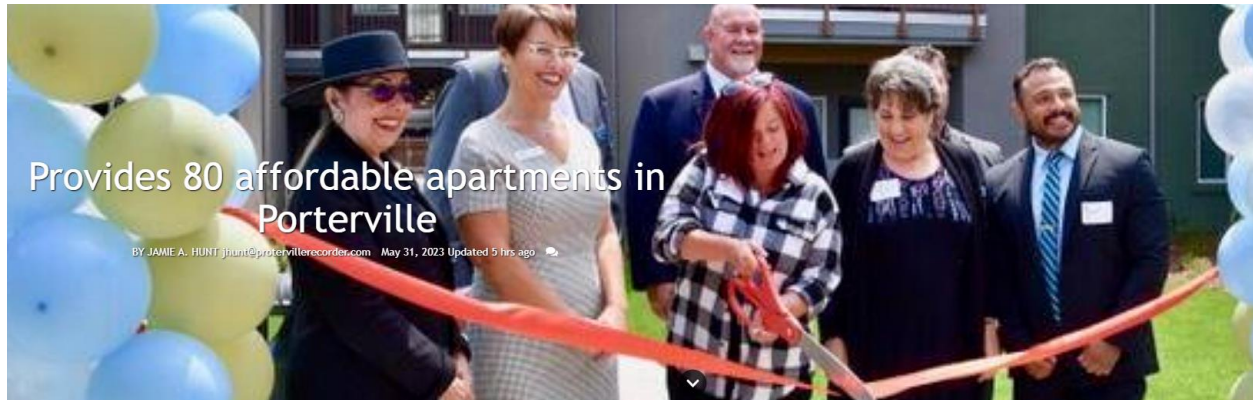


THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

Provides 80 affordable apartments in Porterville

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By: Jamie Hunt



Finca Serena means serene estate, and for people who are moving into the 80-unit affordable apartments, their lives will change for the better.

Dignitaries from all over the state, Tulare County, and city of Porterville were at the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony on Tuesday in Porterville.

Jessica Hoff Berzac, president of the developer Upholdings welcomed everyone and said what a phenomenal and gorgeous day it was in Porterville. "On behalf of my organization and my colleagues here today, and our other partners, It's my absolute honor to welcome you to Finca Serena, which is a brand new apartment complex, we are in the midst of leasing so it should be occupied very soon, with 80 apartments, including 40 one-bedrooms, 20 with two bedrooms, and 20 with three bedrooms.

She said "I'm so happy to see you all," and spoke about the teamwork needed to complete the project, She's been involved in the development from start to finish, and said "it's about building a place for people to live. That's what it's all about. Thank you for being here, some of us take this for granted, but here in California we can't take it for granted, and have to work really hard to make sure people have a place to live. Amen. Right!"

Upholdings states it believes housing is a human right. And Hoff Berzac thanked the dozens of individuals and agencies that made Finca Serena a reality.

She spoke about working with Tulare County and said they were brainstorming, thinking about what happens when people live with chaos, a life of homelessness, or living with mental illness, "and we wanted to create a home, or a whole new place where people could come and escape from that and hopefully move on. So we chose the name. This project was created in response to the enormous need in Porterville, but it is also a state wide issue."

Hoff Berzac went on to talk at length about the project's ground breaking in October of 2021. She said housing is a human crisis and "so today is a celebration of a collaboration of our partners, and every agency that has helped make this a reality. And now 80 families can make these units their homes." Each unit has its own kitchen, living room, and there are on-site amenities including a fitness room, laundry, a playground, computer room, pet areas, and a community room.

Half of the units are targeted for community members experiencing homelessness said Hoff Berzac, "where they will be have a safe, serene and supportive environment where they can thrive, and be helped on their journey. The project is for mixed-income families and will include apartments targeted for individuals with disabilities, or who are at risk of homelessness.

The property also features 24-hour, live-in support staff who will provide access to job training, mental health services, and will work to help residents achieve their own goals. They will work collaboratively with local agencies to ensure a healthy and safe community for residents and neighbors.

On top of all these amenities, the home's are green, efficient and affordable.

Before the ceremony, Hoff Berzac said "We are delighted to be here. The City of Porterville has been a great partner, and they have helped solve problems every step of the way. Now 80 families will get homes."

Miguel Perez, from Kings Tulare Homeless Alliance spoke at the ceremony, and said it was the culmination of the collaboration of so many agencies, elected officials, and the list goes on and on. He thanked everyone and said without their support it wouldn't be happening. "It's a day of celebration but also a day to acknowledge the need for low-income housing throughout the county," he said.

"These projects would also not take off without the support of our elected officials. Thank you Supervisor Dennis Townsend."

Tom Collishaw, Self-Help Enterprises Ppresident and CEO, said "We are committed to providing quality and affordable housing opportunities to ill-housed and un-housed families in the Valley. In addition to the 24- hour support staff, SHE's Resident Services team will offer robust onsite educational, financial, and wellness activities. We are proud to partner with Upholdings on the first supportive housing development of its kind in Porterville."

Townsend congratulated everyone involved in the project. He presented both Hoff Berzac and Collishaw with Certificates of Recognition signed by all the supervisors, and said, "This is a wonderful collaboration." And he said there were actually no bumps in the road, and they were amazing groups to work with. "This is a beautiful development. And be proud of what you do."

Eric Coyne, Field Representative from State Senator Melissa Hurtado also presented Hoff Berzac and Collishaw with Certificates, and he said Hurtado was a real fan of Self-Help Enterprises, and the project was encouraged by both the community and the city supported it. "It is wonderful and the best part is it's permanent and it's affordable," he said.

Mayor Martha A. Flores said it was a pleasure and an honor to be there to celebrate the opening of the new housing project in the heart of the city of Porterville. She congratulated Upholdings and Self Help Enterprises and all the dedicated partners that have collaborated on the completion of the project and also presented Hoff Berzac and Collishaw with certificates of recognition from the city of Porterville.

Francesca Wander, from the HOME investments Partnership program, spoke about the financial end of the housing complex saying funding came from the state and county, and there was a tax credit as well. Plus the people living their will have the security of housing that's a home," Wander said. It's long term affordable housing guaranteed, she said. She also said more low income housing is needed in California, and it's a way to end homelessness.

Jessica Fulton, a Finca Serena resident also spoke about her trials and tribulations, how she has battled addiction for years, while living with her 17-year-old daughter, and 5-year old.

Now, she will have a stable home with her older daughter, and she said she was so thrilled and thankful to have a home at Finca Serena. She said she's always been a care provider. And now she will have a home and a foundation, "I no longer have to numb things. It's a place to come home to at the end of the day and unwind."

After all the speeches, and without further ado, the ribbon was cut by Fulton, with Collishaw, Hoff Berzac, Townsend, Flores, and other dignitaries looking on.