

Rescue Mission looks to house more homeless

Group considers taking over 40-bed Salvation Army shelter

By TODD GUILD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — When the Watsonville Salvation Army announced in June that it will be closing three of its four shelters, waves of panic coursed through the rescue community, which now faced the task of finding housing for at least 40 people who will be without a place to stay in August.

The potential crisis was exacerbated by a worsening economy, record unemployment and the razing of the former metro bus station on Sakata Lane, where several homeless people reportedly camped.

The Salvation Army has been working with the City of Watsonville and community organizations such as Pajaro Valley Shelter Services, Pajaro Rescue Mission, United Way and others to help those individuals affected by the decision.

Now, Teen Challenge Monterey Bay and its umbrella organization, Pajaro Rescue Mission,

is considering taking over operation of the Salvation Army's 40-bed men's shelter on Union Street, which organizers estimate could cost as much as \$100,000 per year.

Both organizations are still hammering out the details and hope to have a written proposal by the end of July.

"It's a big challenge, but it's something that our community really needs to meet head-on, because without services like this we face a big problem," said Chuck Allen, who sits on the Salvation Army's advisory board. "It's part of the fabric of the community."

Pajaro Valley Shelter Services is similarly considering absorbing the Salvation Army's women's shelter on Maple Street.

Nearly 40 years ago, Jim Raymond founded the Pajaro Rescue Mission, which was dedicated to helping "men of the road" — also called hobos, wanderers and

See RESCUE, page A8

RESCUE

From page A1

tramps — find a place to stay and a hot meal.

Nowadays, the people who come to the shelter are referred to as homeless, but their needs have not changed. Many face drug and alcohol issues, while others struggle to find employment. Still others cannot work for physical reasons.

After helping these people for nearly four decades, Pajaro Rescue Mission is ramping up for its anniversary celebration in August. It's been a struggle over the years, but one organizers say they take on gladly.

In the midst of those preparations, the group is now facing a big new challenge.

The Salvation Army's Golden State Division cited budget woes when it announced in June its plan to close the three facilities by Aug. 15.

Currently, funding comes in part from the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville, as well as United Way Santa Cruz County and a handful of churches.

Teen Challenge Monterey Bay, which is largely funded through private donations, takes in men who need a meal and a place to stay for the night. For those who wish to make a positive change in their lives, the organization offers an intensive residential program that

includes help getting clean and sober, health care, employment assistance and temporary housing.

Approximately 100 men avail themselves of the services at Pajaro Rescue Mission, where Teen Challenge Monterey Bay is headquartered.

They get three meals per day, as well as a place to sleep and wash up.

The men also receive religious guidance, which dates back to the earliest days of the Pajaro Rescue Mission at its location at the Southern Pacific Railroad yard. There, men who rode the rails would receive a hot meal out of the back of a truck and get a sermon while they ate.

Drugs and alcohol are not allowed, and the men are expected to keep themselves clean. To graduate from the 13-month program, participants must also get a high school diploma or a GED.

"We want to make sure these men are not on the streets and make sure they are safe," said Teen Challenge Monterey Bay program support assistant Manuel Uriarte. "We're offering something more than just a bed. We offer them a chance to change their life."

The Salvation Army will continue to serve those in need on daily basis through other social service programs such as the Corner House, an 18-bed facility that serves single mothers in drug and alcohol recovery.

The daily meal program will also continue. The program served nearly 16,000 breakfasts and 43,000 dinners in 2011.

In addition, the Salvation Army will continue emergency assistance through the Family Services Department, which includes a weekly food pantry and help with utilities.

The holiday meal and Christmas Toy collection and distribution will also continue.

...

With a potential influx of 40 people coming to their shelter, Pajaro Rescue Mission is hoping for community financial support. For information, call 724-9410 or visit www.teenchallengemontereybay.org.



Manny Uriarte, program support assistant for Teen Challenge Monterey Bay, leads a tour of the Pajaro Rescue Mission Monday.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian