FACEBOOK IS ANOTHER OPTION

Brother Benno’s recently launched a new Facebook page that will enable us to get instant information out to anyone who is interested in knowing about some of our most current events. Our Facebook page is not intended to replace the newsletter; it’s just another way for us to appeal to volunteers, supporters, and anyone else who has an interest in what we do.

One great thing is that our Facebook page is accessible all around the world, and it’s free! Take a look if you’re so inclined, but know that the newsletter isn’t going anywhere—except to your mailbox or your email! And if you’d like to switch from paper copy to email, send us a note to brotherbennos@gmail.com.

RECYCLING IS PROFITABLE

What started as a small experiment to bring in a few extra dollars for the needs at Brother Benno’s has become an amazing recycling program that nets thousands of dollars. Over a four-month period last year, we made $4,000. That same amount has already been raised in just the first two months of this year.

Most of the money comes from aluminum cans and plastic bottles, but we are also profiting from cardboard, paper, tin, glass, and scrap metal. A dumpster for cardboard brings in $15 to $20.

For large items like appliances, scrap metal, and junk cars (which must have proof of clear title), the staff can call the recycling company to pick them up. They do the hauling; Brother Benno’s reaps the benefits.

Items can be dropped off behind the Center Monday–Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; or Saturday, 8:15 to 12:30. Someone will be available to help you unload if necessary. For more information, please call 760-439-1244, ext. 119.

PROGRAM MEMBER FINDS HEALING IN WRITING

by Barbara Ladwig

Writing is often a powerful form of therapy. It allows people to “get things out of their system” in ways that are socially acceptable, as well as physically and emotionally beneficial. Writing about one’s anger, fear, gratitude, or love is a way of channeling feelings into safe and productive avenues. And because of these benefits, it’s not surprising that many of our Program Members turn to writing as part of their recovery journey.

Fifty-one-year-old “Edward” has been writing for almost 30 years. He started while he was in prison. First he wrote poetry because he was in love, then children’s stories—not what one would expect, but the result of a need that grew out of his own difficult childhood, which included physical and mental abuse. Fourteen years ago, he sent 20 stories to the U.S. Patent Office, where they wait for him to come up with the money to get a copyright.

Since he’s been in our Recovery Program, Edward has been writing poems; and he says he writes “what God wants me to write.” His relationship with God ramped up when he faced the newly passed Three Strikes Law in 1995 and discovered that he was destined to be in prison for the rest of his life after stealing three packets of double-A batteries. His first two offenses had been more serious crimes, but the law said any third offense was the third strike. “I never prayed so hard in my life,” he said.

His court-appointed attorney took a personal interest in him, and as it turned out, a special interest in his children’s stories. “I know it was my writing that saved me,” Edward said. “My writing defines who I am inside, who I am as a person. continued on page 3....
EXPERIENCING THE BROTHER BENNO SCENE

by Barbara Ladwig

Need More Coffee? Our Servants of the Poor perform many different tasks at Brother Benno’s, some assigned, others taken on as they see a need. Diana Shields got the idea of filling a carafe with fresh coffee and walking around the dining room during the morning meal. She said the Guests have been very appreciative, and it brings her joy as well. “I’m getting to know people better,” she said. “I think it’s hard sometimes for them to come here, to admit they need help, and this special attention puts them more at ease.” Diana said she often refills the carafe three or four times on any given morning, and some of the diners have started calling her “Servant of the Coffee.”

Lucky Kids. Another group of good people have provided new undies for children, adding to the batch given at Christmas time by the employees of the Neighborhood Services Department of the City of Oceanside. This time, members of Soroptimist International Oceanside-Carlsbad collected 288 items for our youngest Guests, and they were received on March 30 by Harold Kutler, who is so appreciative of all the generosity bestowed on Brother Benno’s. We thank all the members of the club, and especially Michelle Davis, who coordinates this annual donation.

