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BETTY Ransfield and her children Tairaroa, 7, (left) and Tangiroimata, 5, are grateful for their new insulated home.

PICTURE: KELVIN TEIXEIRA

# Project insulating against asthma

by ALISON BROWN in Rotorua

BETTY Ransfield lives in a house filled with warm memories, but she is the first to admit the cold has nearly driven her out.

Traditionally in winter, temperatures plummet in the Rotorua home the 27-year-old grew up in.

Mould grows in the darkest corners of the Koutu house and condensation builds up in the air. It has aggravated her asthma and in recent years contributed to her daughters' poor respiratory health.

But this winter her family's spirits and the mercury in their thermometers are beginning to rise.

They are one of the first families to benefit from a community

project creating healthier homes in Rotorua.

It's hoped by making the homes warmer and drier, the occupants will save money on power and be less likely to go to hospital with respiratory problems.

As part of the Healthy Homes Project, the Ransfields' 70-year-old home has been insulated.

The free insulation was installed in the ceiling and under the floor and two weeks on, Miss Ransfield has already noticed a difference.

"I know it's warmer because I can't see my breath in the air anymore."

The Healthy Homes Project has operated successfully for several years in other parts of the

country, including the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

Separate to an insulation scheme involving Housing New Zealand homes in Fordlands, the project targets low-income home owners who have two or more people in their home with respiratory disease, such as asthma.

It has been jointly funded by the Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority, Health Rotorua, Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust, Lakes District Health Board, the Rotorua District Council and the Bay of Plenty Community Trust.

The groups are spending \$200,000 to insulate 100 homes as part of the pilot project which, if successful, will be offered to more Rotorua families over the next three years.

Four former beneficiaries have been trained and employed by Energy Options to insulate the homes. Only homes built before 1977 — when building regulations changed to make insulation mandatory — are eligible for the project.

Given those without insulation lose more than 40 per cent of heat through the ceilings, Energy Options manager Jo Hunt said the project had the potential to have a huge impact.

"The health benefits of having a warmer, drier home far outstrip the savings you can make on your power bill," she said.

■ People wanting to register for the project can phone 0508 WARM UP, (0508 927 687) between 8am and 3pm weekdays.