

## This is where I want to be'

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by Warren Kagarise

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IFFORD - For almost four years since hurricanes ravaged her neighborhood, Louise Colley has been unable to sleep in her own bed.

For almost four years, as she shuttled between the homes of family and friends, Mrs. Colley stopped by her old house every day to pick up her mail.

Out front in her car, she would sit and cry.

After almost four years, help finally arrived last weekend. As Mrs. Colley watched, nearly 200 volunteers began needed repairs to her home.

"I have had two addresses in my life," Mrs. Colley said. She spent most of her 70 years in the mint-green house on 25th Avenue. She raised her children there. Her husband died there three decades ago.

Standing in her ruined living room May 17, with exposed beams above her head and fragments of drywall beneath her feet, Mrs. Colley said she never thought about moving.

"This is where I want to be," she said.

When times turned tough, a deep religious faith sustained the great-grandmother.

"God is amazing," Mrs. Colley said. "Who else could put it in the hearts of all these people?"

Every Dream Has a Price, a local nonprofit, brought volunteers from businesses, church youth groups and civic organizations to the house on 25th Avenue.

"You come across stories like this and you know the right thing to do," said Julianne Price, a founder of Every Dream Has a Price and a Florida Health Department official.

Every Dream Has a Price coordinates builders and volunteers to renovate crumbling houses for needy residents who are unable to afford repairs on their own.

Reddy Floyd, one of the nonprofit's founders and an Indian River County Sheriff's Office detective, said the daylong project brought residents together.

"Even with the economy like it is, people reach down into their hearts and give," Detective Floyd said.

Alan Dale Williams donated heavy equipment from his land-clearing business for the May 17 workday.

"Everybody loves her, and we'd like to have her back here," he said, referring to Mrs. Colley.

After hurricanes Frances and Jeanne damaged her home in late 2004, Mrs. Colley sought refuge with family and friends.

"I never once slept outside," she said. "Someone always opened a door."

As her sagging house stood empty, Mrs. Colley paid contractors who took her money and disappeared without doing any work.

For two years, Mrs. Colley has lived west of Vero Beach with her daughter, Madelyn Sears, and her son-in-law.

"It's a cliché, but there's no place like home," Mrs. Sears said.

Her coworkers from Vero Radiology spent Saturday lending a hand at the job site - a gesture that touched Mrs. Sears and her mother.

"They didn't have to come out here," Mrs. Sears said. "Everybody worked all day on the job yesterday."

"I'm not going to ever take it for granted," she continued.

Bob Dramis, a building official with the City of Port St. Lucie, coordinated dozens of volunteers through the Christian ministry World Changers, which tackles home-building and renovation projects internationally.

"This is a woman, who, over the years, has done so much for this community, and she needs help," Mr. Dramis said as he stood in Mrs. Colley's front yard.

Three more workdays are scheduled to complete repairs to Mrs. Colley's home.

"I can't repay them," Mrs. Colley said as volunteers rushed around her. "I can just bless them."

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he hopes to move back into her home by this summer.

The day I can turn the key and come into this house," she said, "I will probably sleep for days."

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