



Brother Benno's Newsletter

Interdenominational Volunteers
Making a Difference in This World

“Uplifting The Dignity of Those We Serve”

March 2012

Our beloved Kay Kutler died on February 15, 2012, at the age of 77, after years with Parkinson's and dementia. Her funeral is February 24 at St. Mary Star of the Sea Church in Oceanside. All at Brother Benno's offer their love and support to Harold and their children—Jim, Cayley, and Kevin.

The following was written several months before Kay's death. More tributes will appear in future issues of this newsletter.

KAY, MY HERO

(anonymous)

Sometimes one person can affect another so profoundly that it is not until years later that we realize the full impact of the experience and how it has been a determining factor in changing the course of our life.



I met **Kay Kutler** at the Brother Benno Center in the fall of 1999. I still remember the first time she hugged me like it was yesterday. Everything went fuzzy around the edges, and I felt as if I was surrounded by love and a feeling of security and comfort. During that moment the world went away, and there was just Kay and I.

Since that day many things have happened. I was part of the recovery program when I met Kay that morning. Toward the end of that first journey, my son died as the result of a drug overdose. Kay and Harold's love and compassion, and their decision to send me to the Abbey on the hill for a week, saved my life. During that period I dreamed of becoming a Servant of the Poor at Brother Benno's, but I was too broken and lost to make that kind of commitment.

I remarried and moved to Colorado to start a new life. The lessons I had learned in the recovery program helped, and the memory of Kay's loving hugs were constantly with me.

After two years in Colorado I relapsed. It started with having a tooth pulled and getting a prescription pain medicine. The insidious nature

of addiction slowly crept into my life again, and eventually I lost everything that mattered to me.

I came back to Brother Benno's and asked for help a second time in 2008. Kay was there to greet me, and as soon as she hugged me, I knew it would be okay and that I was home.

During that period while I was in the program, Kay's health began to decline. I decided that I would help her in the mornings when we opened up by standing next to my little angel and giving her a gentle verbal nudge in the right direction when she lost her train of thought. I also had the rare privilege of assisting her during the twenty-fifth anniversary ceremony in the same capacity. It felt as if God had allowed me to be an honor guard for one of His favorites!

A lot was happening at the Center during this time. Harold was exhausted and needed time off. Kay broke her hip and was no longer able to be at the Center. It felt to me as if our “family” was turning into an agency. I began to feel sorry for myself and became frightened and disillusioned. I turned to drugs again for relief, and I left Brother Benno's instead of digging in and doing my part to share the joy that Kay had always given to me.

Two months later, on February 8, 2009, I was locked up for drug possession. A few days into my “vacation,” I decided that instead of leav-

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EXPERIENCING THE BROTHER BENNO SCENE

by Barbara Ladwig

Lots of Help. Southern California Edison (SCE) donated five refurbished computers recently in response to a request we put in the newsletter. **John McCaffrey**, who wears many different hats volunteering in our Computer Room, filled out an application, it was approved, and the computers are now at the Center waiting to be installed. **Debbie Knight** of SCE reminded me that her group sponsors the Auxiliary's Annual Luncheon and Back-to-School drive, provides toys for Christmas, volunteers for the Flapjack fundraiser at Applebee's, helps assemble hygiene packs and rice and beans packs, and volunteers at the National Association of Letter Carriers' food drives that benefit Brother Benno's. Whew!

Filling a Need. For the past ten years, **Frank Grana** has spearheaded a children's underwear drive for Brother Benno's at Christmas time. Most of the donors work with him in the Neighborhood Services Department at the City of Oceanside, but other City employees sometimes jump in and add to the cache. "I specify new underwear for ages three through twelve," he said, "and this past Christmas we got 668 items.

Frank started the drive after asking **Harold Kutler** what items were most needed, and Harold said, children's underwear. Apparently that's one of the things people don't think about when they donate clothing, so Frank is happy to fill the void.

More Good People! Seems we never run out of Christmas stories. This past December, two motorcycle clubs—the Messengers and the Pioneers—held a drive at Kennedy Motorcycles in Oceanside to collect socks and blankets to donate to Brother Benno's. I heard that the response was quite spectacular, thanks to a lot of giving people. We appreciate it!

