

THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

Self-Help designated as Neighborworks Homeownership Center

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By: The Porterville Recorder Staff

VISALIA — Self-Help Enterprises will celebrate its designation as a NeighborWorks Homeownership Center from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, March 30.

The designation assists Self-Help Enterprises with resources and coordination essential for delivering comprehensive, high-quality homeownership services and expanding homeownership opportunities in the San Joaquin Valley.

The celebration event will include guest speakers and information about Self-Help Enterprises' homeownership and housing programs, food and refreshments, a fire truck with a local fire station providing home fire safety information, drawing for a 32-inch TV and \$100 Lowe's Gift card, a bounce house for kids, and resource booths featuring community partners — Tulare County Association of Realtors, Family HealthCare Network, Grid Alternatives, Proteus, and CSET.

As the Valley's only Homeownership Center, Self-Help Enterprises, a HUD-certified counseling agency, works with families to turn the dream of homeownership into a reality through the Gateway: Your Path to Homeownership program. Serving as a "one-stop" shop for prospective homebuyers, Self-Help Enterprises' homeownership advocates walk individuals and families through the different types of mortgage rates, the effect credit scores have on being approved for a loan, how much down payment is needed for purchase, and how much home is affordable. A tailored action plan is then developed to assist prospective homebuyers in achieving their financial homeownership goals.

Individuals and families also participate in an in-person or online homeownership education class, available in English and Spanish. The homeownership education class covers key topics including:

- >Importance of Credit
- >The Mortgage Process
- >Working with a Realtor
- >The Purchase Process
- >Mortgage and Down Payment Assistance Programs
- >Affordable Housing Opportunities

Homebuyers who take this class have a better understanding of the process, ask smarter questions, and make better informed decisions.

Self-Help Enterprises also partners with local municipal governments, realtors and mortgage lenders in an effort to provide a range of homeownership opportunities for families residing in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus and Tulare counties.

Self-Help Enterprises' housing programs include:

- >First-Time Homebuyer: Resources and down payment assistance for families looking to become homeowners through traditional avenues.

>Self-Help Housing: Eight to twelve families are grouped together and help each other build their houses with skilled onsite supervision and guidance of Self-Help Enterprises' construction staff. "Sweat equity" serves as the down payment and monthly mortgage payment is based on the household's income.

>Manufactured Housing: Assistance to eligible homebuyers for purchase of a manufactured housing unit.

>Housing Rehabilitation: Funding assistance to make important health and safety repairs to a home.

Because the programs provide affordable and stable low-interest loans for homebuyers, sustainable homeownership has become a reality for many underserved families in the San Joaquin Valley who may not afford a home otherwise.

To participate in the Gateway program, prospective homebuyers can contact Self-Help Enterprises via phone at 651-1000 or via email at gateway@selfhelpenterprises.org. An initial counseling appointment will be scheduled and a \$50 fee will reserve the appointment. The fee covers a credit report and a portion of the homeownership education class fee. Upon completing an intake form, providing requested documents, and attending the counseling appointment, homebuyers will be enrolled in the homeownership education class.

For more information about Self-Help Enterprises, visit www.SelfHelpEnterprises.org.