



# “Found Object” Sculptures Add to Nonprofit’s Environmental Vision

Made of “found objects,” Steve Cook’s metal sculptures at affordable housing developer Mutual Housing California add to the nonprofit’s vision of environmental sustainability.

“Marsh Madness” recently was created for Mutual Housing at Spring Lake in Woodland, Calif. to mirror the wildlife near the marshes in the area. The 8½-foot tall egret and smaller critters surrounding it was chosen by Mutual Housing’s project manager Vanessa Guerra.

A farm worker’s daughter who grew in the area, Guerra inspired by the sub-division’s name: Spring Lake.

“I wanted creatures like a turtle, frog, dragonflies and cattails because you would typically see them near a lake and they reminded me of the marshes throughout Yolo County,” said Guerra.

Like Cook’s other art—which can be seen at New Harmony Mutual Housing Community in Davis and Mutual Housing at The Highlands in Sacramento—the sculptures are made from cast-aside tools and parts.

The egret is a motorcycle tank, an exhaust pipe off a car, hand shovels, a pair of nail trimmers that a farrier would use and rebar. The other critters in the art work are created from metal spatulas, garden cultivators, motorcycle chains, springs, railroad spikes, plumbing pipes, metal strips and a hammer.

Cook found his calling bailing hay in the local area. Where others saw useless junk in rusted objects abandoned in fields, he saw potential art. Cook wasn’t thinking of saving the environment at the time, but that has become an important aspect of his work.

“Cook successfully re-uses objects that would go to a landfill otherwise,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing’s chief executive officer.

Today, Cook has sculptures in museums and private homes from California to New York, plus Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Florida. He also has a big fan in Iskow, who has been commissioning sculptures since she first saw his work.

“Gertie,” a 9½-foot giraffe, is a cheerful presence in the courtyard of Sacramento’s Mutual Housing at The Highlands.



“Marsh Madness,” an 8 1/2-foot metal sculpture by Steve Cook mirrors wildlife at local marshes.



9 1/2-foot tall “Gertie” adds a cheerful presence to the courtyard of Mutual Housing at The Highlands.

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops sustainable housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at [mutualhousing.com](http://mutualhousing.com).

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At New Harmony Mutual Housing Community in Davis, Calif., a mother elephant and baby are made of gas-tank heads, digging-pick tusks, shovel ears and air compressor-tank bodies. The two grace the stand at the hub of the community while five metal “people” add a whimsy to the garden.

The Mutual Housing at Spring Lake sculpture was partially funded by a grant from the Mayors Climate Protection Award.

Because of Woodland’s emphasis on the environment, former mayor Tom Stallard led the drive for the award that was given on the city’s climate action plan—increasing the tree canopy and supporting zero-net energy homes such as Mutual Housing at Spring Lake.

“We really appreciate councilmember Stallard’s effort to secure this grant,” said Iskow. “For the city council to pass a portion to Mutual Housing for a beautiful art piece that reflects our sustainability goals is perfect.”

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops, operates and advocates for sustainable rental housing for the diversity of the region’s households.

A member of NeighborWorks America—a congressionally chartered nonprofit organization that supports community development nationwide—Mutual Housing has more than 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children.

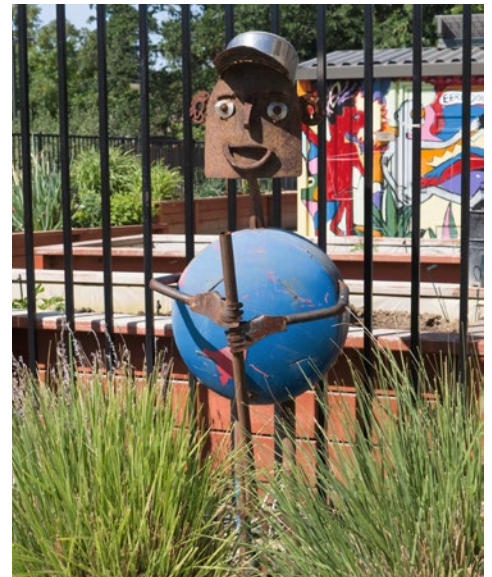
Through its focus on community, the nonprofit also provides training and mentoring as well as educational programs, leadership-building activities and services for residents and neighbors.

For information, visit [www.mutualhousing.com](http://www.mutualhousing.com).

To see more Steve Cook sculptures, go to <http://stevecooksculpture.com/>.



“Ellie” and her infant greet visitors at the entrance to New Harmony Mutual Housing Community. *Photography by Steven Bourasa.*



With a blue gas-tank stomach, “Berry” is one of the garden-folk. *Photography by Steven Bourasa.*

A member of NeighborWorks America, the nonprofit has more than 3,000 residents, nearly half of whom are children. For a list of upcoming Building Up Tours and to register visit [www.mutualhousing.com](http://www.mutualhousing.com).

It’s no secret agricultural and migrant workers have long been paid little for what they do, and some experts believe their low wages, coupled with the availability of affordable lodging, has led to a housing crisis for farm workers in California.