

New RV dealership owner in Scotts Valley

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10-4-90

SCOTTS VALLEY — The bankrupt Travel Trails recreational vehicle dealership has been purchased by Dan Gamel, Inc., and should be reopened by November. Reportedly, Gamel paid more than \$3 million for the business.

Gamel, who grew up in Santa Cruz County and graduated from Watsonville High School, already owns RV dealerships in Fresno, Bakersfield, Modesto and Watsonville. He plans to move his corporate headquarters from Fresno to Scotts Valley.

"We're the largest RV dealership in the U.S.," Gamel said from his Fresno office. He said the Scotts Valley outlet will employ "upwards of 80 people by the time we're in full swing," though it will

open with a staff of 35 or 40, some of them transferred from Gamel's other dealerships.

The abrupt closure of Travel Trails earlier this year was not only a shock to customers and vendors, it dealt a blow to the city's General Fund. The city's share of sales taxes amounts to 1 percent of total sales, and at its peak, Travel Trails was one of the city's biggest sales tax producers, generating \$300,000 in revenue for the city, according to city officials.

Gamel estimated that sales at the Scotts Valley outlet should amount to \$1.5 million or \$2 million per month initially, or \$20 million annually. Gamel said he has high hopes for the Scotts Valley store.

"It's a great community, and it's also a great spot, it's close to the San Jose market without having to

pay San Jose real estate prices," he said.

Workers are now cleaning up the property, repaving the asphalt lots and expanding the parts and accessories store. Craig Lawler, manager of the service department at Gamel's Watsonville dealership, will take over management of the Scotts Valley service department. Lawler's parents founded Travel Trails in the mid-'70s and later leased the business to the couple who declared bankruptcy. Gamel purchased the business from the Lawlers.

The dealership will sell and service Pace Arrow, Winnebago, Bounder, Holiday Rambler, Automate, Prowler, Flair and Aljo-Aly recreational vehicles.