

THE SUN-GAZETTE

Self-Help Enterprises opens first of five Book Nooks at affordable housing complexes in Tulare County

June 13, 2018

By: The Sun-Gazette

GOSHEN — Tulare County has the fourth lowest literacy rate of California counties. According to a 2003 study conducted by the National Center of Education Statistics, nearly one-third of adults living in Tulare County are functionally illiterate, 10% higher than the state average. And just as it strives to help low-income families find safe, affordable housing, Self-Help Enterprises wants to make sure their children have every opportunity to avoid pitfalls of not being able to read.

On June 4, Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) opened the doors to the Goshen Village Book Nook with a ribbon cutting celebration at Goshen Village Apartments on June 4. The Book Nook, housing over 500 children's and young adults books, is the first of five onsite literacy centers designated to increase access to reading materials and support family literacy in rural communities.



Children and teens at Goshen Village can use the cozy, woodland-themed Book Nook to read a diverse selection of books during the onsite after-school program hours of Monday through Friday, 3 pm to 5 pm. Many hours went in to curating the book catalog, which includes classics from Dr. Seuss to Beverly Cleary and newer releases such as *Be Kind* by Pat Miller and *Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World* by Rachel Ignatofsky. The ability to check out books will be available in the near future along with scheduled reading hours hosted by volunteers from partner organizations.

"This is a collaborative effort that creates a literacy enriched environment for kids to explore, learn, and enhance their reading skills," said Tom Collishaw, President and CEO of Self-Help Enterprises. "We are committed to creating safe learning environments for residents and their children."

The Goshen Village Apartments, like the community of Goshen, has residents who are bilingual or whose primary language is Spanish. Therefore, children's books are available in Spanish to encourage reading among Spanish-speaking families. Book titles in Spanish include *Dentro de Mi Imaginación* by Marta Arteaga and *De Como Tía Lola Vino a Quedarse* by Julia Alvarez.

The opening of the Book Nook is timed with the ending of the school year, as the new Book Nook increases educational opportunities for children who have limited access to books, especially during the summer break.

In addition to the Book Nook, Self-Help Enterprises works with many community partners to provide free onsite resident services such as job training, health and medical services, financial training, homebuyer education, and computer literacy classes at the onsite computer lab.

The Whitney Foundation, Lions Pride Club, United Way of Tulare County, and Self-Help Enterprises provided the funding for the Book Nook furnishings and new books. In attendance were Cheri Provanca, member of the Lions Pride Club, Rosemary Caso, Executive Director for United Way of Tulare County, and Amy Shuklian, Tulare County Supervisor.

Additional Book Nooks are coming to Self-Help Enterprises' apartment rental communities in Tulare County. These include Goshen Village II in Goshen, Sand Creek in Oroquieta, Washington Plaza in Earlimart and Vera Cruz in Richgrove. The Book Nooks are expected to be opened by the end of the year