

Baymonte Christian will close high school

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Faced with declining enrollment and a debt of \$120,000, Baymonte Christian School announced today that it would close its 15-year-old high school program in order not to exacerbate that debt.

Margaret Relph, the school registrar, emphasized that Baymonte would continue to provide kindergarten, elementary, and junior high school classes for about 250 students.

Relph said the decision to close the high school was made in order to avoid placing the entire school system in financial jeopardy because of the insufficient income which would have been produced by the lack of student enrollment.

"We have not come to this point without considerable effort and prayer over the past two years...despite our efforts, we have not been successful in stabilizing enrollment at the school," the Board of Directors said in a prepared statement read to parents Wednesday night. "We are aware that this action coming so near the opening of most schools in the area will be a serious inconvenience for all families. Along with our apologies, please accept our assurances that we would not have taken this course had we felt other options (were) open to us."

The directors said an evaluation of its enrollment this year revealed that only 60 students registered as of

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Aug. 19 and that the school would experience a \$100,000 deficit in its operation above the previously budgeted deficit of \$120,000. Some 15 of those students are on some form of scholarship.

Relph said that demand for enrollment at the school was normal as of June. The usual August surge in enrollment did not materialize and the high school was faced with its lowest number of students in five years. It peaked at an attendance of 120 in 1980.

Principal Martin Zuidervaat said the school needed an enrollment of at least 80 in order to meet its financial obligations. The one-year tuition was \$2,500.

"Educationally, the problem is numbers. Financially the problem is money. You can't separate the two," Zuidervaat said.

Relph said that some of the problems with enrollment were caused,

in part, because of transfers out of the system, while another factor was the expulsion of six students for violating "academic standards." The lack of a football team, she said, might have also contributed because it could not attract those interested in this type of athletics.

She said that the high school could not afford to pay, with 60 students, the salaries of its five full-time teachers and its four part-time teachers.

She said that a \$120,000 deficit is not extraordinary and is in the same range as other private Christian and non-Christian schools in the county and across the county.

One benefit coming out of the closure, Baymonte officials said, is that the high school facilities, including a science lab, computer and typing classes, would now be turned over to the 45 junior high school students for their use, giving them better educational opportunities.

As to the possibility of re-opening the school next year or later, Relph said she was not optimistic that this would be done, especially if demand does not pick up in the community.

"We don't anticipate that happening in the near future," Relph said. "The prospects are not good."

Ironically, the Baymonte schools recently were granted a six-year accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and praised for their work.

Relph said that the accreditation would remain in effect for the kindergarten, elementary, and junior high schools.

Baymonte, an independent, non-denominational school, was incorporated in 1968, opening with 84 students. For the last 15 years, the school has been located in facilities on the property of First Baptist Church, 3496 Granite Creek Rd. at Highway 17. The high school was opened in 1970.