

## Teens team up to build man's house

By Kurt Ludke staff writer

WABASSO -- After spending the past several years living in his car, 81-year-old Freeman Wiggs soon may be getting a new house, thanks to the efforts of a few Brevard County teenagers.

Stephanie Goins, mother of one of the teens and president of CCDI Inc., a Cocoa Beach construction management company, said she will be providing technical assistance, but "they're going to physically do most of the planning and most of the work."

The teenagers are setting up a community service group to help Wiggs and others in this area of western Wabasso, just north of County Road 510 and west of 58th Avenue.

The goal is to bring back hope of a better life to these residents who say that for years they have been promised assistance that often failed to arrive.

The first step in achieving that goal occurred Tuesday, when Wiggs' 320-square-foot house was torn down and hauled away on a dump truck. Neighbors gathered at the intersection of 63rd Avenue and 87th Street to watch the house come down.

The teens, most of them students at Melbourne Central Catholic High School, plan to build the new house themselves, but contractors are expected to do some of the work. The students have gained experience through working at Catholic Heart Workcamps.

"Construction probably won't start for two months," Goins said, adding the group is still working to get a well and septic system donated.

The teens hope to have the entire project financed through donations, she said.

For now, Wiggs remains somewhat skeptical of the endeavor.

"I'm going to wait and see" if a house gets built, he said while sitting on a corroded metal chair next to his Eagle Summit vehicle.



**Freeman Wiggs sits next to the car he has been living in for the past several years. He moved out of his house in Wabasso because it was falling apart.**



**Wiggs watches as workers from Affordable Trucking & Land Clearing Inc. of Wabasso demolish his house Tuesday. Wiggs will be getting a new house built for him as part of an effort to improve the living conditions in the area through a multi-agency project.**

Goins read about Wiggs' plight a few months ago and was reminded of it while attending a pre-camp meeting for her daughter, Kelsey Stinnett.

The teenagers who are starting the group include Kelsey, a freshman at Holy Name of Jesus School in Indialantic, and Sara and Henry Lorenzen, Jenny Lynch and Sarah Kroger, all students at Melbourne Central Catholic.

While trying to instill hope in residents here, the teens are doing a little hoping of their own. They are looking for contractors to donate their plumbing and electrical services.

The Indian River County Building Department has been "very cooperative," Goins said.

Calvin Godwin, owner of Affordable Trucking and Land Clearing Inc., Wabasso, had the demolition work done for free.

He said Julianne Renk, Indian River County's environmental health specialist, who has been working with the residents here since January "deserves a gold medal or something" for her efforts.

Sheriff's Detective Teddy Floyd, who has been working closely with Renk, said his job is to help bring people to justice, but "justice can be served in a number of different ways."

### **To help**

For more information, contact:

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