

THE MADERA TRIBUNE

Families receive keys to homes

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By: Wendy Alexander

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director Kim Dolbow Vann joined with Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) Monday to celebrate National Homeownership Month and honor 10 families who have completed building each other's homes.

"After nearly a year of sweat, blood and tears the sacrifices and commitment of these 10 families are paying off with keys to their brand-new homes," said Vann. "There may not be a more appropriate time than National Homeownership Month to highlight these families, this program, and the dedication of our steadfast partner, Self-Help Enterprises, for creating homeownership opportunities across the San Joaquin Valley."



New homeowner Tina Martinez is joined by her son Frankie Perez as she holds up the keys to her home after spending the past year working on building the home.

The homes were all built under USDA Rural Development's mutual self-help housing program. Through the program participants worked under the supervision of SHE, earning "sweat equity" by providing 65-75 percent of the labor in constructing each other's homes. Each family was required to spend a minimum of 40 hours per week on home construction, which began on July 10, 2018. No one moves in until all the homes are completed.

"This is a day to celebrate homeownership, the bedrock of every strong community," said Tom Collishaw, president and CEO of Self-Help Enterprises. "These 10 families represent the final hardworking homebuilders in the second phase of our Parksdale development. We're proud to be associated with these great people."

USDA Rural Development has provided approximately \$1.3 million in home loans to the families in this development.

SHE is the pioneer and leading provider of mutual self-help housing in the United States and their efforts today encompass a range of programs to build better homes and communities for low-income families. Since 1965, SHE has helped more than 6,200 families build their own homes, rehabilitated more than 6,300 unsafe homes, developed more than 1,400 units of affordable rental housing and has provided technical assistance for reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitary sewer infrastructures to more than 160 small communities.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; homeownership; community services such as schools, public safety and healthcare; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/ca.