

Rescue Mission to run Union St. shelter

Homeless - 2000
Takes over from Salvation Army

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WATSONVILLE — Dozens of people displaced by the August closure of the Salvation Army homeless shelter now have a place to stay after Pajaro Rescue Mission agreed to run the facility.

In an agreement signed this week, Pajaro Rescue Mission will run the shelter on Union Street rent-free beginning Nov. 1, and will pay only for utilities.

Pajaro Rescue Mission officials will meet Monday to ratify the agreement.

The Salvation Army will provide a new, mobile shelter facility and continue to provide a daily dinner.

Pajaro Rescue Mission, meanwhile, will serve breakfast and lunch and provide round-the-clock staffing. The organization will also offer its drug and alcohol programs for residents.

"Our goal is not just sheltering, it's giving them what they need to get out of the homeless cycle," said Mike Borden, executive director of Teen Challenge Monterey Bay, which oversees Pajaro Rescue Mission.

Still unknown is how Pajaro Rescue Mis-

SHELTER

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sion will fund the day-to-day operations, and officials will meet soon to plan a fundraising campaign, said Watsonville Police Chief Manny Solano, who sits on the organization's board.

"We have to get this thing going and hopefully continue it," he said.

Citing worsening economic conditions, the Salvation Army announced in June that it would close the shelter in August. The Pajaro Rescue Mission immediately offered to take over operation, but the agreement was held up as both sides con-

sidered the terms.

Chief among the concerns was a one-year contract offered by the Salvation Army, which Pajaro Rescue Mission officials said could put the residents out on the street again if the Salvation Army changed its mind.

But the agreement was reached after the Salvation Army agreed to a 60-day cancellation period and to come to the table 90 days before the end of the period for a review.

Borden called the agreement a "good start," but said he hopes to eventually have a one-year cancellation provision.

"We have the agreement and it looks good," Borden said. "They have responded to our concerns about the cancellation period. (The review) gives us the hope that this is not a 1-year

arrangement. This is something we can keep going."

Salvation Army spokeswoman Lanie Hendricks said the organization has no intention to cancel the agreement, and explained that the delays came because the Salvation Army had never dealt with allowing another entity to use its facilities.

"You have to look at it from the standpoint of the property owner," she said. "We're not landlords."

The Salvation Army will also continue to operate its pantry services, as well as the holiday programs such as the Angel Tree.

The Salvation Army's 18-bed Corner House, which currently offers shelter and other assistance to seven mothers recovering from drug and alco-

hol addiction, will also remain operational.

In addition, the organization will help with utility bills, bus passes and phone cards and offer summer camps for youth. Holiday shoppers can expect to see the ubiquitous bell ringers during the holidays.

The City of Watsonville and the Salvation Army are coordinating with the local churches to start the Winter Feeding Program on Nov. 15.

"I want the public to know the Salvation Army is not leaving Watsonville; it has been a part of the community since 1891 and will continue to work for Watsonville providing all the services it has in the past," said Harry Wiggins, who sits on the board of the Salvation Army.