



PEOPLE WHO CARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# BROTHER BENNO'S NEWSLETTER

*Uplifting the Dignity of Those We Serve*

JULY 2025



## THE DAY I CHOSE LIFE: A Story of Recovery and Grace

BY A FOREVER GRATEFUL PROGRAM GRADUATE, SCOTT

I lay in the emergency room bed, wishing for rest that would never come, counting down the hours until my 6 a.m. discharge. Forty pounds underweight, I resembled nothing more than a skeleton draped in discolored skin. Heavy withdrawal symptoms left me shaking in the fetal position, unable to process clear thoughts or solutions.

Suicide seemed the only plausible outcome. Would I jump off a bridge? Run into oncoming traffic? Earlier that day, alcoholism had cost me everything. As a lifelong alcoholic, I was used to the metaphorical dumpster-fires I'd create, but this time I'd burned down an entire city block. My sailboat, my home in the South Bay of San Diego, and all my belongings were gone. My only possessions were the soiled boxer shorts I was brought in, an empty wallet, and a dead cell phone.

Hospital staff assured me a t-shirt, sweatpants, and slippers upon release. I pleaded for the help I desperately needed, only to be met with the same dry response: they were an emergency room, having done all they could to stabilize my vitals. My mind again shifted to suicide.

I stared at the white walls, imagining the moment I'd be forced to make this decision. I didn't want this. I imagined my aunt in Ohio receiving the phone call. My eyes came back to the crucifix on the wall, which I'd been trying to ignore.

I hadn't spoken to God in over a year. There's a terrible disconnect between an alcoholic in his cups and the loving God who wishes us to live sober, purposeful lives. If I asked for help, would he listen? Was I even worth listening to?

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JEFF EPP**

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UPDATE**

**SERVING TEAMS  
CALENDAR**

**and more!**



[www.brotherbenno.org](http://www.brotherbenno.org)

## SPOTLIGHT ON JEFF EPP

BY ELIAS VALAZQUEZ, INFORMATION DIRECTOR/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The Brother Benno Foundation is proud to spotlight the dedicated service of **Jeff Epp**, a valued member of our Board of Directors—and, beginning this month, our new Board Chair. Jeff has served on the board for nearly a year, but his commitment to our mission began long before that.

As a volunteer, Jeff generously offered his time and legal expertise to support the Foundation behind the scenes, helping us navigate complex matters with clarity and care.



With over 35 years of public service, including leadership roles as both City Attorney and City Manager for the City of Escondido, Jeff brings deep knowledge of local government, legal strategy, and community-based solutions. His thoughtful approach and

unwavering dedication to the public good have made a lasting impact across North County San Diego.

Now, as he steps into the role of Board Chair, Jeff continues to play a key role in guiding our vision and strengthening the programs that serve our most vulnerable neighbors. His leadership helps ensure that Brother Benno continues to provide food, shelter, recovery support, and hope to those who need it most.

We are deeply grateful for Jeff's ongoing service and for all who stand with us—your generosity and involvement make our work possible. Together, we're building pathways to stability, dignity, and renewed possibility.

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This resource is and has been a life saver. Thank you all for your service. I have had breakfast twice here, been given lunch two times, and twice a ticket to LA when I needed a hand. I offered my service but was declined. Good for them that they have plenty of help!

John McAllister (Review posted on our Google Business page)

*"I am a client of Brother Benno's for many years. They are God sent. I lost my whole family. I was homeless for 7 years, been in many shelters and programs but because of the caring staff, too many names of volunteers, just wanted to say thank you and God Bless."*

M.E. Lopez, Guest  
Brother Benno Center



**SATURDAY  
JULY 5 & 19  
9:00 AM**

*No reservation  
required*

*"The personal satisfaction I receive from seeing firsthand what Brother Benno's does for the homeless makes it all worthwhile."*

~  
John Jarvie

## Brother Benno Center

**Monday - Friday**  
6:30 AM – 11:00 AM

**Saturdays**  
Brunch  
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM  
Warehouse  
9:00 AM - 11:30 AM

**Closed**  
Sundays  
New Year's Day  
Memorial Day  
Independence Day  
Labor Day



## Board of Directors

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

**Jeff Epp**  
*Chairperson*

**Joe McDevitt**  
*Vice Chairperson*

**Gregg Prather**  
*Secretary*

**Peter Joyce**  
*Treasurer*

### BOARD MEMBERS

**Jeff Bizzack**  
**Father Charles Wright**  
**O.S.B.**

### HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

**Dan Boone**  
**Dr. Patrick Gilligan**  
**Helen Parsons**

## DONOR'S CORNER

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Donors of Brother Benno's,

As you know, we have been going through steps to initiate and execute a Capital Campaign to raise five million dollars. The main purpose of the campaign is the renovation of the Minnesota house.

