

APRIL 2021

# THE CROSSWALK: BENILDE HALL'S NEWSLETTER

Benilde Hall—Safe Haven—Matt Talbot



## APRIL'S ISSUE:

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## **Abundant Life Baptist Church Gives Back to Benilde Hall**

Volunteers from Abundant Life Baptist Church spent Saturday, April 17th, 2021, giving back to the Kansas City community for their annual Love KC event. Love KC is a day at Abundant Life that focuses on giving back to nonprofit organizations in the Kansas City area. Benilde Hall was fortunate enough to be one of the chosen organizations this year. Volunteers from Abundant Life (along with a few staff and clients) helped build a gazebo and picnic tables to beautify the Benilde Hall campus. This gazebo will serve as a non-smoking area for Benilde Hall clients to talk and gather outdoors as spring transitions into summer. This opportunity came just before National Volunteer Week, which took place this year from April 18th-April 24th. Benilde Hall is always thankful for volunteers who are willing to help our organization thrive.

## Benilde Hall Success Story: Danny Hill

Danny Hill grew up with a close family and a good upbringing. He was the middle child in his family; he had an older brother and a younger brother. While he was growing up, Danny describes his mother as being "a good disciplinarian." During his preteen and adolescent years, Danny's mother became the sole parental figure in his household. After graduating high school, Danny had plans to attend college on a baseball scholarship. In 1987, Danny started experimenting with drugs. What began as using drugs on the weekends quickly became an addiction. Eventually, Danny dropped out of college and started working as a security guard. "I got high initially because I wanted to but then it became a necessity and then a habit. I had to have it. I thought I was doing okay because I was getting up and going to work every day, so I didn't have a problem."

Danny says his substance use "spiraled out of control" in 2004 after his grandmother passed away. "All I knew to hide the pain was to smoke crack," Danny explains. He continued to smoke for 11 years. In 2010, Danny and his girlfriend at the time became homeless. For seven years, Danny went to jail 53 times. "Every day I would cry and pray. I didn't know how to get help." The last time that Danny went to jail was in 2015 after a night of drinking excessively. The police said he was at risk of having a stroke and had him stay in the medical ward. During his stay in jail, he had a spiritual experience in the middle of the night. "I heard a voice saying, 'Help me! Help me!' I turned over and opened my eyes and I saw myself standing there. I turned back over and tried to go back to sleep. I felt someone sit on the bunk, but I didn't look up. I found a Bible and I started reading." Danny realized that he needed to change his life. "After the third day, they told me my blood pressure went down and I would be getting out today. I said I'm not leaving until I get help."

Once Danny completed 28 days of super-intensive probation at Comprehensive Mental Health Services, he came to Benilde Hall on June 30th, 2015. After being unemployed for 11 years, Danny began working for the Benilde Hall lawn crew. Four months later, he started working as a garbage collector. "I hated it, but I said if I can run and chase dope in snow, I can get on the back of this garbage truck and crawl before I can walk." Danny saved up to buy a van, his first vehicle ever. He started driving for Benilde Hall in May 2016 and worked as a driver until September 2018, all while studying to earn his certifications. Danny is the Senior Counselor at Benilde Hall. He is a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) and Missouri Recovery Support Specialist (MRSS) and has recently received his Medication-Assisted Recovery Support (MARS) certificate. After using substances for 28 years, Danny has been sober for five years. "Benilde Hall saved my life." Danny seeks to be an inspiration for those in recovery. "I want people to be able to look at me and say 'If Danny did it, I can do it.'" Danny also wants those in recovery to know that the path to recovery will not always be easy. "There will be some days that are stressful, but I know that drugs and alcohol are not the answer anymore."



*\*This story was originally published in August 2020. Danny celebrated 6 years of sobriety on April 2nd, 2021 and 5 years as a Benilde Hall employee on April 15th, 2021.*

*To read more Benilde Hall Success Stories, go to [facebook.com/BenildeHall](https://facebook.com/BenildeHall).*

*Past Benilde Hall Success Stories can be found on [benildehall.blogspot.com](http://benildehall.blogspot.com).*

**SAVE THE DATE: 11TH ANNUAL TEE OFF AGAINST  
HOMELESSNESS GOLF TOURNAMENT- OCTOBER 1ST, 2021**



Make sure to save the date for Benilde Hall's 11th Annual Tee Off Against Homelessness Golf Tournament on October 1st, 2021 at Drumm Farm Golf Club in Independence, MO.

