

# More than location with self-help housing

By Alonzo Orozco, Contributing Writer

Although the Peoples' Self-Help Housing (PSHH) organization is celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, it shows no signs of slowing down. Opening its doors in 1970, PSHH's purpose is to provide affordable housing opportunities and support services for groups such as: farm workers, low-income families, seniors, those with disabilities and those transitioning from homelessness.

Within a year, in affiliation with Comstock Homes, the non-profit plans to spread its wings by breaking ground on the Los Carneros Planned Communities project in Goleta, which will consist of 70 affordable housing units. According to Executive Director, Jeannette Duncan, the organization will also focus on improving its Youth Education Enhancement Program.

"We have over 200 (children from Spanish-speaking homes) now everyday who come to our program. We're seeing tremendous results with test scores," she boasts of the program set up for children - living at PSHH units - whose mothers for the most part have received little education themselves and are worried about their children falling behind in school because of the language barrier.

The group, which also serves San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties, plans to celebrate its

landmark anniversary with a trio of events in the fall with their "Central Coast Taste of Hope" parties. During these soirées, they will pay tribute to the individuals and businesses that have contributed to their projects over the years, as they'll offer wine tasting, fine dining from local restaurants and caterers, as well as entertainment and silent auctions at some breathtaking venues.

The first celebration will be held at Rubin Estate in Santa Barbara on Oct. 3, the next being on Oct. 23 at Edwards Barn in Nipomo and the finale at Niner Winery on Nov. 6 in Paso Robles. All the events will be held on weekend afternoons and will double as fundraisers for companies to honor People's legacy by becoming a sponsor and donating proceeds anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000 to benefit People's Youth Education programs.

One of the main objectives of PSHH is for those who participate in the programs to become self-sufficient. The organization helps to meet that goal by bringing families together to help build one another's houses, which is referred to as "sweat equity." Groups of families for a period of 10 to 12 months will build 70 percent of the homes.

"It's a way for very low-income people to get their first home," explains Duncan. These new homeowners now have created an investment from which they can build a source of wealth

for the future.

The organization also offers affordable rental housing with lower than market rate rents, managed by The Duncan Group. Goleta residents currently benefit from a couple of these communities, Ellwood and Storke Ranch Apartments, which are a combined 44 units close to shopping, transportation routes and recreational areas.

Even with proposed growth on the horizon,

the organization still has its share of obstacles as it continues to look to the future.

"With the state fiscal situation, a lot of the funding programs for housing are not going to be around," says Duncan. "The future is to learn new ways to do things," she adds.

However, backed by the local community, it's easy to see how this organization's endless energy and momentum will help to sustain its growth.



Photo by Alonzo Orozco

Santa Barbara headquarters for the PSHH and their adjacent hotel for those transitioning from homelessness.