A Few Reminders. If you'd like to get the newsletter via email instead of a paper copy, send your request to brotherbennos@gmail.com. If you'd prefer not receiving a thank-you card for

your donations, send a note to that effect with your next check, or leave a message for Barbara at the Center. If you'd like to donate online, go to brotherbenno.org and click on Donate Now in the upper right-hand corner.

Unusual Ministry. Brother Benno Guests who never appear at the Center continue to be well taken care of by **Heather Pine**. She took over an outreach program to people in nursing homes, many of whom seldom—if ever—have visitors. It all started with bringing them flowers and has grown into quite a ministry. One thing she provides is music, and she often "dances" with the residents, even those in wheelchairs!

At one time, Heather offered a cooking class, and now she's into crafts. She says she's hoping there are some supporters who have the following items they might like to donate: yarn, beads, string, silk flowers, or no-longer-needed jewelry. And if you're so inclined, she's always looking for purses and wallets, bags to hang on a wheelchair, sugar-free snacks, makeup, or Snuggies. Just drop off the items around the back of the Center with the bag CLEARLY MARKED FOR HEATHER PINE.

Remembering Kay. As we at Brother Benno's mourn the loss of Kay Kutler, it seems appropriate to reprint part of Harold's book, *Soup Soap Hugs Hope, The Story of Brother Benno's Life-Changing Soup Kitchen* (page 61):

"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."

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AGAINST ALL ODDS

by Barbara Ladwig

At age two, "Paul" was declared clinically dead for a minute and a half following a fire accidentally set by his drug-addicted mother. His father, also an addict, died when he was seven. By 13, he was no longer attending school; instead, he had followed his older brother as a drug user and dealer on the streets of his poor neighborhood. "We basically had no money at home," he said, "and I saw how easy it was to make a lot of money. At least we could eat."

Paul and his two siblings had a place to live, but their mother was seldom "there." Figuring out where to get her next fix was all she cared about; and the only time she insisted that the kids go to school was when the authorities threatened her because of their truancy. Fighting among his peers was an everyday thing. It seemed like they ganged up on Paul and his brother, causing them constant injury and pain.

Over the years, Paul went back and forth between using and being clean. At age 21, he got married, and they had a daughter. "It was the first time I knew love," he said of his child. They had another daughter, but the marriage ended in divorce five years later, and Paul drifted back into drugs.

When Paul's mother died of an overdose in 2007, he said he was subconsciously trying to die as well, by giving in to his drug use. He felt he had no other choice. Then in a dream, he saw his mother, and he felt it was God's way of telling him to change his life or end up like her. He managed to stay clean for a year and a half after that, but once again he succumbed. Moving around the country and going in and out of homelessness, he made half-hearted attempts to work and to quit the drugs, but he felt worthless and beaten.

In 2011, Paul landed in California, homeless and miserable. Somebody told him he could get food and a blanket at Brother Benno's. After the meal, he was directed to the back of the warehouse for the blanket. A man in a Brother Benno shirt gave it to him, and Paul asked how he had gotten his job, thinking maybe he could pick up a little money. "This isn't a job," the man said. "I'm in their recovery program," and he went on to explain the pro-

gram to Paul.

"The next thing I knew, I was in the recovery program director's office," Paul said, "and I was told I could join the program." That was more than six months ago.

"Now I see the world differently," he said, reflecting on his time at Brother Benno's. "I had never before helped anyone in my life. Words can't describe how good it feels to help another person. Before, everything was about me—what I wanted, what I needed. Self-pity. Always a taker, never a giver."

Paul said there's something he "feels" at Brother Benno's. Caring. Love. God's presence. It comes to him from everyone, but most especially from **Harold Kutler**. "He has a loving, gentle spirit. I want to be like that," Paul said. "I've found happiness here. I have a relationship with God. Now I look forward to a life of service."

He starts every day with prayer, and he prays throughout the day for strength and guidance. He said he knows life won't always be smooth, but he's no longer afraid to face whatever comes. "I'll be sad to leave here (Brother Benno's), but I'm not scared."

