

# Watsonville shelters closing

By JAMIE MARKS  
Sentinel staff writer

**WATSONVILLE** — Slowly but surely, the emergency shelters scattered throughout the Pajaro Valley are closing, a sign that the earthquake recovery effort is moving into a new phase.

Red Cross officials have started to consolidate their shelters as the number of people seeking emergency housing continues to shrink. The shelter population as of last week had dropped to 346, from a high of about 1,000 two days after the earthquake. About 150 people remain at Callaghan Park, which is not an official Red Cross shelter.

The Red Cross closed the shelters at the Veterans Hall on East Beach Street and the Nestle plant in Pajaro last week, moving families and single men into the county fairgrounds, motels and the Buena Vista migrant labor camp.

"We feel like we're starting to make some progress moving people into temporary housing," said Colleen McQuillan of the Red Cross.

"We're certainly not going to abandon anyone, but the shelters are designed for emergencies only. They're run by volunteers, and it's an enormous undertaking to keep them staffed 24 hours a day," McQuillan said.

"Now we're trying to get people into more private housing and back on the road to recovery," she said.

Some of the single men who were staying at the Veterans Hall were homeless before the earthquake hit. They've been given vouchers to stay at a men-only hotel in downtown Watsonville, Red Cross officials said.

A church is planning to open

Monday to shelter people who were homeless before Oct. 17, said Laurie Schumann, a Red Cross volunteer who was cleaning up the Veterans Hall Friday afternoon.

The Veterans Hall hosted a fiesta Wednesday night for the residents, which Schumann said was "quite something."

"This morning we packed about 100 lunches, and gave them three sandwiches apiece," she said. "We've moved some to a hotel, the Buena Vista labor camp and the fairgrounds, so they're on their way."

At the county fairgrounds, the number of people seeking shelter has doubled, from about 90 to 180, as the Red Cross has moved to consolidate its services.

Sixteen Army tents with wooden floors and lights have been erected at the fairgrounds to handle the new tenants. People began moving into them Thursday and Friday.

Fairgrounds Manager Ron Haedicke said Friday he expects the majority of people to stay through the new year.

While most of the shelter residents are Latino, Haedicke said some Anglo families who lost their homes in the Corralitos area have moved into the fairgrounds' tents.

"One guy told me he ran out of money and had to swallow his pride to come in here," Haedicke said. "We put him to work."

The fairgrounds is also working to open the Arts building, which was damaged in the earthquake. Some families will be placed in that shelter when it's ready, Haedicke said.

At the tent city at Ramsay Park,

Red Cross officials have stopped preparing food on-site and are bringing meals in. The Red Cross plans to eventually close the Ramsay Park shelter when it can relocate people.

Bill Villa, of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said 33 families have been moved into the Buena Vista Migrant Labor Camp. Normally closed at this time of year, the camp has opened to accommodate the hundreds of people left homeless by the earthquake.

"They'll stay there until we get mobile homes up and functioning," Villa said. "We have 40 trailers at Fort Ord. All we're waiting for is the state and local people to get their sites ready."



Callaghan Park campers h