

USDA

USDA Celebrates National Homeownership Month

Activities and Events across the Nation to Spotlight USDA's Efforts to Help Families in Rural Communities Achieve the Dream of Owning a Home

WASHINGTON, June 1, 2015 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today kicked off National Homeownership Month by highlighting USDA's ongoing role to help residents of America's small towns and cities purchase homes in rural areas.

"Owning a home is one of the best ways American families enter the middle class," Vilsack said. "USDA has helped provide homeownership for rural Americans for more than six decades. This year, we are marking the 50th anniversary of USDA's [Mutual Self-Help Housing](#) program and are celebrating the 50,000th home built through it."

The Mutual Self-Help program provides grants to help organizations carry out housing construction projects in rural areas. These organizations supervise groups of very-low- and low-income individuals and families as they construct their own homes. The group members provide most of the construction labor on each other's homes and get technical assistance from the organization overseeing the project.

By working with trusted local organizations, this program helps people get affordable, clean and safe homes of their own.

For instance, in California, Self-Help Enterprises has partnered with USDA since 1965 to help more than 6,100 very-low- and low-income families build and own their own homes in the San Joaquin Valley. Though known as a top agricultural production region, the Valley also has one of the highest poverty rates in California.

Homeownership provides a strong foundation to help build household wealth, start a business or fund education through home equity. Since the creation of USDA's single-family housing programs in 1949, USDA has helped more than 3 million rural residents access the American dream of homeownership.

Throughout June, USDA employees will celebrate National Homeownership Month with events across the Nation that demonstrate USDA's commitment to provide access to affordable housing for low-and moderate-income rural residents.

Since 2009, USDA invested more than \$117 billion to support rural homeownership. In 2014 alone, USDA invested more than \$19.9 billion to help nearly 140,000 rural families buy and maintain homes.

Listed below are Rural Development programs that support rural homeownership:

- Direct home loans for low- and very-low-income applicants. Payment assistance is provided that can lower the loan interest rate to as low as one percent.
- Loan guarantees for moderate-income families. The agency works with private-sector lenders to back the lenders' loans.
- Home repair loans and grants to help rural homeowners make improvements or repairs. Examples include making homes accessible for people with disabilities or removing health and safety hazards such as poor wiring or plumbing.

To learn more about USDA's observance of National Homeownership Month, please visit our [Facebook](#) page or contact a [Rural Development State Office](#) near you.

President Obama's historic investments in rural America have made our rural communities stronger. Under his leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way - strengthening America's economy, small towns and rural communities.