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Watsonville homeless shelter falls to diminishing government funds

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

One of two homeless shelters for families in Watsonville closed yesterday, the victim of dwindling government funding.

Two families left the New Life Center at 640 Rodriguez St. last week, and the last two left yesterday, said Ginny Johnson, New Life executive director.

New Life, which also has a 25-bed shelter in Santa Cruz, had been operating both centers on a \$255,000 budget. The big blow for the current year was a reduction

of \$80,000 in state funding.

Johnson said she has hoped to make up part of the deficit with donations from the city of Watsonville and Santa Cruz County, but was rejected by both. "I know they (the city and county) are in a rough spot" with budget uncertainties, she said.

New Life has enough money to continue running the Santa Cruz shelter, Johnson said. Most of the funds come from the federal government; the city of Santa Cruz contributes \$10,000.

The shelter had operated on Ro-

driguez Street for two years, and for three years before that on Freedom Boulevard in Aptos.

The Rodriguez Street site had 16 beds, Johnson said, and was usually full. Two of the families left the area and two found other housing locally, she said.

New Life still has a lease on the Rodriguez Street building, Johnson said, so it will become a rooming house for low-income people until the end of the year. She said there's a slim chance the shelter could be reopened if new funding comes through.