



A Player's Transformation: Dennis Brown

Former defensive lineman Dennis Brown played seven seasons for the 49ers from 1990–96 and was a starter on the team when they won the Super Bowl in 1994. After sports injuries forced Dennis to retire from football, he described the burden of feeling like he couldn't provide for his family, which brought him back to his own experience as a child.

When Dennis was a boy, his father was injured on the job as a roofer. For a period of time, his family was homeless while he waited for his father's back to get better... but it never healed.



Eventually his father accepted his circumstances and moved the family from their car to a shelter. The stability of housing helped Dennis's father return to school to become a pharmacist and later, a professor. Perhaps it was his father's example of resiliency that helped Dennis overcome some of his darkest days when he spent many nights sleeping in his car.

“Don't let pride prevent you from accepting the help you need.

If you isolate yourself, if you disappear, you shut yourself off from great miracles.”

During a difficult period of depression and homelessness, Dennis reached out for support. He credits Alcoholics Anonymous with his four years of sobriety and The Golden Heart Fund with helping him get back on his feet. The Golden Heart Fund provided Dennis with emotional and financial support to see him through his recovery. When he was ready, GHF also encouraged him to do things that were outside of his comfort zone, like public speaking and auditioning for a job at Comcast SportsNet Bay Area, where he has been an on-air personality for three years.

Today, Dennis is thriving in a career dedicated to community service. When the pandemic broke out in 2020, he volunteered six days a week for the San Francisco–Marin Food Bank that serves 33,000 families a week. Before long, they hired him to oversee their outreach program.

He has spent the past two years tackling food insecurity and serving YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, churches, and schools with the organization. Currently he staffs a San Francisco–Marin Food Bank emergency pop-up pantry that feeds 950 people with fresh food in the Bayview Hunter–Point and Tenderloin neighborhoods.

Dennis has won the 49ers alumni community service award for eight consecutive years and is an active member of several alumni groups. He continues to share his story with others as an example of perseverance, accepting help, and the power of service.

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**My story is
unique to me,
but I don't think
it's unique how
people become
homeless**