



Jose &  
Alicia



# MUTUAL HOUSING

CALIFORNIA

SHAPING PLACES • SHAPING LIVES

Since they moved to California some 20 years ago to harvest the food that America eats, the one constant in the lives of Jose and Alicia Guzman has been the underlying stress of their housing instability.

At the migrant labor camp in rural Yolo County, they always knew that once the harvesting was done, the place would shut down and they'd have to leave. Then they would move into a son or daughter's trailer or apartment, where they felt like they were a burden, taking up space in their family members' living rooms.

Always, the anxiety. Always, the stress. Always, the instability. And this was even before Jose Guzman, who is now 71, was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and before he blew out his knees when he had to kneel on the ground to pick peppers and wade in thigh-high mud to lay irrigation lines.

"Our nerves would be really bad," Alicia, 67, said in a recent interview. "We didn't know what we were going to do."

Cramped in a trailer near the Yolo County Fairgrounds, Jose and Alicia Guzman learned about this relatively new community in Woodland that had been built for farmworkers like themselves. It was called Mutual Housing at Spring Lake. When they visited the sparkling new 62 townhomes and apartments, Jose and Alicia found out that even their fellow farmworkers whose average wage in Yolo County was \$12 an hour could afford to live there.

Although all of the homes were occupied, Jose and Alicia put their names on a waiting list - and their timing could not have been better. Last year, the nonprofit Mutual Housing California began construction on a 39-home second phase to the Spring Lake community and was taking applications. Earlier this year, Jose and Alicia learned that they had won something almost as good as the lottery: their application moved through the waiting list and landed on top, giving them an opportunity for residency at the new Mutual Housing at Spring Lake Phase II.

In May, the couple moved into their new home, complete with donated bedroom and dining sets, and they felt the effects almost immediately.

"Somos mas tranquilos - we are calmer," Jose Guzman said, in the interview held in the Mutual Housing community room at Spring Lake.

"We just want to rest and enjoy our home," he said, through the translation provided by Mutual Housing community organizer Miriam Vazquez Tapia. "When we were living with other people, we felt a little bit uncomfortable. Now we don't have to worry about bothering anyone."

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