



PEOPLE WHO CARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BROTHER BENNO'S NEWSLETTER

Uplifting the Dignity of Those We Serve

AUGUST 2025



CELEBRATING 35 YEARS



BROTHER BENNO'S THRIFT SHOP TRANSFORMS SHOPPING INTO HOPE

BY MARINA POZDNYAKOVA, Clothing Services Director

Since its founding in 1990, Brother Benno's Thrift Shop has profoundly impacted North County, supporting homeless neighbors, low-income families, and seniors. This year marks 35 years since our doors first opened, growing into a vital part of the Foundation's mission.

What began as a modest 400-square-foot storefront has grown into a thriving, 11,000-square-foot retail space—a powerful engine of hope.

The Thrift Shop opened October 2, 1990, thanks to the vision of **Rosemary Tucker** and **Louise Western** from the Ocean Hills Country Club's Service Club. Driven to serve, they joined forces to directly benefit Brother Benno's mission, with fellow member **Betsy Allen** helping set up the shop.

In just three years, it grew enough to hire three full-time employees, including longtime volunteer **Mary Lou Casperson** as its first manager.

As community support grew, so did the need for space. In August 2011, a donation truck helped handle increasing volume. By March 2013, the shop moved to its current 10,965-square-foot location, expanding to include furniture, kitchenware, books, and clothing.

In Winter 2024, the Thrift Shop transformed significantly. The donations sorting area moved to the warehouse, opening an expanded retail room for children's items, toys, books, and personal care. Operating hours extended to seven days a week, allowing working families better access. This paid

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CELEBRATING OUR SHINING STARS

DONOR'S CORNER

HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY!

EXPRESS YOURSELF

WIN BIG FOR THOSE IN NEED

SERVING TEAMS CALENDAR

and more!



www.brotherbenno.org

CELEBRATING OUR SHINING STARS: Brother Benno's 2024 Volunteer Awards!

BY SUSAN SOMERS, FM Marketing LLC

This year, we had the honor of recognizing some truly outstanding individuals who go above and beyond. These awards are our way of saying a huge "thank you" to those who've poured their hearts into serving our North County neighbors in need. Grab a cup of tea and let's meet our wonderful award recipients!

Miro'Connell Award:

Carmelina Reyes

The Miro'Connell Award celebrates sustained dedication over many years, and this year, it's our pleasure to honor Dr. Carmelina Reyes. Carmelina has been a six-year volunteer in our intake and essential services, bringing her incredible leadership and organizational skills from her retired teaching career right here to Brother Benno's. She's always there, helping our guests sign up for services and making sure folks get essential items like backpacks and diapers. What a gem!

Barbara Ladwig Award: Carmen Spurling

Our Barbara Ladwig Award is like our "rookie of the year" award for new volunteers who make a big splash right away.

This year, that honor goes to Carmen Spurling! Carmen volunteers with us through the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, an amazing organization that helps folks, often 50 and up, find ways to serve. With her extensive high-level experience in government, Carmen has been an absolute asset to our accounting department. We're so lucky to have her.

Halo Award: Mae Signori

The Halo Award recognizes our longest-serving volunteer, and we are absolutely thrilled to present it once again to the one and only Mae Signori! Mae is 97 years young and has been volunteering since 1983! Can you believe it? She even knew Brother Benno before the soup kitchen even started. Mae now dedicates her time at the Brother Benno's Thrift Shop, and her commitment is truly inspiring. She's a living legend!

Golden Tag Award: Steven Bondafini

This year, we introduced a brand new award, the Golden Tag Award, to recognize the volunteer who makes the greatest impact at our thrift shop. And the very first recipient is

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"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
AUGUST
2 & 16
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

The feedback I've received is that a lot of our Brother Benno family like the updates on our ongoing projects. So, I will continue updating everyone in the next few issues.

First, I would like to say that **Father Charles's** 90th birthday party was a big success and a lot of fun. Thanks to all of you who had the opportunity to attend and a special thanks to the staff and volunteers who helped put it on. He is a very special individual who embodies the spirit of Brother Benno's and inspires us all.

Well, as you know we have a lot of irons in the fire. The biggest one is the **indoor market**. Unfortunately, we had another delay in terms of the center aisle refrigerators/freezers, so we are going with Plan B.

We expect to have the official opening this **September 11th**.

We will open sooner than that, however, in order to refine our processes since the market will change somewhat how we do business.

The **clothing shop**, which is right next to it, is now back open. I'm pleased to report we've had very positive feed-

back.

Our **Accounting** and **IT offices** have moved from our rented space around the corner back to the Center. It is a little tight, but we are saving rent money.

We are also creating some office spaces on the second deck which previously had been used for storage. That will take a few months to complete. All of these moves have helped improve our efficiency.

The **Capital Campaign** continues to progress. A committee was formed, and it is still seeking members, in case you are interested in applying. We are starting two of the projects listed in the campaign.

One is putting **solar and batteries** on our houses used by Recovery. Two, is improving the **HVAC system** at the Center.

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



VOLUNTEER, CHAPLAIN, STORY TELLER, & LONGEST SERVING BOARD MEMBER - Happy 90th Birthday Father Charles Wright!



Oceanside Mayor Esther Sanchez with Father Charles Wright

It was an honor to host a birthday celebration for **Father Charles Wright** last month. The celebration was filled with love, laughs, and delicious food and refreshments provided by Freida's Taco.

Community leaders including **Oceanside Mayor Esther Sanchez**, **Senator Catherine Blakespear**, **Assemblywoman Laurie Davies**, and **Oceanside City Councilmember Eric Joyce** presented Father Charles with proclamations recognizing his dedication to acts of service.