It Takes So Little. A new volunteer seems to have jumped into her job at the Center with both feet and tons of enthusiasm. Julie Petrie said she was trying to think of something to give up during Lent, when a priest suggested that maybe she could “do” something instead of give up something. That led to her coming to Brother Benno’s, taking the tour, and filling out a volunteer form. For the past six weeks, she’s been sitting at the front desk, where she answers the phone, greets Guests and visitors, and generally makes herself useful. 

“Everyone has made me feel like part of the team, like I’m home,” she said. I asked her if she’s had any particularly meaningful experiences so far, and she said she’s had lots of them. “Just the other day, a woman came in, and I could see she was having a really bad day,” Julie said. “She started telling me about all her problems, and I had no solutions for her, so I just stood up and gave her a hug. I could see that was all she needed—someone to listen and to care.”

It’s the same when she answers the phone. Sometimes Brother Benno’s is unable to provide the help people need, but we can often refer them to other agencies—and again, we can listen. “I can feel their relief over the phone,” Julie said. She told one woman she would pray for her, and she asked the woman to pray for her, too. That request seemed to resonate with the woman on the other end of the line.

From An Abundance. A check for $1,000 was recently received from St. Therese of Carmel Parish in San Diego. The money was raised by the youth group at their annual St. Joseph’s Table fundraiser, which has its roots in an Italian tradition from the Middle Ages. During a severe drought and famine in Sicily, the people turned to St. Joseph for help. Their prayers were answered with abundant rain; and in gratitude, they set up public banquet tables to feed the poor. A mother of one of the members of the youth group said that some people in the parish paid $40 for a loaf of bread when they learned that the proceeds would go to Brother Benno’s.

Thanks. Heather Pine, who coordinates Brother Benno’s outreach at Vista Village Senior Living, has asked me to thank all the people who donated items she asked for in the March newsletter. She also said she can always use more volunteers; email her at heathertpine@yahoo.com if you’re interested.

Kay Remembered. One of our volunteers, Dorothy Richardson, happened to see the following message on an internet blog on February 24 regarding the death of Kay Kutler: “I absolutely love this lady. I can still hear her singing, ‘If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands...’ I bet she is singing it for God right now. God bless you, Kay. (signed J.T.)”

Ω
And thank God (my attorney) saw who I really was on the inside and was not afraid to stand up for what he believed was right.” The attorney discovered that the second strike had never been proven; and with that information, he was able to get Edward a lesser sentence.

Edward’s present attempt at sobriety still deals with the echoes of past hurts and mistakes. “One day at a time, just one day at a time,” he says. “I find that I can give some happiness (even if only a little) to people who read my things.”

The following are two of Edward’s poems written in the past few months here at Brother Benno’s:

- **A Closer Look At Me**
  - When I look into the mirror
  - Do I like what I really see?
  - Do I really like the person
  - Who’s looking back at me?

- **Could Have Been An Angel**
  - As I left a store one day
  - A stranger asked me for spare change.
  - I knew nothing about him,
  - I didn’t even know his name.

- **A Closers Look At Me**
  - Did I remember to pray today?
  - Did I help a fellow man?
  - Am I really trying hard enough?
  - Have I done the best I can?

- **Could Have Been An Angel**
  - He seemed a little dirty,
  - Said he was down and out.
  - I wondered if he wanted liquor
  - And what this was about.

- **A Closers Look At Me**
  - Am I proud of myself for yesterday?
  - And what about today?
  - And will I be proud tomorrow?
  - It’s only me who can say.

- **Could Have Been An Angel**
  - Still, I reached into my pocket
  - And fulfilled his request.
  - I didn’t want to refuse him,
  - For this just might be a test.

- **A Closers Look At Me**
  - And when Brother Benno sees me
  - From his place up above
  - Is there a frown upon his face?
  - Or is it filled with love?

