

Two new homes part of Indian River County's health

By KEONA GARDNER

FELLSMERE — Christmas will come a little early for Pamela Jefferson and Martha Rainey, two residents living below the poverty line.

The two will get new homes in October as part of the Indian River County Health Department's Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence program, said Julianne Price, the program's coordinator.

And both homes — each tentatively planned to have three bedrooms and one bath — will be built in a day by Regatta Construction of Vero Beach and Holmes Homes Construction, a newly formed company owned by former pro football player Kenny Holmes of Gifford.

"Isn't that something," Jefferson said of getting a new house.

The state distributes money through the program for improvement projects and uses community meetings such as the one conducted Saturday in Grant Park to determine what kind of help is needed.

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

Jefferson's house still has a blue tarp on the roof after it was damaged in the 2004 hurricanes. The tarp is now in tatters.

"I have weak floors and mold," said Jefferson, who has been living in Gifford as crews assess the dilapidated house in Fellsmere. "I just had one pipe fixed a few weeks ago and then another one burst after I got that one fixed."

Residents of Carter Hall James, a predominantly black community that has more than 100 homes and many low-income residents, gathered Saturday morning at Grant Park to learn about the program.

Only a handful of residents attended the meeting but Price and Indian River County Sheriff's Deputy Teddy Floyd were not discouraged.

"The next couple of months we'll be going door to door with a survey asking residents what they want done," Price said.

Added Floyd, "We really want to get the community input."

But one ingredient is needed for the program to be a success, Price said.

"Residents must stay involved," she said.

PACE MEETING

- 11 a.m. June 16, Grant Park in the Carter Hall James subdivision. For more information, call Julianne Price at the county's Health Department, (772) 794-7445.