



Nine Goshen Families Achieve Dream of Owning a Home

Staff Reports

On June 12 Self-Help Enterprises officially recognized and welcomed nine Goshen families who have completed the construction of their own home. These hardworking families have spent the last nine months helping each other build their new, safe, affordable homes.

Self-Help Enterprises operates the largest mutual self-help homeownership program in the country. Since 1965, Self-Help Enterprises has helped more than 6,100 families in the San Joaquin Valley build their own homes and participate in the American dream of homeownership. The single-family homes are all built under the mutual self-help method of construction with homeowners providing over 70 percent of the construction labor. These labor hours, or “sweat equity”, are used as the down payment on their new home that, together with low-interest mortgage financing through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, reduces the costs for a new home they otherwise could not afford. Self-Help Enterprises’ emphasis on

sustainable homeownership, combining counseling and education, an affordable mortgage, and the sweat equity down payment, has resulted in successful homeownership for thousands of Valley families. Families not only build their homes and those of their neighbors, they also build an instant community, a sense of place, and skills that will last a lifetime.

The completion of the latest nine homes brings a total of 122 homes to Goshen since the first self-help houses were constructed in Goshen in 1963. The construction of the nine homes also marks the completion of the first subdivision with 77 homes on land donated to Self-Help Enterprises by the Doe family, long-time supporters of Self-Help Enterprises who desired to contribute to the future of families and children in Goshen. The donated 40-acre land also includes the 10-acre Peter Malloch Park and the 56 unit Goshen Village II apartment rental community – both developed by Self-Help Enterprises.

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

Urban Farmers for Food Freedom is Born

Catherine Doe

Out of the ashes of the June 1 Visalia City Council meeting was born Urban Farmers for Food Freedom (UFFF). After three members of the city council voted down an ordinance allowing chickens in residential zones, the pro-goat and chicken constituents joined forces. Their goal is to legalize small food-producing farm animals inside the city limits. The group has begun the initiative process and has just formed a Political Action Committee.

Council members Amy Shuklian and Warren Gubler voted in favor of changing the ordinance to include chickens, but none of the council members were willing to put the goat issue on the agenda.

The Urban Farmers for Food Freedom are in the process of refining the wording of the initiative. According to the Sarsfield and Melo Law firm, it is projected to take two to three weeks to get the first draft of the initiative completed and submitted to the city clerk.

The city attorney assembles a ballot title and summary of the proposed law. The UFFF is ready to obtain the initial signatures and circulate the proposed law in a newspaper. The group has 180 days to get the required number of signatures. The exact number is still being researched but is approximately 10 percent of Visalia’s registered voters. If everything goes according to plan UFFF hopes to have a launching date of the Fourth of July to start collecting signatures.

It is still unclear whether the initiative will be on the June, 2016 primary ballot or the November general election ballot.

Sarsfield and Melo Law firm is working pro bono, helping the UFFF with the wording of the initiative and the paper-

work. The law firm was also instrumental in forming the UFFF PAC.

“We believe in the right of Americans to provide for their families without interference from the government.” said Maggie Melo.

A few details of the initiative have been agreed upon by the members of UFFF. Each food-producing animal will have square footage requirements and an enclosure; such as the chickens will have to have coops and the miniature goats will have to have pens. There will be a 60-pound limit for each farm animal. All of the animals included as food-producing must abide by pre-existing ordinances that pertain to household pets. These include unlawful trespass, health, noise and nuisance. Food-producing animals will not count against household pet limits. Roosters, peafowl and unneutered male mini goats will not be allowed.

According to Visalia resident Gingi Freeman, “An initiative is a means by which a petition signed by a certain minimum number of registered voters can force a public vote. But one thing is for sure, we’re confident we’ll get this on the ballot, and once this decision is put to the people and not to career politicians engaged in class warfare (civilized people just don’t live among chickens and goats, you see) we will have a huge victory for food freedom in Visalia.”

All donations to help cover legal expenses can now be mailed in to UFFF PAC at:

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