

Sandy victims search for solutions Residents flock to session on aid

By JOHN C. ENSSLIN
STAFF WRITER

A Little Ferry couple came to a one-stop flood relief fair hosted by Bergen County on Friday looking for something not explicitly advertised by any of the agencies taking part in the event.

Hope.

"We're looking for some hope of normalcy, which I think is never going to happen anymore," said Ana Lamboy, who with her husband, Victor Garcia, were among several hundred people attending the half-day program in the county administration building in Hackensack.

The audience was mostly residents who had been flooded out of their homes in Little Ferry and Moonachie last month in the wake of superstorm Sandy.

They heard from a volunteer lawyer with the Bergen County Bar Association, talked about insurance problems with state regulators and sought help from non-

profits such as United Way of Bergen County.

Volunteers with Habitat for Humanity, for example, talked to several residents about a program where residents could tap volunteer help and low-interest loans for projects ranging from replacing wallboard to getting a new coat of paint.

Jacey Raimondo, executive director of Habitat for Humanity, said many of the residents had problems with mold left behind by the flood. That's not something her organization can help with, but they were able to refer people to other outfits that do.

But once the old drywall is removed, Raimondo said, her group can come in and help with the work of putting in new drywall.

"Our neighborhood revitalization program fits this disaster relief program perfectly," she said.

Others, however, were looking for help getting further along with the applications for aid from insurance companies and the Federal

Emergency Management Agency.

Rashida Amin came hoping to find a way for someone to speed up her pending application for FEMA relief. Amin is seeking help on two fronts. Her Little Ferry home of the last 25 years filled up with water 5 feet deep during the flood.

Meanwhile, she lost a lot of food at her Ridgefield Park restaurant when the power went out.

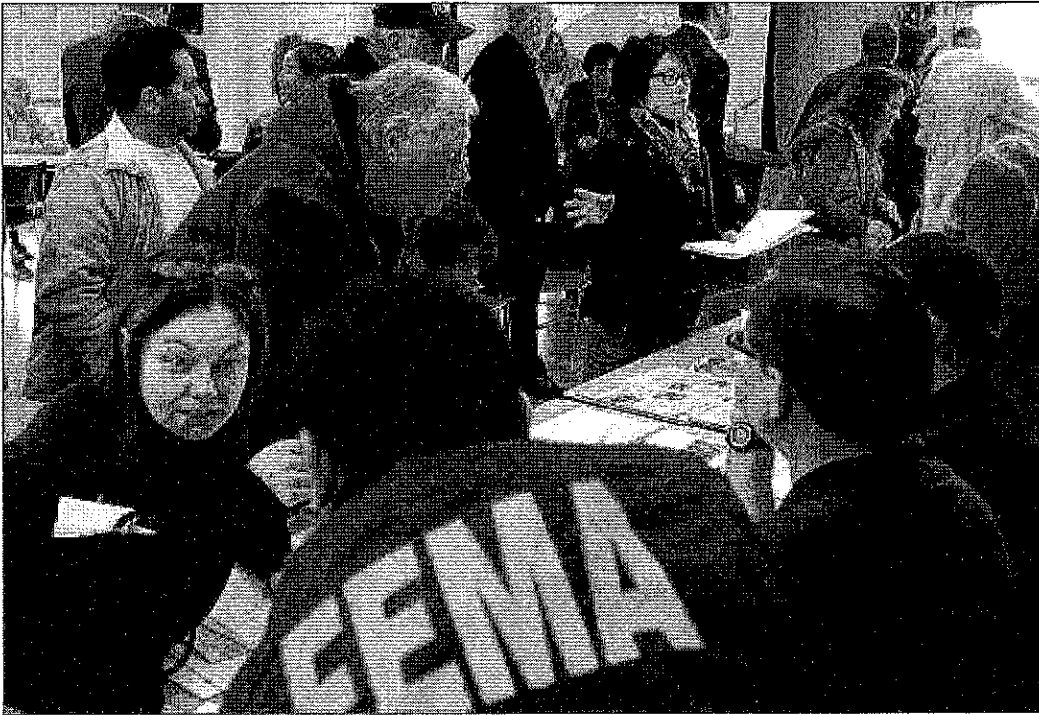
Bergen County Executive Kathleen Donovan said the purpose of Friday's event was to connect people to the help needed, either to repair a home, find a new one, find a job or get mental health counseling.

"If we're the wrong people, we'll try to help them find the right people," Donovan said.

Little Ferry Mayor Mauro Raguseo said the event was helpful because people won't always come to borough hall for such problems.

"By having an event like this, you hear the issues that people are facing," he said.





CARMINE GALASSO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Residents meeting in Hackensack on Friday with government representatives and non-profit agencies about ways to pay for property damage done by superstorm Sandy.