



PEOPLE WHO CARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# BROTHER BENNO'S NEWSLETTER

*Uplifting the Dignity of Those We Serve*

DECEMBER 2025



## Message from the Chairman, Board of Directors

This holiday season marks the culmination of an incredible 42nd anniversary for the Brother Benno Foundation. The generosity of all of the friends, donors, and volunteers helping those truly in need has been absolutely incredible.

Where can I begin in describing these blessings? Perhaps the lump in my throat when graduates of our recovery program share deeply personal stories of transformation from lives of drug and alcohol addiction. Or watching a small child walk alongside his mother's shopping cart in our Indoor Market instead of rummaging through boxes on pallets in a parking lot. Or witnessing our Essential Services volunteers and staff sharing the hygiene products, lunch bags, bus passes, and other items taken for granted each day with people who can't afford them. And, there is the visible relief of those on the cliff's edge of homelessness who are grateful for the rental assistance provided by your donations and our Outreach team.

There is also the work to consolidate administrative space saving thousands of dollars in lease payments which provides more direct help for people. I am so very proud of the deep stewardship carried on by our staff and volunteers. Harold and Kay Kutler would smile at how faithfully the Foundation has carried on their mission. Gratitude, and of course, "thank you," springs to the front when I think of all the generous time, money, and talents given to the Brother Benno Foundation.

If you've been to the Center recently or stay in touch through this newsletter, you will know exactly what I am talking about. If you haven't visited lately, I hope you will come by and visit. I know you will be touched by all the people simply helping other people.

With gratitude,  
Jeffrey Epp

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

MESSAGE FROM A  
FALL SCHOLARSHIP  
RECIPIENT

DONOR'S  
CORNER

CITA

STILL TIME TO HELP  
CONGRATULATIONS  
DUE

FINDING SERENITY:  
MY RECOVERY

SERVING TEAMS  
CALENDAR

*and more!*



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

# A MESSAGE FROM A FALL 2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

BY BELINDA SMITH, Scholarship Committee Chairperson

This fall, the Brother Benno Scholarship Committee awarded \$500 scholarships to 40 students from a pool of over 80 deserving applicants. These recipients represent the diverse and inspiring faces of educational perseverance.

While we wish we could share all the heartfelt thank you messages we received, we are honored to present one, with an unexpected connection, which reminds us how important your support is in changing lives.

*My name is [B.G.] and I'm one of the students who received the Brother Benno's Scholarship this year. I wanted to sincerely thank you for your generosity and support.*

*This award truly means a lot to me and my family. Brother Benno's has helped my family in the past. My mom shared how she and my uncles used to come for meals, and how my older sister was welcomed there when she was little too. Knowing that the same orga-*

*nization that once helped feed my family is now helping me continue my education feels incredibly special.*

*Receiving this scholarship from an organization that has been part of my family's story reminds me how kindness truly comes full circle. I'll never forget this.*

*Thank you for all that you do to support students and families in our community. I am deeply grateful for this scholarship and for the compassion you continue to show others.*

From recent high school graduates taking their first steps in higher education to determined individuals returning to college to reshape their career trajectories, your support makes a tremendous impact. Thank you.

If you would like more information about committee volunteer opportunities or how to donate to the scholarship program, email

[bbscholarship@brotherbenno.org](mailto:bbscholarship@brotherbenno.org).

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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  
DECEMBER  
6 & 20  
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



**Robert Darnell**

Local Guide · 3 reviews · 64 photos



3 days ago

NEW

Great place they have many resources to help everyone who is in need.

## 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,

I'm writing this on the 13th of November and this week we are finally moving into the upstairs offices. We are very excited and feel we have collectively made one more much needed improvement to the organization. I have to admit I'm pretty excited about it. We still need to put up on the wall some of the before and after pictures of the construction, and as importantly, some pictures of our history.

On the program side of the house, last month I spoke about the restart of the **Women's recovery program** by working on a farm, and hiring someone with a strong background in mental health.

