

National board may determine Boys' Club fate

By PAUL BEATTY

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SANTA CRUZ — The fate of the Boys' Club of Santa Cruz, faced with the loss of its major endowment fund, could be decided by action of national Boys' Club of America directors Dec. 9.

The local club lost its endowment fund this month when Ruth Mallery announced she did not want the interest from the \$1.5-million endowed by her and her husband, John, in 1967 to continue supporting the club if it is going to serve both sexes.

She wrote the national boys' club board asking it to redirect the money to other clubs.

The state Supreme Court ruled Oct. 21 that the Santa Cruz Boys' Club must open its doors to girls.

The high court's ruling upheld a 1979 ruling by a local Superior Court that determined since the club charges a small fee from the 1,200 boys it serves, it is therefore a business and cannot discriminate by allowing only one sex to use its facilities.

Local directors say they are willing to comply with the court order but that the Mallery endowment pays 75 percent of the \$250,000 annual budget. Without that money, directors say, the club will probably have to close Jan. 1.

National board spokesman Mark Lutin said this morning, "The national board when it meets Dec. 9 will probably go along with what the local board wants. But this is problem that hasn't come up before as far as I know.

"We'll have to look at the legal implications, ask the local board

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what it wants and probably talk to Mrs. Mallery."

The local board announced at a meeting Oct. 4 that it will honor the wishes of Mrs. Mallery and also sent back, at her request, \$168,000 remaining from a direct \$200,000 endowment made by the Mallerys to the local club.

Lutin, who is manager of public relations for the Boys' Clubs of America with offices in New York, N.Y., said the national organization readily accepts clubs that serve both boys and girls. Of the 1.2 million youths it serves in 1,100 clubs in all 50 states, 300,000 are girls, he said.

"It's a local board decision to have both boys and girls," he said, "and we respect their decisions."

Mrs. Mallery and her husband, now deceased, put up money to build the club that was opened in 1969 and put the endowment fund in the hands of the national organization with the stipulation its interest come back to Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz club attorney Bob Bosso said that if the club closes, its management and property will revert to the national organization.

Lutin said the national organization does not run nor own any boys' clubs. "We are more like a federation. We set policy, offer programs and set standards. Local clubs volunteer to be part of the national organization and can withdraw at any time. Also, if a club doesn't meet out standards, we can kick them out," he said.

He said that decisions on the property and the endowment fund "may

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end up primarily as legal matters."

The lawsuit against the club was brought by the parents of three girls and two boys in 1967.

Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt is the mother of one of the boys and said this morning, "I think if the local board said 'let's keep the club open,' they would be in a very strong position with the national organization to keep the funding."

Local Boys' Club Board President Betty Elward says the club on Center Street is getting ready to open to girls for part of the day. Until separate locker and shower facilities are built, which will be difficult with the club faced with closing because of no money, the club will not be open to both sexes at the same time.

Mrs. Mallery, in a letter to the local board, stated, "It seems only right that those people so interested in determining who the Boys' Club serves be given the responsibility of generating funds."

Wormhoudt said she thinks that by serving both sexes, the club might get greater contributions and be eligible for public funds.

Elward said, "We'd like to keep it open; we have a great service for the community. But unless someone comes up with some money, and we haven't had anybody come up with any offers, it looks like we'll close."