

# THE SUN GAZETTE

---

## Program preps communities for next drought

By: Staff

January 29, 2020

**Self-Help Enterprises initiative provides emergency preparedness education, urgent access to clean water, water well replacement and more**

VISALIA — Whether or not you accept climate change as a reality, one thing is for certain – the San Joaquin Valley will have another drought. Throughout recorded history, the semi-arid Valley has had extended dry spells with little precipitation to moisten its fertile soil creating a micro climate of economic crisis. The Valley is still dealing with the effects of an overdrated groundwater basin including abandoned private wells, contamination in remaining rural wells and subsidence in its water conveyance systems.



*Self-Help Enterprises' Emergency Services Program offers \$5 million in assistance to prepare disadvantaged communities for natural disasters, such as drought, fires, floods and earthquakes in the San Joaquin Valley.*

In preparation for the inevitable, Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), a community development organization whose mission is to work with low-income families to build and sustain healthy homes and communities, has launched a new and innovative Emergency Services Division that will reach and engage diverse and vulnerable populations around natural disasters, such as drought, fire, flood and earthquake. The program will also help families receive urgent access to clean water, help with water well replacement and water filtration services as needed.

The scientific community has indicated that droughts will become more frequent and severe as climate change progresses, putting drinking water supplies at risk of running dry or becoming contaminated. As we learned from the most recent drought, conditions disproportionately affect low-income, small and rural communities.

“It is important for the residents of the central valley, especially those very rural areas dependent on private domestic wells to have access to safe, clean and affordable water,” said Tami McVay, Emergency Services Program Manager for Self-Help Enterprises. “Our role is to educate the San Joaquin Valley’s private well owners on long-term sustainability, well maintenance, water contamination and water conservation. This will allow residents to be resilient in the face of the next drought.”

SHE’s new Emergency Services Program offers San Joaquin Valley residents nearly \$5 million dollars in program support for the following areas: (1) Clean Water Solutions which include bottled water delivery and installation of filtration systems; (2) Access to Water Programs which provide and deliver emergency water tanks and/ or hauled water to residents in the San Joaquin Valley in dire situations; (3) Well Quality & Resources for the assessment of water well health and quality; (4) Emergency Preparedness via the LISTOS CA Campaign that will empower Tulare County’s most vulnerable populations to prepare for natural disasters through education and training.

This program will cover Stanislaus, Mariposa, Madera, Merced, Fresno, Tulare, Kings and Kern counties. Residents needing water related assistance can email [droughtsupport@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:droughtsupport@selfhelpenterprises.org). For questions regarding emergency services, email [emergencyservices@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:emergencyservices@selfhelpenterprises.org). People can also call us at (559) 802-1685.

Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) is a nationally recognized community development organization whose mission is to work together with low-income families to build and sustain healthy homes and communities. The pioneer and leading provider of mutual self-help housing in the United States, SHE's efforts today encompass a range of efforts to build better homes and communities for farmworkers and other hard working families. Since 1965, SHE has helped more than 6,200 families to build their own homes, rehabilitated over 6,300 unsafe homes, developed over 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. SHE's commitment to providing resources and training for individuals builds capacity of highly effective leaders in communities that also promote collaborative solutions for improving communities. These combined efforts have touched the lives of over 55,000 families, providing security and stability for families and building more productive communities.