Maloney	Alva & Frances	Gregg Prather
Frank S. Dolley	Helene McGill	Snider	
Anita H. Donahue	Michael & Monty	Squirrell Family	
Dorothy M. Donahue	Nares	Mike Stendahl	
Fr. Luke Dougherty	Zeferino & Dancy	Margaret Stephan	
Roseanne Dreibelbis	Nares	Virginia Sylwestrzak	
Fr. Abbot Claude	Mary Nordstrom	Harold Thompson	
Ehringer, OSB	Nysewander Family	Carol & Herb	
Myron Eichen	Bud & Blanche Ogle	Thornberg	
Richard Farhquar	Ben Osgrove	Rosemary Tucker	
William & Vennita	Kathryn D. Pent	Walter Ulloa	
Flanagan	Mary Peterson	June Williams	
Louise Foussat	Jane Pfau	Fred Williamson	
Joe & Ida Friend	Ruth Hazel Pierson	Peg Reilly	
Mary Gerrity	Alan Port	Frank Beeson	

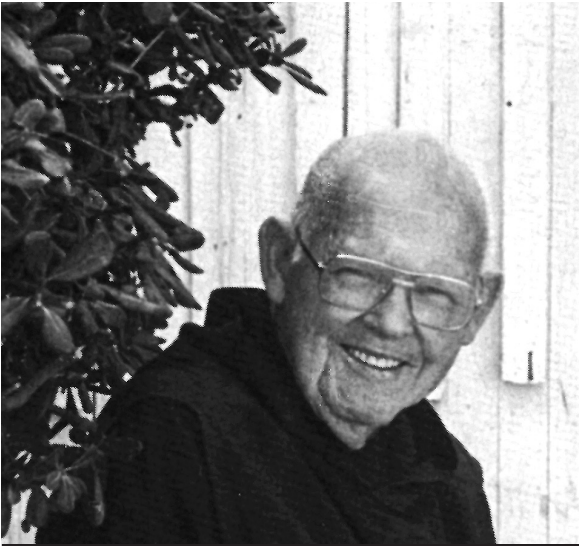
NEEDS

small bags of chips
 fruit cups
 protein bars
 crackers
 bottled water
 small juices
 Gatorade

Please consider contributing to the Brother Benno Foundation by way of your Will, Living Trust, Designated Beneficiary Account, Stocks, Life Insurance, Mutual Funds, or Real Estate. For more information, contact Suzy Martinek, 760-941-1876 or smartinek@miracosta.edu

Brother Benno Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 308, Oceanside, CA 92049

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Brother Benno's Thrift Shop

(Helping the poor, one sale at a time)

Clothing, Household Goods, Furniture

Store Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5; Donation Hours Tuesday-Friday 10-4, Saturdays 10-2

We welcome your saleable furniture items. Please call 760-967-7507 for free pick up

Stop by to check out our Daily Specials!!

3955 Mission Ave. (East of Albertsons) 760-967-7505

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 Services:

	November 2020	Our 37th Year		November 2020	Our 37th Year
Meals	9,210	4,564,878	Loads of laundry	0	28,628
Nights of lodging	825	323,665	Food packs	422	357,448
Articles of clothing	2,572	1,427,382	Blankets	167	48,941
Showers	0	271,036	Tarps	56	6,191
Haircuts	0	22,827	ID Vouchers	29	9,998
Bus passes	18	86,084	HUGS	0	1,011,244