

Local Christian school looks for students

Grace Christian Academy hopes to open a facility at church in West Gardiner

BY BETTY ADAMS
Staff Writer

WEST GARDINER — With a whole lot of space to fill in their 10,000-square-foot church building at 187 Lewiston Road, some members at the Grace Community Chapel decided to found a new Christian school.

They're accepting applications for the upcoming school year, hoping to enroll at least 16 students — the magic number to make it financially feasible, according to Bruce Coffin, chairman of the school committee.

Kayla Beaulieu, 13, of Richmond, stopped in Sunday to look at the library that serves the church and would also serve the school. She said she was considering enrolling.

"I think I'd get a better education," she said, as Coffin handed her a hardcover volume of Sherlock Holmes' exploits.

"Do you play any sports?" Coffin asked. "I promise you every kid gets plenty of playing time because we need everybody."

Beaulieu said she plays soccer. Her cousin, Ashley Loon, also of Richmond, was checking out the library and proposed school as well. Both attend Grace Community Chapel.

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He and his wife Marion, who live in Gardiner, organized sports teams there and

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years, taking both a soccer and a volleyball team to playoffs. They also worked on the library.

Coffin pointed to the soccer goal half-buried in the snow. "Our church bought a lot of materials, including desks and library materials, from Crown Regional School," he said.

Coffin said board members surveyed area churches to determine interest in the new school and are now publicizing the venture.

He said the kindergarten-to-12th grade school will use the Alpha Omega curriculum, where students can be in the same classroom, working at their own pace with assistance from the teacher. Tuition for the year is \$1,200 annually, with an additional \$450 in fees. (That reflects a discount for students enrolled by May 1.)

Last year, the fledgling school failed to reach the minimum enrollment, so it was put on hold until this year.

Coffin said a stronger financial plan is in place.

"It's a ministry of Grace Community Chapel; the building, the heat and the electricity is already there," he said.



Staff photo by Betty Adams

CHECKING OUT: Kayla Beaulieu, of Richmond, examines the books available in the library at the Grace Community Chapel in West Gardiner. Beaulieu, center, and her cousin, Ashley Loon, right, chatted with Bruce Coffin about the Grace Christian Academy, which Coffin and others are starting.

for teachers.

"We have a number of possibilities for teachers, including one from the school committee," he added.

The school was originally planned using a standard curriculum.

"Using the nontraditional route cuts our tuition more than in half," Coffin said. "We will be a non-approved private school no different than any other school. We will offer sports, music and drama."

He said if the school proves

turn to a more traditional curriculum.

Initially, all students may be downstairs in the library and adjacent room. For the future, however, church members have already readied small, second-floor classrooms with desks; faded green lockers stand in the hall, and a teachers' lounge has a wall of textbooks.

Many are the same texts used in public schools. One row of science texts was printed by Rob Jones. University

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"As Christians, we believe in creationism, and for science that's the point of view we will be teaching," Coffin said. The students will have Bible classes as well.

"As a Christian, God is a part of my everyday life," Coffin said. "As a student, God will be a part of their everyday lives."

More information is available on the Web at www.gchapel.com or by calling 582-8045.