

Rural Housing Service • Mutual Self-Help Technical Assistance Housing Program

Achieving Homeownership Helps Rural Family Reduce Expenses

Sandra and Michael thought homeownership was beyond their reach. They never imagined it was not only possible but that they could reduce their housing expenses by buying a home.

They were living in a manufactured house with their three children and their dog. The home was built in the 1970s, before building codes were updated. It was poorly insulated, had a leak in the roof, and dry rot. They knew they needed to move. Sandra and Michael agreed they wanted to buy a house, but they didn't see how they could afford it.

A friend told them about a program run by the local nonprofit Community Home Builders. The nonprofit uses a [USDA Mutual Self-House Housing grant](#) to guide families through building their own homes, providing oversight and construction assistance while the families reduce the price with their own labor. The families also receive affordable mortgages through USDA. When they learned the next subdivision would be built in McMinnville, they applied immediately.

Achieving homeownership through this program required dedication. Sandra and Michael spent about two years improving their credit, and then worked with a group of families over 11 months to build each others' homes on nights and weekends. Nevertheless, Sandra said, "It was totally worth it. I gained skills I didn't expect. If something breaks, my husband or I can fix it now."

Sandra and Michael also received a low-interest mortgage loan from USDA with no down payment required. "There was no possible way we could have bought a brand new four-bedroom house without this program," said Sandra. "I would recommend it to anyone who qualifies. I love my new house and can't wait to move in!"

Not only did Sandra and Michael achieve their dream of homeownership, they also reduced their expenses. Their utility bill will be lower now that they own a home with high-quality insulation. Their mortgage payments will be about \$300 per month less than they were paying for their crumbling rental. And their new home appraised at a higher value than they paid for it, providing them with instant equity and a foundation for financial stability.



When owning a home seemed impossible, Sandra and Michael achieved homeownership for their family through their own sweat equity.

Obligation Amount:	\$655,050 grant to create a 26-home affordable subdivision \$240,000 (approximate) individual mortgage loan
Date of Obligation:	June 2017
Congressional District:	Representative Bonamici, District 01; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Demographics:	McMinnville, Oregon; population 34,347
Impact:	Twenty-six families who could not otherwise afford to purchase a home are achieving homeownership through their sweat equity, building their own houses with assistance from the nonprofit Community Home Builders and affordable mortgages from USDA.