“Father Charles has been the Foundation’s spiritual compass since its inception,” said Brother Bennos Executive Director **Paul “Mac” McNamara**. “His dedication, kindness, and genuine caring for his fellow human beings never fails to inspire. In the first few minutes after meeting him, one knows they are in the presence of someone special. One can only hope that he will be with us for another 90 years.”

Thank you, Elias and Susan for help with the details for this news piece.



OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Paul ‘Mac’
McNamara**

Executive Director

DinaMarie Ahee

Deputy Executive Director

Kathleen Diehlmann

Development Director

Darryl Harris

*Supportive 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

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

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off: by fiscal year-end, the shop welcomed 47,862 customers and experienced a 40% increase in sales.

Spring 2025 brought remarkable improvements, transforming our front shopping area into a "Voucher Room." Individuals and families in need can use shopping vouchers provided by our Supportive Services Team for essentials – from job interview clothes to household items. Last fiscal year alone, vouchers provided over \$17,700 in value! Your donations made this possible!

Our success hinges on incredible staff and dedicated volunteers who give their time and hearts. We especially recognize:

- Volunteer of the Year: **Steve Bonfadini** – for his work staging the SHOP and pricing boutique clothing and art
- **Sue Broyer** – for her

countless hours running the kids' department

- **Blake Kern** – our trusted "book pro"
- And many others, including **Katherine Woods, Ruth Morita, Sandra Comouche, Sandy Holtz, Theresa Byrne, Dorine Meade, Ruthie Whittington, Ann and Tom Davis, Ysela Sharp, Nita Rodriguez, and Eileen Cignako.**

Thank you for all that you do for our customers, our mission, and for the Thrift Shop!

We are filled with gratitude for our donors, volunteers, shoppers, and the North County community. Your donations don't just fill shelves – they change lives. Every item sold or shared represents a step toward stability, dignity, and hope.

Thank you for believing in our mission. We couldn't do what we do without you! Ω

EXPRESS YOURSELF!



Are you a donor, a volunteer, a former auxiliary member, a newsletter reader, or a FOBB (friend of Brother Benno's)? No matter who you are, the Brother Benno Foundation wants to hear from YOU! Please take a moment to complete our brief [online survey](#) today.

Questions? Contact Kathleen Diehlmann at kathleen.diehlmann@brotherbenno.org or (760) 888-7986 (mobile).

WIN BIG FOR THOSE IN NEED (and YOU too!)

BY DINAMARIE AHEE, Deputy Executive Director

Back by popular demand, our Golf Tournament Online Silent Auction opens to the public on **Friday, September 5th** and will end at the close of the Tournament, Tuesday, September 9th.

Generously donated by local and regional businesses that care about the work you help us do, our Silent Auction offerings include many phenomenal items, such as, surfboards, golf gear, exquisite restaurants,

celebrity memorabilia, resort vacations, and elite gift baskets.

You can take a peek of this year's auction items and place your bids any time from September 5th to September 9th by visiting brotherbenno.org/golf. Because this is both online and open at the event, bidders do not have to be present to win an item.

The Silent Auction is a large

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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



Thank you *Signal Serving Team!*

♥♥♥ AUGUST 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 San Luis Rey Mission	2 St. Thomas More
4 St. Elizabeth Seton #1	5 St. John The Evangelist	6 Stephanie's Team	7 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	8 St. Patrick's	9 Lifegroup from North Coast Church
11 North Coast Methodist	12 Riverview Church	13 Carlsbad Hi-Noon Rotary	14 OPEN	15 St. Elizabeth Seton #2	16 Girlfriend's Care
18 Sunrise Kiwanis of Vista	19 OPEN	20 Friends of Brother Benno	21 Ernest Packaging	22 Oceanside Sanctuary	23 La Costa Valley Volunteers
25 OPEN	26 Rotary Club of Vista	27 San Luis Rey Methodist	28 Signal	29 King of Kings	30 Nativity Men's Group

MEMORIALS



August's Memorials

Joanne Kellett
Kenneth LeVar Woods Sr

*The Perpetual Memorials
list can be viewed here*

<https://tinyurl.com/BBFMemorials>

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Steven Bondafini! Steven was a consistent volunteer at the shop, and when he needed to take a break for a serious health matter, we certainly missed him. So, when our thrift shop expanded to seven days a week with extended evening hours, we needed some reinforcements, and Steven stepped right back in! His dedication is truly admirable.

Volunteers are the backbone of Brother Benno's, and we are endlessly grateful for their tireless efforts. If you're feeling inspired, we're always looking for more wonderful people to join our family! Start with one of our tours or reach out to us at volunteers@brotherbenno.org.



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part of Brother Benno's biggest biggest fundraiser.

Bidding generously and often ensures positive change in North County. Your participation means you will be making a difference in the lives of the many people who need our help.

For more information, visit brotherbenno.org/golf.



Silent Auction
Bidding Opens
September 5th!

**unique experiences
golf & travel resorts
surf & golf equipment
celebrity memorabilia
VIP baskets
& MORE!**

All proceeds benefit Brother Benno's

"I have mentioned your organization several times in my change process. It's the organization like you guys that make people with doubts about society caring about us possible. I thank you for your assistance and from my family to your organization god bless your heart."

Richard B. (Scholarship Recipient)

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. 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

	JUNE 2025	OUR 41st YEAR		JUNE 2025	OUR 41st YEAR
Meals	9,938	5,129,029	Blankets	122	56,088
Market Visits	3,670	36,375	Tarps	82	10,321
Clothing	4,237	1,611,641	ID Vouchers	32	11,505
Showers	317	296,197	Lbs. of Food Rescued	181,903	6,674,128
Bus Passes	260	94,009	HUGS	1,000	1,042,244