

# Pass It On®...

## Benny's Bees.

*How a former Marine with PTSD finds solace in service and beekeeping.*

Benny is up early. His fit frame and efficient movements are a testament to his military training. He hoists heavy boxes of packaged honey into the back of his truck before the sun is up. But he always has time for a chat. And that begins with him handing you a bottle of honey and talking about its health benefits.

Honey is one of the healthiest foods on the planet, stocked with nutrients and antioxidants, and unlike other sweeteners, it may even help maintain blood sugar levels. Honey also reduces inflammation and improves heart health. It helps suppress coughing in children and even helps heal open wounds, especially from burns, as a topical ointment. Benny will tell you all this while leaning against the truck and slicing off a chunk of honeycomb for breakfast. Honey is good for energy, too. And if you stay around long enough, Benny will teach you about bees.

Our food supply depends on pollinators. Bees are a major part of the ecosystem. Fruit trees rely on them. Flowers, bushes, trees, spices, nuts and even chocolate depend on bees. Plants need to regenerate to provide shade, soil health, clean air and water, and habitats for all kinds of wildlife, large and small.

Taking care of bees is no small matter. The average bee pollinates 5,000 flowers a day. But in its lifetime, a bee will only collect enough nectar to produce 2 ounces of honey. Imagine how many bee hours it takes to make one jar! "The health of the hive is most important," Benny says. They need to be protected from parasites and pesticides, and they need a diversity of flowers.

To produce a comb of honey, each bee collects nectar, processes it inside its body, and stores it in a small cell. Thousands of bees working together are the perfect example of a community or colony caring for each other as they store honey for the winter. Every bee does its part: Some fan the entrance to regulate the temperature, some are producers, and the queen makes sure enough new

bees are hatched to grow the colony. None of this is lost on Benny.

"My grandfather introduced me to bees," Benny says. "It's where I find my peace."

Benny's routine is to stock the truck early, and on his way to his stand, he makes several stops — checking on neighborhood widows, picking up trash along the road and slinging full bags into a dumpster. In the winter, he'll shovel the snow off the sidewalk around the whole block. By 10 a.m., he is sitting at his stand. He'll sell a few jars and spread the word that honey gives life and bees are the perfect example of community, each giving something of themselves to make every day a little sweeter.

**Sweetness...** [PassItOn.com](https://passiton.com)

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