

# USDA Rural Development - Self Help Housing CONFERENCE NEWS

REINFORCING RURAL  
HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

June 3 - 4, 2003  
Coachella Valley, CA

United States  
Department of Agriculture

Rural Development  
California

## Conference Affirms Commitment - Partners for Self Help

Rural housing partners and USDA Rural Development experts in Washington, D.C. came to Coachella Valley, California June 3 - 4 to discuss how to meet the West's unique rural housing needs. California's USDA Rural Development office hosted the special two-day con-

ference attended by over 150 individuals from California, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho and Washington state.

Self-Help Housing partners and Rural Development staff heard from speakers on critical subjects including the *Money*

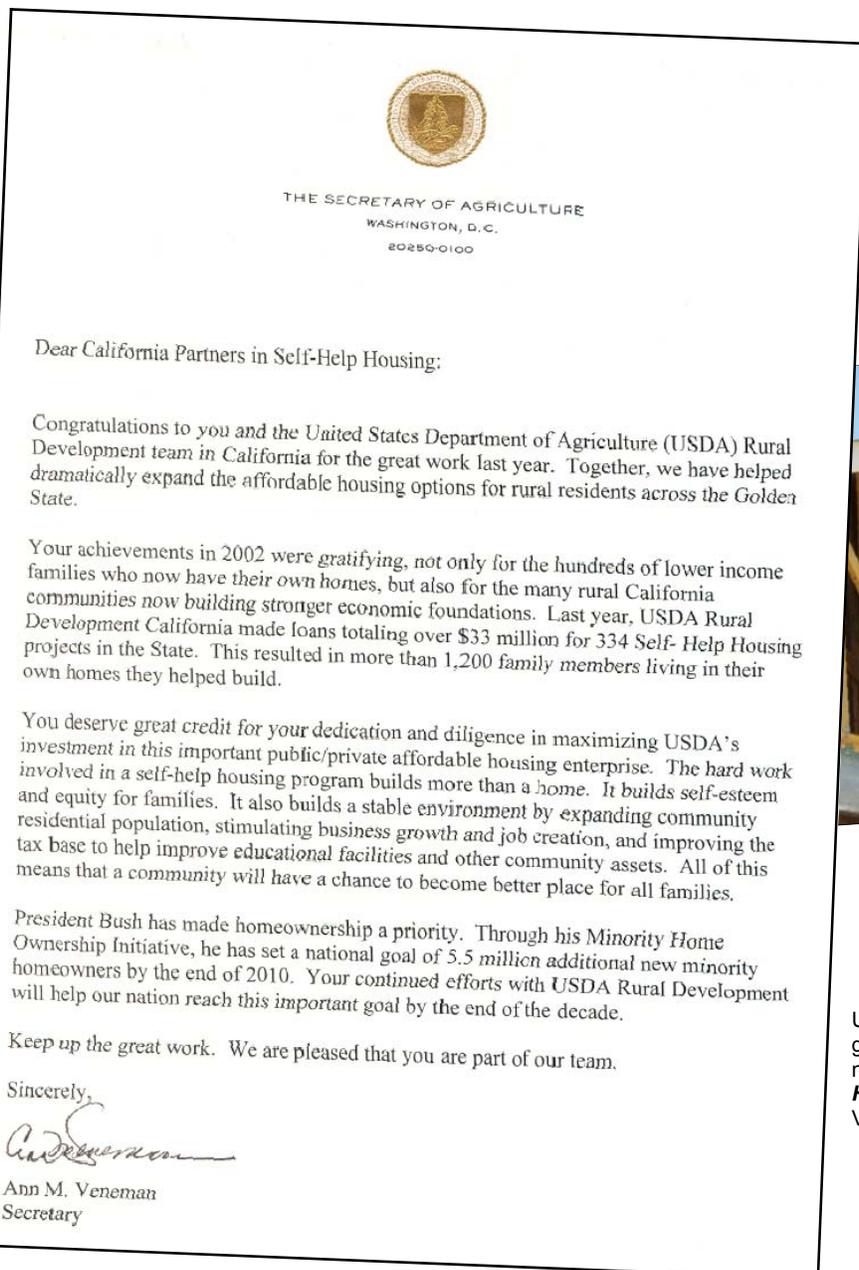


*Smart*® Program, Loan Servicing and Civil Rights. In addition, question and answer panel discussions encouraged audience participation on issues such as Loan Limits and the Cost of Affordable Housing in California and USDA's *Five Star Commitment* to meet

President George W. Bush's goal of 5.5 million new minority homeowners by the end of the decade.

By the end of the Conference, participants were encouraging further meetings to continue the positive communication on issues of critical importance to the Self-Help Housing program.

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**Mecca, CA** - Self-Help Housing families greeted visitors and shared their progress at the **Mexicas Subdivision** during the **Homeownership Month Celebration** scheduled as part of the **Reinforcing Rural Housing Partnerships Conference**.



USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman offers her congratulations to California Self-Help Housing Partners in a special letter for the **Reinforcing Rural Housing Partnerships Conference** in Coachella Valley.

## The Garcia Family Builds a Future in Mecca

Maria and Jose Manuel Garcia are investing 40 hours per week to build their first new home with the help of relatives, friends, neighboring Self-Help families and USDA Rural Development and Coachella Valley Housing Coalition.

They hope to complete construction this summer and move into their four-bedroom, two-bath home in the Mexicas Self-Help Subdivision. In Mecca, California.

