



SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING-One of a group of new homes (above, left) constructed in Sterling, Alaska by homeowners through USDA Rural Development's "Self Help" program. Above, Nita Jackson (right) signs papers allowing her to move into her home. Assisting is Kenai Loan Technician Wylie Chandler.

SELF HELP HOUSING COMES TO ALASKA'S KENAI PENINSULA

THE NEED: Safe, affordable housing for limited-income Alaskans on the Kenai Peninsula.

HOW RURAL DEVELOPMENT HELPED: By providing a grant to the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), USDA Rural Development enabled prospective homeowners on the Kenai Peninsula to construct their own homes, under the supervision of a professional contractor. Sterling homeowners worked together to build attractive, quality homes with detached garages. A second construction phase has begun in nearby Kenai, also under the direction of RurAL CAP.

"This program has allowed area residents, many of whom have never owned a home before, to achieve the dream of homeownership," said Kenai Rural Development Area Director Michelle Hoffman. One of those residents is Eddie Engelstad, a member of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. He and his companion Tina Bolton worked almost daily on their new home and the homes of their neighbors who participated in the program. "Thank goodness for this Rural Development program," said Engelstad. "Thanks to your agency we were able to move from an old trailer into our new home."

RurAL CAP is seeking eligible Alaskans to participate in future self help phases. For more information call the Kenai USDA Rural Development office at (907) 283-6640.

THE RESULT: Using USDA Rural Development's "Self Help" program, Alaska families on the Kenai Peninsula are breaking the cycle of renting and becoming homeowners. By building their own homes they are also building equity in their property. During 2008 June Homeownership Month, Acting State Director Chad Padgett, Area Director Michelle Hoffman and her staff joined a representative of the Alaska Congressional Delegation's staff to co-host a picnic with RurAL CAP for the Self Help families at the Kenai site.
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