

# Fellsmere subdivision residents share concerns about homes

By LAMAUR STANCIL

FELLSMERE — Pamela Jefferson's home is falling apart.

The 16-year-old home on State Street in the Carter Hall James subdivision has duct tape on its windows. Jefferson walks on a floor with plywood exposed. Various leaks have rotted kitchen cabinets. And various pipe problems in the bathroom can make it a disaster for her two children to take a bath.

"I wouldn't care if the house came down today," said Jefferson, 40. "I've sat here and cried, and I've prayed about this house."

Her home is just one of many in the Carter Hall James subdivision in bad shape, and officials from Indian River County and Fellsmere want to find out how they can help. The predominately black community has more than 100 homes. Most of them very old and few have been renovated by their owners, who can't afford the work.

The Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence program, which is run by Indian River County Health Department, is holding a community meeting at 11 a.m. Saturday at Grant Park in the Carter Hall James subdivision.

The state distributes money through the program for improvement projects and uses community meetings such as the one being held Saturday to determine what kind of help is needed. The program also connected several Wabasso residents to county water last year.

Jefferson is one of many low-income residents in the neighborhood. She makes \$870 a month through workers' compensation and hasn't worked since suffering an arm injury last summer. Often, that money goes toward the endless string of repairs needed for the home.

The subdivision has qualified in the past for state grant programs because it is a low-income area. But Jefferson herself hasn't qualified for help from traditional sources, which is why the PACE program stepped in to help.

Environmental Health Coordinator Julianne Price learned Jefferson had an exposed septic tank for which the county health department had cited her for. Since Jefferson couldn't afford the \$400 cover for the tank, Price contacted the nonprofit group Indian River Cares, which paid for it.

Wednesday, Price took several officials to Jefferson's home and other places in Carter Hall James. The group included Fellsmere City Manager Jason Nunemaker, City Councilwoman Susan Adams, sheriff's Deputy Teddy Floyd, executives for Regatta Construction of Vero Beach and a representative from Indian River Cares.

The visitors also checked out some of the abandoned homes in the neighborhood, which can often be used as criminal hideouts, Price said.

Price tries to pull together organizations that can help in various ways. For example, Regatta was tapped last year to build a home in Wabasso for a needy woman. Regatta

## PACE MEETING

- When: 11 a.m. Saturday
- Where: Grant Park in the Carter Hall James subdivision
- What's happening: Residents will tell officials from Indian River County and the city of Fellsmere what their concerns are for the neighborhood.
- For more information: Contact Julianne Price at the county's Health Department, (772) 794-7445

President Dennis Witherow walked through Jefferson's home Wednesday and said his company would consider organizing an effort to build her a new home.

The county initially was interested in helping out residents near Carter Hall James, who are on two short dirt roads just north of city limits. However, with those residents being so close to Carter Hall James, Price said the plans expanded to including the subdivision.