

Gilbert School won't allow Bible display ⁵⁻²⁻⁷²

By MARIA A. GOLDBERG
Register Citizen Staff

WINSTED — The Gilbert School administration has discovered it would be unlawful to allow Gideon International to distribute Bibles at the school next week.

"We just don't feel the school is a place for that," said Gilbert Headmaster James V. Steenstra yesterday.

The Gideons hoped to set up a table to display, discuss and give away small copies of the New Testament to the high school's 470 students, but the Constitution forbids such a practice, explained school attorney Thomas Sullivan yesterday.

Norman E. Shirk of Middlebury, Gideon's secretary-treasurer for Northwestern Connecticut, expressed disappointment over the school's finding yesterday.

"Our only recourse is to pray that things will change in our

country, and that these things will be accepted," he said. Locally, the group has 11 members who meet the third Monday of the month at the Log House Restaurant on New Hartford Road, and hold weekly prayer sessions.

Founded nationally in 1898 by two businessmen who met in a Wisconsin hotel, Gideon International, an association for Christian businessmen, has headquarters in Nashville, Tenn. It now distributes 35 million Bibles each year in 140 countries and 58 languages, to hotels, hospitals, nursing homes and doctor's offices.

"It comes out to about one (Bible) per second, around the world," Shirk said. The Bibles average about \$1.40 a piece, and Shirk said Gideon funds its activities through its membership and church donations.

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