We did talk to the farm bureau and we were warmly received; the members were interested in what we were trying to accomplish.

We envision a farm-based recovery and empowerment program designed specifically for women, particularly single mothers or women experiencing homelessness.

This initiative will provide:

- Safe housing on a working farm
- Therapeutic and vocational

training through agriculture

- Case management, education, and wraparound support services
- Purposeful work growing food and/or producing farm-based products
- Opportunities to give back by redistributing food to the community

To launch this transformative initiative, we are seeking:

1. Land – Ideally a small farm with a livable residence
2. Partnership or donation – Owner willing to donate or lease the property at a reduced rate
3. Agricultural expertise – A farm manager or advisor to guide the program
4. Infrastructure – Access to water (well preferred), reasonable transportation access

If you know of any leads, please let us know.

On the mental health side, we have some great resumes to look at.

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!



We caught **Nancy Bronzini** (pictured) and **Karis Chodzko** at St. Thomas More's November Ministry Weekend. They shared the work you make possible and some of the ways we collaborate with St. Thomas More. We are particularly grateful because this was a last-minute request to volunteer.

## THERE'S STILL TIME TO HELP A CHILD FEEL THE WARMTH & WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

**Sponsor a Gift:** A \$25 Walmart gift card allows a child to choose something special just for themselves. Gift cards or checks may be sent with the [form](#) or donated [online](#) at any time this month.

**Stocking Stuffers Still Needed:** Small puzzles, card games, stickers, mini-Legos, markers, and other small surprises help us fill every stocking to the brim.

**Cozy Clothing for Cold Nights:** Size large pajamas and warm socks remain among the most-requested items. These simple gifts offer comfort long after the party ends.

**Collection extended through December 10th** at the Center between 8 AM and 2 PM, or at the Thrift Shop daily from 10 AM to 6 PM. Please label items "Kidsmas Party" and leave all gifts unwrapped.

**Volunteers Needed!** Managing the popcorn station, face painting, serving hot chocolate, greeting families, decorating the Center or helping with clean-up - there are opportunities to fit every schedule and skill level. To sign up, please email [volunteers@brotherbenno.org](mailto:volunteers@brotherbenno.org).



## 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](#)



*“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



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.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

BY STAFF

We're pleased to share that Brother Benno's Development Director, **Kathleen Diehlmann**, has been selected to receive the **Chamberlain Scholarship** from the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) San Diego Chapter.

The scholarship covers the AFP ICON Conference registration fee with additional funding for parking and some travel expenses. The next AFP ICON Conference will be held April 26-28, 2026, in San Diego.

“One of the benefits of this scholarship will be to continue to develop my fundraising skills,” shared Kathleen. “However, what really makes me happy about this news is that I will receive this training without incurring additional expenses for Brother Benno's.

It's a win-win.”

As part of her application, Kathleen wrote that the more she learns at conferences (such as AFP ICON) and can incorporate into her professional skills, the more she can give back and make a difference in the lives of others.

The San Diego Chapter of the worldwide Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) upholds the mission of the international association and advances philanthropy in the San Diego region by enabling members, prospective members and representatives of other organizations to practice effective and ethical fundraising.

Congratulations Kathleen!

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## Kick off your holiday season with an appreciation concert at the Center!



Saturday, December 6th - 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
\* Featuring the Pacific Coast Concert Band \*

# FINDING SERENITY: MY RECOVERY THROUGH BROTHER BENNO'S

BY CODY N.

I grew up in a religious household where we were at church as many days as the doors would allow. We were involved in the music ministry, and hosted a home group too. While in school, I excelled, being in GATE, sports and popular among my peers.

In college, I studied music, engineering and physics with a vibrant social life. Alcohol didn't care, and it became my master before the age of 20. It kept me chasing the bottle and any other substance for nearly 20 more years, destroying my family and career. On May 13

2025, which is my sobriety date, that all changed thanks to the help of Brother Benno's.

