

Volunteers Show 'Em How In Ben Lomond

By BILL NEUBAUER

Sentinel Staff Writer

Self-reliant men and women in Ben Lomond who know what they want and how to work to get it are showing both county and city of Santa Cruz officials how to develop and manage a community library with but a handful of dollars a year.

Residents say the library is operating better than ever since the county cut it adrift from the city-county library system early this year.

And, the volunteers who staff and operate the library have statistics to show the library is bigger than ever now that it is no longer a pawn to be shoved hither and yon in the perpetual political chess game being played by city and county authorities.

Paul Ellis reported to the city-county Library Board this morning that the Ben Lomond experience over the past six months demonstrates that using volunteers to provide service "is a valid method of extending the existing budget."

He stated to a Library Board that has not in the past been receptive to use of volunteers on the scale that Ben Lomond uses them: "The system of volunteers is working."

Citizen efforts to retain a library in Ben Lomond began early this year when the county administrative office reported that a shortage of funds would necessitate closing the Ben Lomond, Soquel, Capitola, Freedom branches and require the LaSelva branch to be operated on a different basis.

The Ben Lomond Youth Council formed a library committee under the chairmanship of Faye Ellis. Now there are 10 volunteers who staff the library, and support has come from local organizations and individuals to keep the library open as a community cultural asset.

The library now has 219 memberships, which cost \$2 per year per family. Its circulation of books has soared in the first six months by some 29 percent, climbing from a low of 356 books circulated the first month. In the six-month period, circula-

tion totaled 3,465, compared with 2,698 during the comparable period as a member of the city-county system.

Moreover, Ellis reported, the Ben Lomond Library has had memberships purchased by 15 in Boulder Creek, six in Brookdale, 10 in Felton, one each in Scotts Valley and Lompico and five in Santa Cruz.

Ellis said that in the judgment of the volunteers two factors account for the success to date: new books and more hours of operation.

Some 600 new books have been added to the collection, hardcovers and paperbacks, and the permanent collection is now at some 3,800 volumes.

"In 1963 the records show the library circulated 12,000 volumes," Ellis said. "But in 1978 the circulation was down to around 4,000 even though population had increased. Our record the past six months shows that adequate hours and new books will bring people to their library."

The volunteers now are staffing the library 39 hours weekly, compared to staffing of around 15 hours weekly when the library was in the city-county system. The library is open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Ellis told the trustees that he supports the concept of a new library in Boulder Creek. "Make it as big as possible," he urged.

Trustee Jim Lee praised the Ben Lomond volunteers highly, saying: "Sometimes people inside a system can learn much from people outside a system."

Sara Bunnett, board chairman, added: "I hope this lesson is learned by the people who fund the library system and are cutting hours and are cutting book budgets."

The county has aided the Ben Lomond library with a donation of \$3,000 for shelving, and the library has gotten a federal revenue-sharing grant of \$2,000 for more new books.