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By: Dylan Gonzales



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Photo via Self-Help Enterprises | Merritt Capital inducted Self-Help Enterprises President and CEO Tom Collishaw into the Affordable Housing Finance 2025 Hall of Fame.

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**Dylan Gonzales** - STAFF WRITER

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Merritt Capital honored Self-Help Enterprises, a Visalia-based developer, at its annual Partners Celebration on Nov. 6 in Oakland. Merritt, a mission-driven investor in affordable housing developments across California, highlighted SHE's growing impact across the Central Valley and its

longtime partnership with the organization.

This year, Self-Help Enterprises surpassed a major milestone, developing over 3,000 affordable rental homes for families, farmworkers, seniors and individuals in need of permanent housing. The award recognizes both the scale of SHE's work and its relationship with Merritt Capital.

"We are honored to be recognized by Merritt Capital as Developer of the Year," Collishaw said in a statement. "We are deeply grateful for their partnership, which makes these transformative homes possible, and we look forward to continuing our shared work to expand access to quality affordable housing throughout

the region."

Collishaw was also recently inducted into the Affordable Housing Finance's 2025 Hall of Fame during the AHF Live conference in Chicago, where four industry leaders were honored for helping shape the future of affordable housing nationwide.

He noted that the honor reflects the collective efforts of SHE rather than his individual career.

"When I saw some of the names who have been inducted before, I felt particularly humbled," he said. "I really accepted it on behalf of Self-Help Enterprises, because it's been the work of a lot of people over the last 45 years that has resulted in the impact we've been able to have."

Founded in 1965, Self-Help Enterprises significantly expanded its rental housing development in the last decade, doubling the number of units it owns and operates in roughly six years. That growth has allowed the organization to serve a larger population across the Central Valley, including seniors, farmworkers and people experiencing homelessness.

"We've been on a run that we've never really attained in our six decades as an organization," Collishaw said. "It's expanded our impact and given more people the opportunity to live in great housing with good services close to other opportunities."

Beyond the total number of units, Collishaw said affordable housing should also be understood as an issue

of equity and racial justice, particularly for homeownership. SHE's sweat-equity homeownership program, which started with farmworkers of color, remains a core part of the organization's mission.

"The single most important way to build wealth in this country is homeownership," Collishaw said. "For a long time, that opportunity wasn't equally available, and much of that was by design. Our work has been an antidote to that."

Looking ahead to 2026, SHE has several projects underway, including new rental developments in Visalia, Corcoran and Chowchilla, with more communities planned across the Central Valley in the upcoming year. It is also making progress on single-family homeownership projects in Fresno, Tulare, Kern and Stanislaus counties.

As housing affordability continues to challenge communities statewide, Collishaw said the growing awareness of the crisis offers cautious optimism.

"Housing affordability is at the top of everyone's list," he said. "That creates incentive to find solutions, and we need to embrace both proven methods and innovation to expand housing supply and preserve what we already have."



Photo via Self-Help Enterprises | Team members from Self-Help Enterprises pose with the Developer of the Year Award from Merritt Capital, a mission-driven investor in affordable housing development based in Oakland.

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