



PEOPLE WHO CARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# BROTHER BENNO'S NEWSLETTER

*Uplifting the Dignity of Those We Serve*

NOVEMBER 2025



## RETIRED COLONEL DELIVERS FOOD FOR MARINE FAMILIES

At Brother Benno's, we know that meeting community needs requires dedication, and no one embodies this better than **Ed Szymczak**.

Ed, who recently celebrated his 85th birthday, stepped up in a vital way: using his retired military credentials to drive the



Brother Benno's van, fully loaded with food, onto **Camp Pendleton** for the YMCA's Food Pantry. Brother Benno's support ensures that Marine families, who often face unique challenges have access to essential, quickly distributed aid.

The delivery was met with enthusiasm by the YMCA's Director of Service, **Cassandra Wiley** and YMCA Director of Community Outreach, **T. Berenice Dorantes**,

who confirmed that the food is immediately distributed to families of Marines. Ed's efforts facilitate this crucial partnership.

Ed's willingness to serve is rooted in a lifetime of dedication. He is a retired Air Force Colonel, having served 24 years before retiring in 1987. For the past fifteen years, he has been a consistent presence at Brother Benno's, volunteering as a weekend driver for grocery pickups and serving the poor, one of the teams from St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church.

His service to military families extends beyond food delivery; he is a long-time member of the Knights of Columbus, whose group

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### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

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TARA MCGRATH  
TO BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

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CITA

FULL CIRCLE FOR  
FORMER GUEST

MAKE HOLIDAY  
MAGIC HAPPEN

SERVING TEAMS  
CALENDAR

*and more!*



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

## BROTHER BENNO'S WELCOMES TARA MCGRATH TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We're excited to share some fantastic news: **Tara McGrath** has joined Brother Benno's board of directors, and we couldn't be more thrilled to have her.

What makes Tara such a perfect fit for our mission? Well, her heart has been with Brother Benno's for a long time. Back in 2007, she rolled up her sleeves and started volunteering right here in our clothing room - the same place many of you have generously given your time over the years.

"Tara has a deep sense of compassion and service," says Jeffrey Epp, our board president. "We're honored to have someone with her experience and years of dedication join us."

Tara brings remarkable experience to our organization. She recently served as the U.S. attorney for Southern California, where she oversaw a team of more than 330 people. Before that, she spent over a decade as a federal prosecutor in San Diego and Washington, D.C., working on everything from fraud cases to helping people get back on their feet through treatment programs instead of jail time.



She's also a proud U.S. Marine Corps veteran who served our country both in uniform and as a legal advisor to military commanders across the Pacific region.

But what really matters to us is Tara's commitment to service. Beyond her work with Brother Benno's, her experience includes serving on nonprofit boards, including the Salvation Army in Virginia and the Coastal Conservation League. She understands what it means to roll up your sleeves and help your neighbors - because she's been doing it for years.

Tara earned her law degree from the University of Michigan and has received numerous awards for her public service. However, her most important qualification is the one that brought her to our clothing room all those years ago: a genuine desire to help people in need. We're grateful to have her guidance as we continue serving North County's homeless and working poor.

You can read more about her in our [press release](#).

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*"Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies" ~ Mother Teresa*

*"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  
NOVEMBER  
1 & 15  
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**  
**Tara McGrath**  
**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 a quick construction update, the offices on the second floor are moving along albeit slowly. One can see the improvements and so the closer the offices come to becoming a finished office the faster we all want the work to be completed.

While this work is going on, we continue to make minor improvements to the center which improve the experience of our guests. If you can stop by and check out the changes.

On the program side of the house, here are a couple of updates on the things we are looking into.

Women's Recovery – looking to restart this program as part of the capital campaign but also working with the SD county farm bureau to use a farm for housing and possibly tapping into the healing power of agriculture.

Mental Health – we are also looking into taking a bigger step in the area of mental health. We know that mental health issues can be obstacles to recovery and self-sufficiency. Something as simple as fear can be a major hurdle.

As these programs develop, I will keep everyone up to date.

