

Accounts established for faculty, staff

University continues with real estate, loan negotiations

By KIMBERLY WHITE

kwhite@santacruzsentinel.com

SCOTTS VALLEY — By the time retired Bethany University history professor Dwight Wilson died in late May, hope remained that the school could be saved.

But the highly anticipated funds never materialized, and on June 13, administrators announced the decision to close.

"We had my husband's memorial service at the [university] chapel on June 18, and it was like a double memorial service," recalled Kathryn Wilson, who spent 30 years teaching music at the university before retiring in 1994.

Money in a memorial fund established for the university is being set aside for the roughly 85 now-unemployed faculty and staff. None received severance packages, and they aren't eligible for state unemployment benefits since the private, nonprofit institution never paid into that fund, officials said.

Last week, the Bethany Corp.'s board of trustees voted to dissolve and give control to the Northern California-Nevada District of the Assemblies of God, which is now seeking to sell the roughly 66-acre campus.

"At this point, Bethany's debt is of such a nature that we are unable to pay the very bills that are there," the Rev. James Braddy, the district's superintendent and chairman of the board, said Wednesday. "If we can sell the campus, the Bethany Corporation will make every attempt to pay severance."

The campus will officially close Aug. 12, but work related to the shut-down is continuing, with a campus

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clean-up slated for Saturday morning. The corporation will cease to exist once the campus sells and all its debts and liabilities are satisfied, Braddy explained. Though efforts to move the campus to the Sacramento area had

been discussed over the past two decades, two earlier offers never exceeded \$12 million. He declined to speculate on the land's current worth.

District officials are in talks with a potential buyer, which Braddy declined to name. But in the July 7 meeting, he introduced the president of San Francisco-based Olivet University. Scotts Valley Mayor Dene Bustichi con-

firmed Olivet is the interested buyer, but had no other details.

The district is still working to avoid bankruptcy by obtaining a loan from the financial arm of the Assemblies of God, but because the district is separate from the corporation, additional funds for severance packages cannot be included.

Braddy said the shut-down

process could take up to a year, and that "this has been one of the most difficult decisions I've had to make in my life."

Asked why the donors failed to deliver, he said he had "no idea. ... They never gave any indication for why they chose not to stay engaged."

Meanwhile, students such as 26-year-old Da'rrel Suha, just eight credits shy of gradu-

ating with a music degree, are making plans to finish their studies elsewhere. Suha transferred to Bethany in August 2007, and now plans to complete his studies at Northwest University near Seattle.

"My biggest concern is the staff and faculty for the reason of being unemployed and not getting any severance or unemployment benefits," he said.