If you are not familiar, that is where **Harold** and **Kay** started the "soup kitchen" element of Brother Benno's. In later years, it was used as housing by our program graduates as a "sober living" type environment.

Other projects in the campaign are things like a renovation of the Center's showers. So where are we?

Right now, we are putting together a volunteer Campaign committee. The Campaign committee will be responsible for the actual work to raise the five million.

One of the projects that the team remains excited about is the Indoor Market. It is almost complete, but we've had a shipping delay for three of the refrigeration units. We probably won't receive them until late July or early August. Once they come in, we will be ready to

open up the market.

While there has been a discussion about an official ribbon cutting, no date has been set. We will keep you posted, and we hope you all can come. I think when you see it, you will be impressed.

If you have not been to the Thrift Store lately, I would invite you to check it out. There have been numerous improvements over the past months. It looks a lot better, it is more organized, and we have had a lot of compliments about the changes.

One of the ones that I think is most impressive is that the store is now self-sustaining, meaning we don't have to subsidize it anymore. And we have maintained the same prices for our guests for over the last ten years.

Finally, let me close once again with one of the great truths of our organization, we couldn't do it without you, so,

thank you and -

God bless you all,

Mac



## CAUGHT IN THE ACT! Community Partners, Supporters & Volunteers Making a Difference



Service with a smile! We caught volunteer **Roger** helping to distribute food to those in need.

Lending a hand wherever needed, his positive energy inspires those around him. **Thank you Roger!**

Are you thinking about volunteering? Take a Tour and see what we're all about. No reservations necessary.

Brother Benno's now has its very own flag thanks to staff member **Don's** surprise contribution!

We are so proud to wave this flag alongside Old Glory.

Keep an eye out for it the next time you visit the Center.



We deeply appreciate the support of our community partners, volunteers, and donors. Sadly, we only manage to document a small portion of these acts of kindness. If you have a photo or story you'd like to share, please send it to us at [bbnewsletter@brotherbenno.org](mailto:bbnewsletter@brotherbenno.org). We'd be delighted to feature your story!

## OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Paul 'Mac' McNamara**

*Executive Director*

**DinaMarie Ahee**

*Deputy Executive Director*

**Kathleen Diehlmann**

*Development Director*

**Darryl Harris**

*Outreach Services*

*Director*

**Marina Pozdnyakova**

*Clothing Services*

*Director*

**Rob Sanchez**

*Operations Director*

**Jim Shlemmer**

*Recovery Director*

**Elias Velazquez**

*Information Director*

*Volunteer Coordinator*

**Craig Yates**

*Accounting Director*

## FOR CONTACT INFORMATION

[visit our website](#)



*“Thank God for Brother Benno’s. They saved my life with all the services and my son went into the rehab, graduated and now is sober.”*

*The recovery program helped my son get his family back and life back on track.”*

CORA R.



*“Being imprisoned by addiction is a living hell. By interacting with the men and women in our recovery program, we become part of the key that will open the gate to their freedom.”*

HAROLD KUTLER

Brother Benno  
Foundation  
Recovery Program

(760) 439-1244 ext.101  
[recovery@brotherbenno.org](mailto:recovery@brotherbenno.org)

Changing people’s lives  
through the  
12 Steps of  
Alcoholics Anonymous

**... continued from page 1**

These questions brought fear, but I knew I had to try, given my only other alternative.

“God, PLEASE help me. I don’t want to die. I don’t know what else to do or where to go. Please guide me. I need your HELP, PLEASE HELP ME GOD...please. Show me what to do next.”

God’s grace is unfathomable. Leaving the hospital, my mind was so jumbled I could barely cross the street, let alone navigate a familiar neighborhood. Through God’s direction, and with help from his children placed in my path, I secured a bed in a ten-day alcohol detox program for the indigent.

Recovering alcoholics volunteering through this program counseled me toward further treatment. They all repeated the same advice: “You need to go to Brother Benno’s.” Like a mantra, I became convinced God was directing me through their words.

When able, I called Brother Benno’s. “Hello, my name is Scott, I am an alcoholic...and I need your help.”

That phone call saved my life. I have absolute certainty in this statement. During the six-month alcohol and drug

support program, I completed the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, established conscious contact with a loving God, learned to be of service, and built a meaningful support group with program members and staff.

As a lover of words, I confess I lack the ability to completely describe what separates Brother Benno’s from any other help I could have received...other than it must just be “A God thing.”