On the fun side, we are getting into the Fall holiday spirit with the dining facility decorated for Halloween which will morph into Thanksgiving and finally Christmas. Our guests had big smiles when they walked in on the first day. We have some creative decorators on the team.

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



Donate Online or via check and we'll purchase gift cards in your name  
Our goal is to collect 400 Walmart gift cards this year & we're counting on you!

CUT AND MAIL WITH YOUR GIFT CARDS or CHECK

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing \_\_\_\_\_ Gift Cards @ \$25.00 each

Please purchase Gift Cards in my name. Donation amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check No. \_\_\_\_\_

SEND Gift cards or check with [this FORM](#) to: The Brother Benno Foundation, PO Box 308, Oceanside, CA 92049 -- ONLINE: <https://tinyurl.com/BBFChristmasGiftCards>

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



Not only did we catch a team from **Ernest Packaging** serving breakfast, their team donated two pallets of new, warm and fuzzy towels. Our Guests are really going to enjoy these when they shower. Thank you! You bless us (and our Guests) with your consistent and compassionate support.

## IN THE NEWS

The launching of the Indoor Market received much well-deserved attention from local print and broadcast news. You were key to making this happen. To read or watch to learn more, links to all are on Brother Benno's Media page - <https://brotherbenno.org/news-and-events/media/> We especially appreciated the Guest comments and think you will too.



Photo - John Gastaldo / For The San Diego Union-Tribune

**The San Diego Union-Tribune**



Photo - Samantha Nelson, The Coast News

**THE COAST NEWS GROUP**



ABC 10 NEWS  
NEW MARKET FOR HOMELESS & THOSE STRUGGLING  
CCL/AMC

**ABC 10 News**



NEW MARKET BRINGS FREE FOOD & DIGNITY

**NBC 7 News**



EXANDER NGUYEN  
NEW MARKET BRINGS FREE FOOD & DIGNITY

**KPBS**

## OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Paul 'Mac' McNamara**

*Executive Director*

**DinaMarie Ahee**

*Deputy Executive Director*

**Kathleen Diehlmann**

*Development Director*

**Darryl Harris**

*Supportive Services Director*

**Emily Hasting**

*Grants Director  
Food Recovery and  
Redistribution 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](#)



*At The Brother Benno Foundation, we respect everyone who comes to us for help – and many are working toward a fresh start in life. So while their stories are true, guest names and images may have been changed to protect their privacy. Thank you for understanding.*



*“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**

## A FULL CIRCLE MOMENT FOR A FORMER GUEST

BY KATHLEEN DIEHLMANN, Director of Development

At Brother Benno’s largest fundraiser of the year in September, a stylishly dressed woman in Brother Benno’s blue (with matching glasses) introduced herself.

**Alexandria** was a tournament hole sponsor.

Her generous contribution to Brother Benno’s 7th Annual Charity Golf Tournament was made in memory of her mother, **Victoria Radcliff**.

One of the people Alexandria ran into at the tournament was **Dennis Pinnick**, Development Specialist at the Brother Benno Foundation. It turns out he was a friendly face from her past.

“I think it was you and the CEO [founder, **Harold Kutler**] who actually helped me and my mother get into temporary housing,” she told Dennis, recalling that the first time they met was 11 years ago. “We’ve

always given what we can since we got stabilized.”

As she hugged Dennis, she thanked him and Brother Benno’s for helping her mother and her.

Today, Alexandria works as a Certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with her sights set on affordable housing development right here in North County. It’s inspiring that her professional path now aligns with the very need she once

experienced firsthand.

“Oceanside is home,” Alexandria proudly declared, and her words capture exactly what makes our community so special.

When we support each other through difficult times, we create ripples of positive change that last for generations.

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**Alexandria Radcliff with Kelly Slater**



**Victoria Radcliff**

# MAKE HOLIDAY MAGIC HAPPEN

BY ALCIA ANTHONY, Kidsmas Party Committee Chairperson

The holiday season is a special time for all of us. There's no better feeling than helping a child feel the pure, sparkling joy of Christmas, and you can help us make this cherished tradition a reality.