Maria and Jose and their four children, Jose Manuel Jr, Armando, Laura and Denise have seen a more troubling side of housing in the past. As a farmworker for nearly 20 years, Jose and his family have lived for over a decade in a 12 x 15 foot concrete and plywood structure, paying as much as \$230 in rent per month. As the family grew, Jose added two small rooms, still relying on an extension cord for the entire home's electricity supply.

Right now Jose works as a groundskeeper for an area resort and Maria continues as a seasonal farmworker.

Their older children all plan to work this summer to

help the family afford new furniture for their new house. Coachella Valley Housing Coalition has worked with this family and many others to utilize the USDA Rural Development

Self-Help Housing Program and make the dream of homeownership come true. Congratulations to Maria and Jose for their hard work and success in building a better home for their family.



**Mecca, CA** - Self-Help families are trained in modern building techniques including metal frame construction. Metal wall frames are now used exclusively in Mecca. Project managers report they are straighter, stronger, easier to lift and less expensive than wood.

“Owning a home lies at the heart of the American Dream. A home is a foundation for families and a source of stability for communities.”

President George W. Bush



### Partnership for Success - Housing Conference

*(Continued from page 1)*

Speakers included Art Garcia, Administrator of USDA Rural Housing Service and Paul Venosdel, California State Director USDA Rural Development.

Coachella Valley Housing Coalition conducted a guided tour of the Self-Help Housing projects in Indio and Mecca and hosted an evening reception for the conference participants.

National Homeownership Month was celebrated during the tour with a special media event at one of the CVHC Self Help Projects. Special thanks to Rural Community Assistance Corporation for handling registration duties and for providing site assistance.



**Coachella Valley, CA** - At the Self-Help Housing Conference **Reinforcing Rural Housing Partnerships**, USDA RD California State Director Paul Venosdel, USDA RD Rural Housing Administrator Art Garcia and USDA RD Washington State Director Jackie Gleason.

# Teamwork Builds Affordable Housing for Families

Construction of Self-Help Housing is a true team effort. USDA Rural Development staff are proud to be on this outstanding economic opportunity team, but we are just one element. Individual builders / owners are a second essential part of the team. These owners and their friends provide the on-site sweat equity and commitment as leverage for a more secure future for their own families.

A third team element are the important skilled construction supervisors and building industry professionals who work on site, daily. The dedicated and hard-working non-profit housing corporations comprise the fourth critical team component.

A special thank you to the outstanding lineup of self-help housing corporation all-stars who have made it possible to stretch USDA program dollars and expand the number of affordable housing projects completed each year:

**Asociacion Campesina Lazaro Cardenas, Burbank Housing Development Corporation, Campesinos Unidos Incorporated, City of Brawley, Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, Community Housing Improvement System & Planning, Community Housing Improvement Program, Mercy Housing Corporation, Peoples' Self-Help Housing**



**Corporation, Rural California Housing Development Corporation, Self-Help Enterprises, Self-Help Home Improvement Project, South County Housing.**

In addition, the **Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)** is a

valuable technical assistance and management partner. RCAC play an important role in providing essential resident homeownership and construction training and other administrative services for our Self Help Housing Program.

USDA's values the Self Help Housing Partners on the team. These housing corporations devote significant time and energy to improve affordable housing options for rural Californians. Each of

these regional non-profit corporate partners has become an affordable housing finance and construction expert for their area, utilizing federal, state and private resources to help provide families with decent places to live.

With the teamwork of all these rural housing partners, we reached NUMBER ONE in Single Family Housing in the U.S. last year. Thanks to everyone and lets do even more in 2003!

"The Self Help Program allows families to learn additional job skills and build equity up front. . . It offers an opportunity for an improved quality of life and is an investment in their future."

Tom Dorr,  
Undersecretary  
USDA  
Rural Development



**Esparto, CA** - USDA Rural Development California volunteers and Self-Help Housing families take a break after working together at **Country West II - Mercy Self Help Housing** site on **Volunteer Day**, October 26, 2002.

## Homeownership Goal - A White House Priority

Visit Our Websites for further information about USDA Rural Development programs:

**California Office**  
www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca

**National Office**  
www.rurdev.usda.gov

### Helping Rural People Succeed

USDA Rural Development is an equal opportunity Lender, Provider and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20250

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President George W. Bush has set a high priority on increasing economic opportunity by setting an aggressive goal to increase homeownership. Last year President Bush set a goal of 5.5 million new minority homeowners by the end of the decade. This challenge sends a signal to federal agencies involved in home loans and grants such as USDA and HUD, but also is a challenge to the private and non-profit housing industry to "do what it takes" to help all families and individuals get their first home.

"It's not by accident that President Bush is devoted to economic development for families," said USDA State Director of Rural Development Paul Venosdel. "President Bush knows that by building equity through homeownership, a family gains a greater sense of pride, responsibility and self-determination for



their next generation." According to a 2002 study by the Administration, meeting the President's goal will involve \$256 billion in economic activity in the form of construction and remodeling jobs, spending on household goods, and other benefits.

June signals the time for the annual HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH celebration nationwide. In California, this

year's celebration includes a special tour of Self-Help Housing projects, funded by USDA Rural Development. Coachella Valley Housing Coalition is coordinating the tour of affordable housing projects they administer in Riverside County. The housing tour will visit projects completed and underway near Indio and Mecca.



**Mecca, CA** - Self-Help family members receive their certificates of completion at the **Mexicas Subdivision** on June 4, 2003. Joining in the Homeownership Month celebration scheduled as part of the *Reinforcing Rural Housing Partnerships Conference* are representatives from USDA Rural Development California, USDA Rural Housing Service, Congresswoman Mary Bono's office, Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia's office and Coachella Valley Housing Coalition.