- **Could Have Been An Angel**
  - He might have been an Angel.
  - How am I to say?
  - But I felt something good inside
  - As I watched him walk away.

- **A Closers Look At Me**
  - So when you look into the mirror
  - To him have you been true?
  - And is the person smiling
  - That’s looking back at you?

- **Could Have Been An Angel**
  - And how he spent that money
  - I’ll never know to my grave.
  - You see, it really doesn’t matter.
  - The point is that I gave.

**AUXILIARY NEWS**

by Vikki Ramey

Thanks to everyone who brought in rice and beans for the Center food boxes, and for the candy for Mother’s Day bags. Thanks to Claire Carter, Karen Gallagher, Dawn Schawbe, Penny Sallee, Renee Lawson, and Elena Gonzalez for filling the bags. Special thanks to Claire Carter for preparing the items for the bags, making is easy to complete the task.

Our meeting on May 16 will be at the Prince of Peace Abbey. Many of you have expressed an interest in knowing more about Brother Benno and the Abbey, and we are delighted that Abbot Charles Wright will speak to us that day. Cost is $10, which will include lunch. Deadline for reservations is May 11. Please contact Vikki Ramey (760-803-6267) for more information.

The LaCosta Post Office has designated Brother Benno’s as the recipient of the NALC Food Drive on May 12. We need volunteers to pack boxes as the postal carriers come back from their routes. Contact Janetha Long (760-630-1093) if you can help.

“Ted” is a former Program Member, now on Staff at Brother Benno’s. He works full-time at the Center, as do all Staff members; and on his day off, he goes to Vista Village Senior Living, where he helps to provide activities for the residents.

Last September, Heather Pine—who runs the outreach program for Brother Benno’s—asked Ted if he’d like to help out. He is now an important part of a team that is doing wonders with the residents, many of whom are dealing with Alzheimer’s and other memory-related problems.

The facility ran into a problem with their Easter party, when a group that was scheduled to help was unable to do so. The Brother Benno volunteers stepped right up and provided everything that was needed, and then some.

A couple guys offered to barbecue, one man helped with security and with the giant jumping gym that had been set up for residents’ grandkids, and the rest saw to it that everyone who wanted to dance to the music of the great band had help if needed.

Ted mentioned two women in particular who seemed to be having a really good time. Ruth, (pictured) who’s 95, had never spoken or smiled in all the time he’d known her, seemed disconnected from everybody and everything, and walked “a foot a minute.” But when she heard the music, she got up, left her walker behind, and danced for what seemed like hours. Another Brother Benno volunteer said she wore him out, and he’s way younger than she is. (Way younger!)

The other woman who delighted Ted was Nellie, a 76-year-old who doesn’t look a day over 50. “She’s a big flirt,” Ted said. She went from one man to the next, asking them to dance with her. And they all did.

Ted said the only down-side of this ministry is having to watch the people degenerate. But then he added something all volunteers seem to feel: “I get much more than I give.”

Ω

Information & Online donations

brotherbenno.org
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
Dora Ramirez
Dick & Terry Riley
Peggy Higley
Frank Douglas
Kopeso
William Flanagan
Nysewander Family
Squirrel Family
Agatha Johnson
G. Preston
McCaulay
Marshall Button
Franklin Forthoffer
Pete Treadwell
Dad & Mom
Stanley LaMonte
Alice Condren
Merle Stokes
Andrea Boersma
Roger Diet
Bernie Weiler
Joseph Opatkiewicz
Chris Kefalas
Ed Raymond
Carolyn Halsey

Recyclable Items  Hygiene Items  Bulk Rice and Beans  Socks, Socks, and Socks

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<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Welk Resort</td>
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<td>Soroptimist International</td>
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Brother Benno’s Furniture Sales
3242-B Production Ave., Oceanside  (next to Center) 760-967-2742  Open Mon. - Sat. 9 am to Noon

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 Services:

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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.
P.O. Box 308, Oceanside, CA 92049