

THE SUN-GAZETTE

Self-Help cements status as a top 50 developer

June 26, 2024

By: The Sun-Gazette Staff



VISALIA – Self-Help Enterprises has helped build up low-income housing over the years, and now the nonprofit is beginning to build up its resume with another accolade.

For the fourth time in the last six years, Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) has been recognized by Affordable Housing Finance Magazine as a top 50 developer of low-income housing in the entire country. This year, the housing and community development nonprofit was ranked No. 38 and was positioned as the No. 5 nonprofit organization on the list.

A total of twelve nonprofits were included in the Top 50. Headquartered in Visalia, Self-Help Enterprises is the only organization to be included that is based in the San Joaquin Valley, bringing services to nine counties.

The ranking is a representation of the organization’s rising production figures derived from both new construction of single-family homes and multi-family rental homes. In 2023, construction began for 427 new units. During that time, SHE also successfully completed a total of 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,” SHE President and CEO Tom Collishaw said. “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. In this program, participating families work together to help each other build their houses with skilled on-site supervision and guidance from SHE’s construction staff.

Together, families pour foundations, frame homes, install electrical wiring, hang doors and windows and 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 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.

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SHE's rental housing development work featured 405 units of new housing. In addition to serving low-income residents, many of SHE's new units are reserved as Permanent Supportive Housing 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 multifamily complex located at 340 E. Oak Ave. in downtown Visalia. Half of the units are reserved to serve PSH residents, while offering programs designed to help residents thrive. The Lofts is home to the Visalia Arts Consortium and My Voice Media Center.

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.

The full list of top developers by Affordable Housing Finance magazine can be found at <https://www.housingfinance.com/>. More information about Self-Help Enterprises can be found at www.selfhelpenterprises.org.