Prior to my 10 day detox at Carlsbad first step house, which is free, I had somehow ended up in Oceanside and was homeless here for over a month. Not being from this area, unemployed and alone compounded the situation. Despite all of this, I still managed to always have a bottle at my disposal.

The evening of May 11, I was once again drunk and alone. Thinking about what my

*continued on page 7 ...*



Thank you Dr. Bronner's Homelessness Task Force!

## ♥♥♥ DECEMBER SERVING TEAMS ♥♥♥

With heartfelt thanks, we accept your gifts of your time & loving service.

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1 St. Elizabeth Seton #1	2 St. John The Evangelist	3 Stephanie's Team	4 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	5 San Luis Rey Mission	6 St. Thomas More
8 North Coast Methodist	9 Riverview Church	10 Carlsbad Hi-Noon Rotary	11 <b>OPEN</b>	12 St. Patrick's	13 TVIA
15 Sunrise Kiwanis of Vista	16 St. John The Evangelist	17 Friends of Brother Benno	18 Ernest Packaging	19 St. Elizabeth Seton #2	20 Girlfriend's Care
22 <b>OPEN</b>	23 Rotary Club of Vista	24 San Luis Rey Methodist	25 Christmas	26 <b>OPEN</b>	27 La Costa Valley Volunteers
29 Oceanside Pacific Kiwanis	30 Brother Benno's Volunteers and Staff	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



# MEMORIALS

## December Memorials

Barbara Blackwell-  
Waldowski  
Joan Boyd

Gigi Ellis  
Agatha Johnson  
Joanne Kellett

## In Honor Of

Joyce Cerimele  
Michael P. and  
Teresa A. Filice

Joan Jeske  
Lorraine Reade



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

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life had been like, just a short year ago, I finally accepted the stark reality that if I kept drinking, I would surely die before the end of the year. The inability to barely eat, vomiting blood and full body spasms were tiresome. I was tired of black outs being the only time of rest.

Having come to this realization, I proceeded to an organization that had helped me with a resume on the morning of May 12. They arranged for me to meet with someone at Brother Benno's. I did not initially get into a detox, but was offered a bed and food for the first time in a while. The next day, however, my trajectory of my life was radically changed and I spent the first night in detox, Thursday May 13 2025. From there I was accepted into the Brother Benno's recovery support program where I have grown mentally, physically and most importantly, spiritually over the past 6 months.

I have discovered a new and unfathomable sense of serenity that is not controlled by external circumstances. I am learning how to live life on life's terms sober, and one day at a time with the support of the family that are staff and program members, both current and graduates, of the Brother Benno's Foundation.

Currently, I am in the Graduate Transitional Living Program and employed as the Sous Chef

in a restaurant with career potential. Ironically, the front door of the restaurant is across the street to where I used to sleep while homeless and remember wondering what it would be like to work there.

To those who are donors, whether of time or money, thank you. Miracles do happen and lives truly are changed by your efforts; I am a living testament. To those who wonder if they may have a problem with alcohol or know someone that may, there is hope in sobriety and Brother Benno's can help.

Thank you Brother Benno's, the promises taught in the Big Book are being fulfilled. Not of a job or physical things. These are simply the manifestations of the universe and the Higher Power. The promises, rather, are the spiritual connection I now have and the unwavering peace with both self and nature. From this mystical harmony, I have the ability which allows me to be sober, both mentally and physically.

Today, at just 6 months sober to the exact date of writing this today, November 13 2025, I am truly happy, joyous and free for the first time in my ENTIRE life! None of this would have been possible otherwise. So once again, thank you.. I have found hope.

My name is Cody, I am alcoholic.

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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**

	OCTOBER 2025	OUR 42nd YEAR		OCTOBER 2025	OUR 42nd YEAR
Meals	9,180	5,164,700	Blankets	208	56,710
Market Visits	3,566	50,407	Tarps	152	10,782
Clothing	4,474	1,626,834	ID Vouchers	33	11,672
Showers	367	297,728	Lbs. of Food Rescued	115,982	7,197,172
Bus Passes	302	95,062	HUGS	1,000	1,046,244