

Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in California

Winter 2003



USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman and Rural Development State Director Paul Venosdel visited several of the exhibits during the White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in San Diego.

USDA Secretary Veneman in California for Faith-Based and Community Conference

San Diego was the site for the most recent *White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, attended by over 1,800 leaders of churches, synagogues, mosques and other faith groups. This was the fourth regional conference sponsored by the White House.

In her opening address at the February 18 conference, USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman explained "Faith-based and community organizations are an integral part of ad-

ressing pockets of despair that still exist within our country."

"Together, these kinds of partnerships are helping improve the lives of so many families – and children – and making for stronger communities throughout the nation," she concludes.

Mercy Housing, Inc. received high praise in Secretary Veneman's remarks, "USDA's Rural Development in California has 12 housing partners who

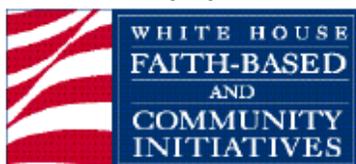
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Teviston Betterment Association Teams Up with Rural Development

The Reverend Alfred King serves his community's spiritual and economic needs. He is President of the Teviston Betterment Association in this small but vigorous Tulare County agricultural community near Pixley and Earlimart.

The residents in Teviston had a problem. Their community center was in dire need of repair and the small community didn't have the resources to get the job done.

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With the help of their local USDA Service Center Office and Rural Development staff, Rev. King's Teviston Betterment Association received a \$37,652 Community Facilities Grant to make exterior building improvements and parking lot repairs. Now the facility is being used for child care, community meetings and community safety and first-aid training programs. Rev King says that USDA Rural Development has done a lot during the eight years he's been working to im-

prove Teviston. "USDA has always been able to help with projects when we have limited funds," said Rev. King. "We especially appreciate the help

with the childcare center and receive many compliments from community members."



Teviston child care program kids with staff members (left to right) Cody Blalack, Ana Mercedes Ramirez, and Elizabeth Biagas along with the proud Rev. Alfred King.

Partnerships at Work in Housing and Facilities: Mercy, Bethel Lutheran and USDA



Homeowner / Builder Yvonne Long and children Marila, Angel and Ronnie Jr. **Mercy Self Help Housing** - Galt, CA

“A happy family makes a happy home. After 14 months of construction, we are moving into our first home. And we built it ourselves, with the help of our neighbors. Thank you USDA Rural Development and Mercy Housing California!”

Yvonne Long

“Over the years, our partnership with USDA Rural Development has been very productive and has played an important role in many communities, providing homeownership opportunities for low-income families,” said **Sister Lillian Murphy, RSM, President and CEO of Mercy Housing, Inc.** *“We look forward to our continued partnership as we work to meet the housing needs of low-income families in rural California.”*

Mercy Properties California
Sycamore Center Building
▶ 57,000 Direct Community Facilities Loan - Red Bluff, CA, senior community center in converted 35-year old building .

Bethel Lutheran Homes, Inc.
Bethel Lutheran Facility
▶ \$3.3 million Loan Guarantee - Selma, CA, 36-unit independent living addition to existing skilled nursing and residential care home for seniors.

Mercy Housing California
▶ \$2.4 million Self-Help Technical Assistance Grant
▶ \$18 million Single Family Housing Loan Funds (502) Serving Galt, Esparto, Placerville, Plymouth

Mercy Housing California
▶ \$2.3 million Self-Help Technical Assistance Grant
▶ \$15 million Single Family Housing Loan Funds (502) Serving Brentwood, Esparto, Galt, Placerville

Faith-Based Conference in California

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work with us to build homes in the Self-Help Housing Program. This program has a current inventory of over 5,200 affordable homes in California that were built by low and moderate income families. It provides families with opportunity to build equity, pride and confidence, all at the same time as they build their own homes,” said Secretary Venemen.

“For 20 years, Mercy Housing

has been one of our best housing partners. They are efficient...they maintain a quick timetable to get people into their homes as soon as possible...but they also are very caring people. And they make sure that these are quality homes that lead to quality neighborhoods.”

“Sister Lillian Murphy’s is the President and CEO of Mercy Housing. Sister Murphy understands first-hand how USDA’s homeownership program is helping low-income families see their dream of homeownership come true. “

“When describing the success of the partnership with USDA, Sister Murphy said, “The chances of the Cor-

tez family, who recently moved into a new home in the small community of Esparto, CA, would have been slim to none had it not been for the financial and technical assistance provided by USDA Rural Development and Mercy Housing.”

President George W. Bush addressed the conference via videotape and drew rousing applause when he stated: “It shouldn’t matter to the government if the group has a cross on the wall, a muzuzah on the door or a mullah on the board of directors.”

In workshops and general sessions, participants learned which federal agencies offer funding and services and how faith-based or community groups can do their own research on federal programs and navigate through the government system.



President George W. Bush speaks to Faith-Based Conference attendees via videotape.

