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Valley housing nonprofit recognized as top developer for fourth time in six years

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Affordable Housing Finance Magazine has once again recognized Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) as one of the top 50 developers of low-income housing in the country, marking the fourth time the nonprofit has been recognized as a top developer in the last six years.

The housing and community development nonprofit was ranked #38 and was positioned as the #5 nonprofit organization on the list – twelve nonprofits were included in the Top 50.

Self-Help Enterprises, headquartered in Visalia, is also the only organization included that is based in the San Joaquin Valley. It brings services to communities across nine counties.

The ranking represents the organization's rising production figures derived from the new construction of single- and multi-family rental homes. In 2023, construction began on 427 new units, and during that time, SHE also successfully completed 481 units.

"While we are not in the work of building and sustaining healthy homes and communities for the accolades, it is nonetheless gratifying to be recognized for all of your hard work," shared Tom Collishaw, SHE's President and CEO, in a press release. "Other crucial work at SHE may not have similar opportunities to be recognized in this manner, but it is the collective effort of our work that makes a difference in our communities."

During 2023, SHE provided direct support to 78 families who built their homes through its Mutual Self-Help Housing program.

Amidst California's housing crisis, SHE offers families homeownership. Participating families work together to help each other build their houses with skilled on-site supervision and guidance from SHE's construction staff.

Families pour foundations, frame homes, install electrical wiring, hang doors and windows, and even lay tile and paint. Each family is required to contribute a minimum of 40 hours a week working on all the homes. These labor hours, or "sweat equity," are used as the down payment on their new home, reducing costs for a new home they could otherwise not afford.

SHE also assists each applicant with securing the loans needed to build their home. Special financing from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State of California also helps make these homes affordable.

SHE's rental housing development work featured 405 units of new housing. In addition to serving the needs of low-income residents, many of SHE's new units are reserved as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, supporting formerly unhoused residents or those at risk of homelessness. In 2023, through their continued partnership with local organizations, SHE added 110 new PSH units.

One of the year's notable project openings was The Lofts at Fort Visalia, the nonprofit's new 80-unit multi-family complex at 340 E. Oak Ave. in downtown Visalia. Half of the units are reserved to serve PSH residents while offering robust programs designed to help residents thrive. The Lofts is home to the Visalia Arts Consortium and My Voice Media Center. This partnership with local arts organizations provides vibrant services to Lofts residents and the greater Visalia arts community.

The location of The Lofts is believed to be the original site of the fort that was constructed when settlers came to this region and established Visalia as a community. SHE partnered with Visalia Heritage to celebrate the site's history, including a diorama of the original Fort Visalia and historical information on display in the Fort Visalia Heritage Room in the leasing office and Fort Visalia plaza.