This year's Brother Benno's "Kidsmas" Party for low-income children aged 0-14 from around North County will be held at the Center, 3260 Production Avenue in Oceanside, on **Sunday, December 14th**, from 12:00 to 2:00 PM.

In addition to returning to the Center, this year's event will require a personal Brother

Benno's invitation to attend.

With your help, we hope to bring holiday cheer to over 450 children, just like we did in previous years.

## Your Loving Gift Makes a Child's Day

Donating a \$25 Walmart gift card, allowing children to pick out a much-wanted gift, or contributing to the Christmas party fund is the quickest way to make this happen!

Send Gift cards or a check with the form on page 3 or donate online.

[continued on page 7 ...](#)



## ♥♥♥ NOVEMBER SERVING TEAMS ♥♥♥

The gifts of your time & loving service are received with heartfelt thanks.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1 St. Thomas More
3 St. Elizabeth Seton #1	4 St. John The Evangelist	5 Stephanie's Team	6 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	7 San Luis Rey Mission	8 Lifegroup from Northcoast Church
10 North Coast Methodist	11 Riverview Church	12 Carlsbad Hi-Noon Rotary	13 Signal	14 St. Patrick's	15 Girlfriend's Care
17 Sunrise Kiwanis of Vista	18 Dr. Bronner's	19 Friends of Brother Benno	20 Liberty Military Housing	21 St. Elizabeth Seton #2	22 La Costa Valley Volunteers
24 <b>OPEN</b>	25 Rotary Club of Vista	26 San Luis Rey Methodist	27 Thanksgiving	28 Oceanside Sanctuary	29 Nativity Men's Group

# 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



# MEMORIALS



## November Memorials

Jim Bruynell  
Joyce Cerimele  
John Ciganko  
Diana Gabot

John (J.R.) Gaydos  
Shirley Kudzia  
Ron Stauffer

The Perpetual Memorials list can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/BBFMemorials>

... continued from page 1

actively supports Marine families at Christmas with turkey and gift deliveries. Ed's remarkable energy and commitment demonstrate how powerful a single volunteer can be. Your support helps us harness this dedication, ensuring that

when the community calls, our most dedicated volunteers like Ed can answer.

*Thank you Joe McDevitt for sharing Ed's story and photo of him with the wonderful YMCA staff.*

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**Fill a Stocking:** Help us stuff their stockings with small puzzles, mini-Legos, fun socks, stickers, card games, colored pencils, or markers, to name a few ideas.

**A Warm Embrace:** New, cozy pajamas and socks are always a favorite, offering warmth and comfort for chilly winter nights.

Drop off toys, pajamas, socks, and stocking stuffers **through November 30th** at the Center (preferred) between 8 AM and 2 PM, or at the Thrift Shop, Monday - Sunday 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM. *Please mark your gifts "Kidsmas Party." We kindly request that all gifts be left unwrapped.*

### Volunteers Needed!

If your heart loves the beauty of the season, we need your generous spirit and helping hands!

The Kidsmas Party cannot happen without dedicated volunteers. **You can help** with a variety of tasks on the day of the party, as well as before and after, to make the day sparkle.

Imagine serving warm hot chocolate, cookies, and snacks, managing fun crafts and games, or helping greet guests!

You can also help sort donations, decorate, and set up the Center before the party, or join the clean-up crew.

It takes a community to create this kind of magic, and we need you! To sign up to volunteer, email [volunteers@brotherbenno.org](mailto:volunteers@brotherbenno.org)!

From the bottom of our hearts and on behalf of this year's Chairperson, **Alycia Anthony**, and the entire committee, thank you for being the generous and loving contributors who support our North County families year after year.

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**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**

	SEPTEMBER 2025	OUR 41st YEAR		SEPTEMBER 2025	OUR 41st YEAR
Meals	8,162	5,155,520	Blankets	152	56,350
Market Visits	3,298	46,841	Tarps	105	10,630
Clothing	2,679	1,622,360	ID Vouchers	40	11,639
Showers	244	297,361	Lbs. of Food Rescued	134,740	7,081,190
Bus Passes	150	94,760	HUGS	1,000	1,045,244