

Community program helps out with homes in Fellsmere

By KEONA GARDNER

FELLSMERE — Tears rolled down Martha Rainey's cheeks as she watched a bulldozer demolish the trailer she's called home since 1964.

"I've had so many problems getting the house fixed," said Rainey, 63.

And next door, Rainey's neighbor, Pamela Jefferson, 40, smiled as construction workers quickly took sledge hammers and saws to gut the 17-year-old wood-frame house.

"It's a blessing," Jefferson said.

The work is a part of the Indian River County Health Department's Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence program, where officials use community meetings to determine what community projects are needed. The program receives money from the state to pay for the projects.

Last year, the program connected several Wabasso residents to county water.

This year, the program is targeting improvements in the Carter Hall James subdivision. Both Rainey and Jefferson's homes will be rebuilt in one day — Oct. 13 — said Julianne Price, the program's coordinator.

During the demolition, Rainey had one request of workers:

"Oh, please don't knock my mango trees down," she said.

The mango trees, which had fruit hanging from their branches, were still standing late Saturday afternoon.

Before work started Jefferson's roof still sported a blue tarp courtesy of the 2004 hurricanes. And Rainey said the inside of her trailer had seen better days.

"I had one guy put in the new insulation but he didn't take out the old and it was soggy," she said.

Jefferson's house will be built by Regatta Construction of Vero Beach and Rainey's house will be built by Holmes Homes Construction, a newly formed company owned by former pro football player Kenny Holmes of Gifford.

Holmes said he learned of the need for adequate housing during a tour of the area with Indian River County Deputy Teddy Floyd.

"This is my community and I want to help out," Holmes said.



SARAH GRILE
Indian River sheriff's deputy Teddy Floyd gives Martha Rainey a hug before her house in Fellsmere is demolished on Saturday. A new house will be built for Rainey in October through the Indian River County Health Department's Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence program, which identifies blighted areas in the county and meets with residents to find solutions to the problems.



SARAH GRILE
The Rev. Ned Childress, pastor at New Bethel AME Church in Fellsmere, from left, and Alan Williams Jr., who works for his father's business, Alan Dale Williams Land Clearing and Leveling, throw pieces of pavement onto a front-end loader while helping with the demolition of Martha Rainey's house in Fellsmere on Saturday.

While their homes are being built, Rainey has found temporary housing on Oak Street and Jefferson is living with friends in the Grace Grove subdivision in Gifford.

And though both properties are a long way from being completed, Rainey and Jefferson said in their minds the houses are fully furnished.

"I'm going to have big kitchen because I like to cook," Rainey said.

Added Jefferson, "I want some place where I can sit down on my front porch and sit."

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