



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development

World Wide Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>

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Release No. 15.08

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO CELEBRATE GROUNDBREAKING ON 13 HOMES

National Homeownership Month celebrations continue in Gridley

GRIDLEY, Calif., June 6, 2008 – USDA Rural Development is making the dream of homeownership a reality for hundreds of low-income rural families with the agency's Mutual Self-Help Housing program. Through the program, families are given the tools to build their future, utilizing their own labor as "sweat equity" to reduce construction costs. During June, National Homeownership Month, USDA Rural Development will celebrate the many successes of the Mutual Self-Help Housing program, utilized for over 40 years in California.

Today, in the Butte County community of Gridley, USDA Rural Development State Director Ben Higgins joined Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) and soon-to-be-homeowners to turn over the first shovels of dirt at a groundbreaking for 13 homes in the Locust Estates subdivision.

"Homeownership is the first big step to financial security for millions of Americans," said Higgins. "Our Mutual Self-Help Housing program helps bridge the affordability gap in California and provides an opportunity for families to build personal equity that transforms the options they and their children have in the future."

Self-Help Housing families spend a minimum of 40 hours per week on home construction, working with 10 to 12 other families. Typical projects take from 10 to 12 months to complete all homes in the development. Upon completion, these families have new homes in a safe and secure neighborhood where they know everyone as a result of their team effort.

CHIP, based in Chico, Calif., is one of 13 non-profit affordable housing development companies in California that works with USDA Rural Development. CHIP coordinates loan applications and then trains and supervises families as they work together to build their own homes. California's Self-Help Housing program is the largest in the nation, with annual funding totals often exceeding \$50 million for Self-Help projects.

Since 2001, USDA Rural Development California has provided over \$800 million in loans and grants to help over 6,000 California families move into their own home or improve their current home. Nationally, the Bush Administration has invested \$28.5 billion to help over 300,000 families become homeowners.

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National Homeownership Month

As part of National Homeownership Month celebrations, USDA Rural Development had three additional stops at Self-Help Housing sites where USDA Rural Development funds are being put to work in rural communities.

On May 29, Higgins kicked-off the month with a wall-raising in Orosi, Tulare County at a site developed by Self-Help Enterprises. On June 3 he visited the families of the Sierra Vista subdivision in Linda, Yuba County developed by Mercy Housing. The final event will take place on June 13 at the Los Fundadores subdivision in Mecca, Riverside County where USDA Rural Development will celebrate the completion of 22 self-help homes developed by Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC).

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$91 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 1.7 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at one of California's 18 local USDA Rural Development offices or by visiting <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

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