Alyssia Hall holds her daughter Alaijah, 4, as friends and family applaud the work done on her new house Tuesday at 606 S. Mechanic St. Hall said she expects to move into the house July 15. “Words can’t even describe how excited I am right now,” she said.
By Tarryl Jackson
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As a first-time homeowner, Jackson resident Alyssia Hall, 23, looked around in amazement at her newly constructed home one recent afternoon.

“I can’t even put into words how I feel right now,” said Hall, mother of Alaijah Boyd, 4, and Brion Boyd, 5. “I’m so grateful.”

The three-bedroom home in Jackson’s Partnership Park was made possible through a joint effort between the Greater Jackson Habitat for Humanity and Community Action Agency’s YouthBuild Program.

YouthBuild is a program in which people ages 16 to 24 work toward their high school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) diploma while learning job skills and serving their community by building affordable housing.

Jackson resident Jermaine Williams, one of the YouthBuild students, congratulated and thanked Hall at a recent dedication ceremony for the house.

“As I was building your house, I was building and bettering my own life,” said Williams, 19.

This is the third house in Partnership Park built by students in the YouthBuild Program. The home has also received an Energy Star rating as a “green” home for using methods such as building a wood basement and using advanced framing, which uses less lumber, officials said.

“It’s going to be a real nice home for them,” said Kevin Dowd, executive director of the local Habitat for Humanity.

YouthBuild U.S.A. was started informally in 1988 and incorporated in 1990 and has more than 250 programs nationwide, according to its website. Community- and faith-based nonprofit organizations sponsor most of the programs, although some are sponsored by public agencies. Primary support comes from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The students work on one housing project throughout the school year.

There were about 30 students involved in the program this year, up from about 20 last year.

“We’ve been able to expand the program a little bit this year and help more youth,” said Paul Burnham, program operations manager for YouthBuild. “This house is a visual testament to what we can do.”

Hanover resident Jeremy Maga, another YouthBuild student, recently earned his GED and will soon be attending college in Daytona, Fla., to study motorcycle mechanics.

“It’s helped me better my future,” Maga said about YouthBuild.

The program is now accepting applications for the upcoming school year. For more information, call 962-2916 or e-mail phurnham@caajlh.org.