

West Wabasso residents rejoice over water project

By Adam L. Neal
staff writer

For more than three decades, Alberta Shivers has been concerned with her white clothes turning yellow after being washed at her West Wabasso home.

But the only thing she worried about Sunday was getting barbecue sauce on them.

"This is going to be such a blessing," said Shivers, who expects to be hooked up to the county water system within the next six months.

She has had well water, which sometimes came out of her faucets brown, since she moved 33 years ago into the West Wabasso community north of County Road 510, between 61st Drive and 66th Avenue.

"There is just so much iron in the water here," she said. "I have to bleach everything."

Shivers and more than 100 other area residents packed a gathering Sunday afternoon in the back of St. Matthew's Baptist Church in West Wabasso to celebrate the local water project kickoff with a barbecue.

The free barbecue ribs, chicken, coleslaw, rolls and other foods were consumed in celebration of the recent \$825,000 state grant that allows about 80 homes to be equipped with water lines and the yearlong work between residents and county officials.

Several local officials and county commissioners joined the celebration, sponsored by the county Utilities Department, Environmental Health Department, Indian River County Sheriff's Office, local engineering contractors and others.

The Rev. Charlie Jones of the Church of God By Faith was one of the many speakers at Sunday's celebration. He echoed previous comments about how the community set a goal and accomplished it.

"As a community, if we come together we can do anything. And this proves it," said Jones, who opened the ceremony with a prayer. "This is just a stepping stone to higher heights we can achieve."

Alma Miller, who works for the county Environmental Health Department, urged residents of West Wabasso to continue to better their lives by taking care of their bodies and working together to bring the basic essentials to the community.

"Not one person could bring this together," she said. "It doesn't have to just stop with water."

Frances Snyder was one of several residents at the barbecue who took interest in signing a one-time access permit, which gives county contractors permission to her property to connect the new water lines to her home.

"It has been a long time coming," she said, "but it's a blessing, finally a blessing."

The barbecue moved outside for a brief ceremonial groundbreaking of the project. A few county commissioners and project officials joined hands with community members for a prayer thanking everyone involved.