



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Annette Marcum, volunteer director of Valley Churches United Missions, welcomes visitors to the agency's new Ben Lomond home Sunday.

## Church charity heralds new facility

By **DONNA KIMURA**  
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**BEN LOMOND** — Harley riders to church leaders helped dedicate the new home of Valley Churches United Missions on Sunday.

They joined about 200 people who attended the ceremony and heard the mission bell toll for the first time.

"It's not really our mission," said Annette Marcum, volunteer director. "It's your mission."

The volunteer agency has provided emergency food and shelter to the needy in San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley for nearly 15 years.

The new home at 9430 Love Creek Road is more than chance, said the Rev. Joseph Kennedy, former pastor of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ben Lomond. About a half dozen other clergy members attended the dedication.

The agency began its long history of giving during the 1982 storms and mud

slides, the worst of which was at Love Creek, where 10 people died.

Valley Churches United was born in the halls of nearby St. Andrew's, said Kennedy, who now leads the congregation at St. Jude's Episcopal Church in Cupertino.

Marcum, he remembered, had been searching for a project that she could do to help the community.

That project has turned into numerous, long-standing charitable programs that will be housed in the new mission, including the Valley Christmas Project, the Thanksgiving Project and an emergency food pantry.

The group has raised close to \$4 million in cash and supplies over the years.

"This is a giving county and tremendously giving valley," said Assemblyman Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz.

He praised the organization for devoting nearly all its money to local individuals and families. Only about 5

percent goes toward the agency's administrative costs, which include fund raising and office expenses.

The new building will also serve as a disaster relief center, equipped with supplies and a communications center.

"People know there is a refuge in this community," said Santa Cruz County Supervisor Fred Keeley, who represents the San Lorenzo Valley.

Valley Churches United was previously located about a block away.

The new mission gives the organization about 3,000 more feet of storage space for its canned goods and disaster supplies.

In addition to church and government leaders, members of the Santa Cruz Harley Davidson Owners Group were also on hand for a flag presentation.

The bikers have donated thousands of Easter baskets and raised money for the food pantry.