Upon graduation, I was graciously offered residence in their Graduate Transitional Housing program where I currently reside. I spend my days happily, gainfully employed, with strong ties in the local A.A. community. I also have the privilege of working with another alcoholic, guiding them through the same twelve steps. I am truly blessed with a sober and purposeful life today.

As of July 13th, 2025, I will celebrate my one-year anniversary of sobriety—the longest in my entire adult life. In my free time, I can be seen riding my e-bike along the coastal strand, enjoying my second chance at life. There I am in gratitude. Gratitude that God answered my prayers, and gratitude that Brother Benno’s answered their phone.       Ω

# REGISTRATION AND SPONSORSHIP UNDERWAY FOR ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT AT GOAT HILL

BY CHUY REYNA AND AMY SELICH, GOLF TOURNAMENT CO-CHAIRS

Golf spots and sponsorships for the 7th Annual Brother Benno’s Charity Golf Tournament on **Tuesday, September 9, 2025**, at Goat Hill Park are filling up. Don’t miss your chance to be part of an exceptional event at [brotherbenno.org/golf](http://brotherbenno.org/golf).

This year’s auctions include many fun items and bespoke experiences, including **Kelly Slater’s Wave Co. “Night and**

**Day” Surf Ranch experience, wave runners, Alfa Murph electric bike**, and many other curated selections, making it more than a day of golf.

**Golf with the G.O.A.T.**, 11-time world champion surfer **Kelly Slater** who is returning to golf and support the tournament. **C3Bank, Outerknown,**

*continued on page 7 ...*



Thank you **La Costa Valley Volunteers Serving Team!**

## ♥♥♥ JULY SERVING TEAMS ♥♥♥

Thank you serving teams! The gifts of your time and compassionate service are received with heartfelt thanks.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1 St. John The Evangelist	2 Stephanie’s Team	3 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	4 San Luis Rey Mission	5 St. Thomas More
7 St. Elizabeth Seton #1	8 Riverview Church	9 Carlsbad Hi-Noon Rotary	10 <b>OPEN</b>	11 St. Patrick’s	12 San Rafael Parish
14 North Coast Methodist	15 <b>OPEN</b>	16 Friends of Brother Benno	17 Ernest Packaging	18 St. Elizabeth Seton #2	19 Girlfriend’s Care
21 Sunrise Kiwanis of Vista	22 Rotary Club of Vista	23 San Luis Rey Methodist	24 Signal	25 Oceanside Sanctuary	26 La Costa Valley Volunteers
28 <b>OPEN</b>	29 Bother Benno’s Volunteers and Staff	30 <b>OPEN</b>	31 <b>OPEN</b>		

# THIS MONTH'S URGENT NEEDS

**MEN'S UNDERWEAR**  
small and medium

**WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR**  
small and medium

**SOCKS**



Kindly deliver your donations to the Thrift Shop

**MONDAY - FRIDAY**  
**10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**SATURDAY**  
**10:00 AM - NOON**

**VIEW our Donation Guide**





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

Non-Profit Organization  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
 Oceanside, California  
**PERMIT NO. 166**



*Harold & Kay Kutler - Pictured, Brother Benno*

**BROTHER BENNO THRIFT SHOP**

*"Helping the poor, one sale at a time"*

**3955 Mission Avenue**  
**Oceanside, CA 92058**

(Mission between Douglas and Rancho Del Oro)

**OPEN EVERY DAY!**

**Monday - Saturday**

10:00 AM – 8:00 PM

**Sunday**

10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

**DONATE**

**Monday - Friday**

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**Saturday**

10:00 AM – noon

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

Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax deductible donation to The Brother Benno Foundation or donate on-line under 'How to Help' at [brotherbenno.org](http://brotherbenno.org). Use your preferred service - Apple Pay, Google Pay, Venmo, PayPal, credit card or bank transfer. **Please note the Brother Benno Foundation's mailing address:**

**The Brother Benno Foundation, P.O. Box 308, Oceanside, CA 92049-0308**



**By the numbers: Your gifts are meeting needs**

	<b>MAY 2025</b>	<b>OUR 41st YEAR</b>		<b>MAY 2025</b>	<b>OUR 41st YEAR</b>
Meals	7,934	5,119,091	Blankets	142	55,966
Market Visits	4,464	32,705	Tarps	108	10,239
Clothing	3,965	1,607,404	ID Vouchers	38	11,473
Showers	329	295,880	Lbs. of Food Rescued	137,065	6,492,225
Bus Passes	261	93,749	HUGS	1,000	1,041,244