

THE SENTINEL

Self-Help Enterprises receives \$5.2 million

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By: Staff reports

Self-Help Enterprises has been awarded \$5.25 million in technical assistance funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development for the purpose of providing a program of technical assistance to carry out mutual self-help housing efforts that aid low-income families in achieving the dream of homeownership.

Grants are funded on a two-year basis and are designated for construction activities in seven counties, including Corcoran (Kings), Reedley (Fresno), Shafter and Wasco (Kern), Parksdale (Madera), Planada and Winton (Merced), Patterson (Stanislaus), Goshen, Orosi and Woodlake (Tulare). Self-Help Enterprises has historically been the largest, most productive grantee in the nation. To date, this funding has helped Self-Help Enterprises build over 6,265 affordable homes across the Valley.

Since 1971, the Section 523 program has provided the primary funding for Self-Help Enterprises' mutual self-help housing program by funding staff time and overhead for the self-help program in rural communities. Through this program, 10 families are grouped together and agree to help each other build their houses with skilled onsite supervision and guidance from onsite Self-Help Enterprises construction staff. The homes are built under the mutual self-help method of construction where each family is required to contribute a minimum of 40 hours a week working on all the homes for a period of 9 to 12 months. Families provide at least 65 percent of the labor on the homes and no one moves in until all of the homes in the group are complete. Hours can be provided by the owners-to-be, any household member 16 years of age or older, and approved helpers. Together, families pour foundations, frame homes, install electrical wiring, hang doors, paint and lay tile and complete other finish work.

These funds represent approximately 25 percent of Self-Help Enterprises' operating budget for this fiscal year. "USDA Rural Development's ongoing support is essential to the delivery of our mutual self-help housing program," said Tom Collishaw, president and CEO of Self-Help Enterprises. "We value their commitment to our shared goal of helping hard working, low-income families become sustainable homeowners."

"We are proud to partner with Self-Help Enterprises in their mission to increase access to affordable housing across the San Joaquin Valley," said USDA Rural Development California State Director Kim Dolbow Vann. "This investment will not only help hardworking families build homes, but also develop skills that can lead to new opportunities and strengthen communities." A primary goal at USDA Rural Development is to help create and sustain strong, thriving communities throughout rural America; and supporting affordable housing organizations such as Self-Help Enterprises is a key component to that mission.