On February 9, Paul graduated from the recovery program. He moved to another state a few days later to rekindle a relationship with a woman he's known for many years. "She always loved me, no matter what," he said. "And now I know I'm ready to return that love."

At the brief graduation ceremony on the 9th, other program members as well as many volunteers were on hand to congratulate Paul and wish him well. An appropriate closing to the day's festivities came when someone spontaneously began clapping and singing an old Brother Benno favorite started by **Kay Kutler**, and everyone joined in: "Thank you, God, for giving us Paul; Thank you God for giving us Paul; Thank You God for giving us Paul, right where he is."

You are all my family, and I won't forget you," Paul said, as tears flowed freely all around.

AUXILIARY NEWS

by Vikki Ramey

Auxiliary members were saddened to hear of the passing of our beloved **Kay**. She truly was and will always be an inspiration to all of us. Our hearts and prayers go to **Harold** and the **Kutler family**. Her singing, and definitely her hugs, will be missed.

Fifteen prospective new members attended our Membership Drive Luncheon on February 25. Special thanks go to **Barbara Barreras** who stepped in for our injured VP **Linda Garvey** to oversee the arrangements, to **Carol White** for preparing the new members' packets, to **Carol Richards** for delivering the balloons, and to all members who assisted in other ways. Great job, Ladies! A check for \$21,000 was presented to the Brother Benno Foundation on behalf of the Auxiliary for the support of the women's shelters.

Don't forget the Flapjack Fundraiser at Applebee's in Oceanside (2146 Vista Way) on Saturday, March 17, from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10. For info and tickets, please contact **Judy Harris** (760-724-0227) or **Edith Jones** (760-529-0875).

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 28, when we will discuss fundraising events, Annual Luncheon, NALC Food Drive, and Mother's Day/Father's Day bags.

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Information & Online donations
brotherbenno.org

"...Kay My Hero, continued from page 1

ing when things got tough, I should have followed the example that Kay had constantly been—to be a provider of hope by hugging and loving people just like she had done for me. At that moment I decided I would talk to Harold about becoming a Servant of the Poor. That was on February 14, 2009—an appropriate date, in my opinion.

So now I am a Servant of the Poor. Each day, if you come down for our breakfast, you'll see me opening and closing mealtimes with a recording of Kay singing and thanking everyone for the "privilege of serving them." In between I get to tell bad jokes, mingle with our Guests, play music or sing Happy Birthday to someone. Most important, though, is that fact that I offer hugs to anyone who wants or needs one.

I am the luckiest man alive! Thank you, Kay!

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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) _____

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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 \$ _____

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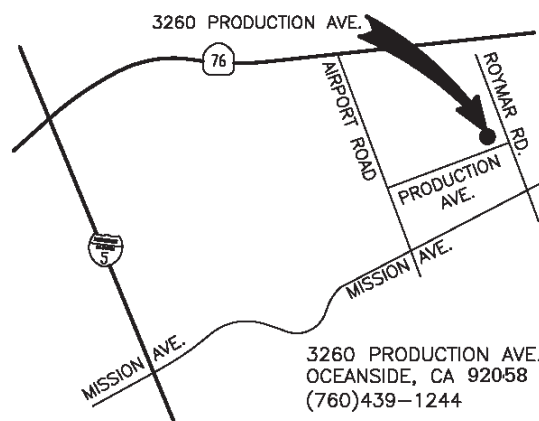
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Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation to the Brother Benno Foundation. If you are viewing this online you can donate by going to brotherbenno.org and click on Donations. This will allow you to make a secure donation 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 Services:

	January 2012	Our 28th Year		January 2012	Our 28th Year
Meals	12,786	3,210,135	Loads of laundry	23	25,981
Nights of lodging	1,143	221,673	Food packs	2,754	185,088
Articles of clothing	4,370	904,332	Blankets	141	32,582
Showers	860	163,865	Prescriptions	46	6,864
Haircuts	87	13,663	ID Vouchers	10	8,229
Bus passes	75	75,301	HUGS	1,800	819,544

Our services are the same for everyone without regard to race, religion, 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 5 p.m. -- Stop by to check out our Special of the Week Sales!!

**Brother Benno Foundation, Inc.
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