“Government shouldn’t discriminate against faith; government should welcome faith. The power of faith, whether it comes through the Christian church, through Judaism, or through Islam, can change people’s lives for the better. And we must welcome that faith in our society.” President George W. Bush

Showing Faith by Helping Others in California Communities - Freedom Corps USDA Staff, Families and Friends Volunteer

President Bush has called on all Americans to volunteer their time. USDA Rural Development staff answered the call and turned out in force on *Make a Difference Day*, this year. This national event is the largest volunteer day in the U. S. – a celebration of neighbors helping neighbors.

Nationwide, nearly 4,000 projects were carried out this day. In California, approximately 200 USDA Rural Development

employees, families and friends volunteered to help on a long list of local community service projects, including the construction of 120 houses which will provide housing for over 500 people.



Staff nailed, painted and planted in USDA-funded Self Help housing sites in Esparto, Delhi, Mecca, Guadalupe, Armona, Corning and Brawley. Elsewhere staff also helped plant a vegetable

garden for a developmentally disabled home, visited seniors and helped families at a domestic violence center and planted trees along rural community streets as part of a civic improvement program.

We are proud of TEAM USDA and our Rural Development family. We like to spend our own time once in a while to help out. It restores our faith in the goodness of human nature.

Organizations, Communities & USDA - Working Rural Partners

An incredibly diverse and dedicated group of individuals and organizations have become partners with USDA Rural Development. Together we serve the housing, community facilities, utilities and business development needs of rural communities throughout our state.

Here's a partial list of the faith-based and community organizations that Rural Develop-

ment has been working with over the last several years:

Mercy Housing California, Mercy Properties California, Bethel Lutheran Homes, Inc, United Indian Health Services, Feather River Tribal Health, Kern River Valley Youth Center, Calexico Neighborhood House, Mahal Plaza Child Care Center, Teviston Betterment Association.



Feather River Tribal Health, Inc. was assisted by USDA Community Facility Direct and Guaranteed Loan programs to construct this 36,700 square foot medical facility. The community of Oroville is now prepared to meet the regional population's medical service needs. Pictured during opening ceremonies for the building are Native American tribal dancers.

Home Ownership - A Presidential Priority

Challenging private industry to join with government, President George W. Bush announced the national goal of increasing the number of homeowners by at least 5.5 million before the end of 2010.

USDA Rural Development is working with faith-based and community organizations and home-building partners to help reach this 5.5 million addi-

tional homeowners goal.

Paul Venosdel, State Director of Rural Development in California is committed to the President's goal of increased minority home ownership. "Housing prices in California are higher than in many other parts of the country, putting



homeownership out of reach for many families in rural markets," said Venosdel. "To meet the President's goal, we are putting more resources into loan and guaranteed loan programs and self-help housing opportunities that help minority families."

USDA Rural Development is working with faith-based and community organizations and home-building partners to help reach President Bush's 5.5 million additional homeowners goal.



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Community Facilities - Getting Help in Rural California

USDA Rural Development is committed to building stronger, more vibrant communities in California. Health care clinics, police and fire stations, schools and care centers for adults and children are all essential to the quality of life in rural communities. We work with local lenders including banks, savings and loan associations, mortgage companies and Farm Credit System banks to offer loan guarantees to help build and improve es-



United Indian Health Services Center - Trinidad, Humboldt County, CA

sential community facilities throughout rural California.

"Faith-based and community groups come to us for the kind of loan guarantee help they can't get elsewhere," said Janice Waddell, USDA-RD California Community Facilities Program Director. "An excellent example is the **United Indian Health Services Center** in Humboldt County. We worked with tribal groups to help put together a local financing package that included USDA-RD di-

rect and guaranteed loan funds totaling \$9 million." Now a modern Tribal Health Care village serves Native Americans and their dependents in a 40,000 SF clinic. The 12 acre village site also includes a tribal office, dental office, conference center, museum and art center and will soon include day care.

"Our government should not fear programs that exist because a church or a synagogue or a mosque has decided to start one. We should enable them to access Federal money, because faith-based programs can change people's lives, and America will be better off for it."

President George W. Bush

Juliet McCarthy - Faith-Based Director for Rural Development

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the appointment of Juliet McCarthy as Special Assistant to the Secretary and the Director of the USDA Center for Faith-

Based and Community Initiatives. As a first step in its implementation of the Initiatives, USDA will conduct, in coordination with the White House, an agency-wide review to identify opportunities to increase the participation of these organizations in federal as well as state and local activities.

McCarthy joins USDA in this new post after having served as the Deputy Director for the Department of Labor's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives since June 2001. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and graduated from Emory Univer-

sity School of Law in Atlanta. Prior to joining the Administration, McCarthy worked as an attorney at the Georgia Justice Project in Atlanta.



Juliet McCarthy, recently appointed Director of the USDA Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.



Rural Development State Director Paul Venosdel and Rural Housing Service Associate Administrator James Selmon in the Rural Development California booth at the White House Faith-Based Conference in San Diego.