

Board runs out of options, votes to close youth center

By Terri Morgan
Special to the Mercury News

After a fruitless nine-month effort to reopen a drop-in center for teen-agers in the San Lorenzo Valley, the directors of the Valley Youth Center are giving up.

"I regret we have come to this point, but I don't think there is any other choice," said Stephanie Butler, who chaired the board of directors. "I think the Valley Youth Center has burned through every volunteer in the San Lorenzo Valley."

The board agreed to dissolve the non-profit corporation Tuesday night, after exhausting all its avenues for funding and support. Last month the Boys Club of America

rejected the board's proposal to open a satellite center in Boulder Creek.

"It would have been wonderful if the Boys Club had gone for it," Butler said. "But they told us it would be at least five years before they could afford another center."

Along with a new facility, the Boys Club would have offered the stability and managerial support board members said was lacking at the original youth center.

Founded in 1986, the Valley Youth Center closed the doors of its downtown Boulder Creek facility last May after being plagued with numerous problems.

See YOUTHS, Page 2B

Valley Youth Center board votes to dissolve corporation

YOUTHS, from Page 1B

Many of the problems stemmed from disputes between the center's volunteers and the original board members, and from a lack of training for the volunteers. The latter problem ultimately led to the volunteers' inability to control a group of unruly teen-agers who allegedly dominated the center, intimidated other youths, heckled people visiting neighboring businesses and caused many of the volunteers to resign.

Ultimately, all of the original board members quit, except for Butler, who was one of the co-founders. Six adults and two teen-agers joined Butler on the new

board, and attempted to reopen the center in a new location.

"We had some dedicated volunteers, but they were just volunteers," Butler said. "We needed to hire a full-time director, and rent a place, but there just wasn't enough money available."

"The need is still here in the San Lorenzo Valley for a youth center, but somebody needs to get paid for running it," she said.

Despite its closing, board members say the Valley Youth Center had a positive effect on San Lorenzo Valley teen-agers.

"We had many kids that changed (for the better)," Butler said. "Even if we only had one, I'd call it a success."