Registration will begin at 8 AM and Tee Time will start at 9 AM. Lunch will be provided and a raffle with lots of exciting prizes.

Although the golf tournament is not until October, it's never too early to start planning. October will be here before you know it!

Since COVID-19 brought our golf tournament to a halt last year, we are excited to bring back our annual fundraiser. If proper social distancing guidelines are followed, outdoor golf is considered a safe activity to participate in!

To register, contact Tonya Gundersen by phone at (816) 918-3264 or by email at [tgundersen@mail.benildehall.org](mailto:tgundersen@mail.benildehall.org).

Make sure to spread the word to all the golf players in your life!



**Tee Off  
Against  
Homelessness**

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**Benilde Hall  
is proud to extend an  
invitation to participate in  
our  
11th Annual  
Tee Off Against  
Homelessness Golf  
Tournament**

**October 1st 2021  
8am Registration / 9am Tee  
Time**

**Drumm Farm Golf Club  
15400 E 34th St S,  
Independence, MO 64055**



Don't play golf but still want to help?  
Call or email Tonya Gundersen for pick up of monetary donations or prizes.  
816-918-3264 or [tgundersen@mail.benildehall.org](mailto:tgundersen@mail.benildehall.org).

To pay fees or make a donation in person, Drop off / mailing address is:  
Benilde Hall 3220 E 23rd St,  
KCMO 64127

**MEET THE BOARD:  
Q&A WITH DEPUTY CHIEF KARL OAKMAN**

**Q) Can you tell our readers a little bit about yourself?**

**A)** I was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas. My father died when I was 6 years old and my mother passed away 5 years later. I learned at an early age how to adapt and depend on a community of people. This early experience taught me to keep an open mind and treat all people with respect and dignity. My childhood gives me a valuable introspection on how social economics affects the opportunities of all communities. I joined the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department in 1992 after college. I currently hold the rank of Deputy Chief and oversee the Patrol Bureau. In my 29 years on the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department I have served in numerous assignments. Throughout my career, I have worked to create positive police and community relations. I have been married for 27 years and have two sons.

**Q) How did you become involved with Benilde Hall?**

**A)** I became involved with Benilde Hall through the son of the current board member Joan. I met with Joan about the organization and realized that Benilde Hall was doing great things to uplift the lives of people.

**Q) What led you to the decision to become a board member?**

**A)** I clearly understood the purpose of the organization, my older brother a U.S. Marine veteran who struggled with substance abuse. Unfortunately, he did not fare well dealing with the death of my mother. His struggle with substance abuse caused other challenges in his life such as crime and employment issues. I remember he told me just before he died in 2019, that he worked to shield me from the struggles he faced in life. So the decision to join Benilde Hall was easy.

**Q) What do you hope to see for Benilde Hall in the future?**

**A)** The future is bright for Benilde Hall and I hope the organization continues to be the beacon of light for people before they get to the condition of my brother. This organization has been the light and hope for so many and it is wonderful.

*"This organization has been the light and hope for so many and it is wonderful."  
-Deputy Chief Karl Oakman*

## HOW TO HELP



Want to help? There are many ways you can assist us with our mission!

Monetary donations are always appreciated, and we will provide a tax donation receipt.

You can go to <https://www.benildehall.org/how-to-help/donate.html> to make a monetary donation.

Are you hiring? You may employ one of our residents. Feel free to post your available positions on our job board, or email [info@mail.benildehall.org](mailto:info@mail.benildehall.org) with job info!

Is your organization looking for volunteer opportunities? Call 816-842-5836 x 100 to register your volunteers to assist with needs around our campus.



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2. Select **Benilde Hall**
3. Give while you shop!

Godfrey S. Kobets



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Free estimates, Competitive prices

**Looking for an online recovery community? Follow Benilde Hall on social media!**



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