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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

There is so much good news on so many fronts in our mission that I simply have to highlight for you the highlights! So this month hear the news!

NEWS! The Pew Charitable Trust through one of its major initiatives, The Pew Partnership for Civic Change, has launched a “best practices” program named, “*Wanted: Solutions For America.*” Under the leadership of Suzanne Morse and her staff at the Pew Partnership a nationwide search is underway to select 50 programs that are making a significant difference in their efforts to effect meaningful and lasting change in the quality of life within their cities and communities.

The plan entails a major commitment by The Pew Charitable Trust (which is a 4.5 *billion* dollar foundation !!) to underwrite the selection process of the 50 “best practice” programs. Then an expert team of evaluators will spend three years working with those programs in a measurable validation process showing demonstrable results. And finally, there will literally be a *huge* national campaign to publicize each of the 50 programs, with care given to detail the aims, methods, and results for every group selected.

As you probably are aware, Shreveport Community Renewal has been selected to be one of the 50 “best practice” programs! We have also been honored by the Pew Partnership in being asked along with three other programs to be pilot sites for the entire initiative.

Last week we met with the other pilot sites from Jacksonville, Florida, Cincinnati, Ohio, and a group from Western North Carolina in Charlottesville, Virginia to lay the foundation for our participation with the Pew Partnership. I wish you all could have been there!! It filled us all with a hope which simply cannot be defeated.

To see the excellence of leadership in Suzanne Morse and her outstanding staff, to know of the commitment of the Advisory Board which reads like a Who’s Who in America, to be partnered with the depth of dedicated persons from the other sites, and to hear of the plans to open the sluice gates of publicity in the next three years, absolutely ignited Karen Logan, Burnadine Anderson, Bob Honig, and myself in ways that just can’t be described. *Y’all this is big!!*

The announcement of this initiative was made on September 15th at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. and news went everywhere. We saw several clippings from leading newspapers. Why, it was a front page story in the *Boston Globe*! It was so great to see the city of Shreveport featured in such a positive way and this was just the announcement! Wait until Pew really starts to roll the publicity out.

This will open a gigantic window of opportunity in three years for our whole city. We must begin to prepare *now* for the attention and interest this is going to

generate. People all over our land are looking for a working and a workable model which can bring a restoration of harmony and safety through renewed lives and neighborhoods. They will want to be trained and equipped to replicate “*The Shreveport Plan*” in their own city and we have to be ready to meet that challenge to train them in the concepts and practices which we have discovered here. We need to set up the equivalent to a “teaching hospital” to meet the avalanche that Pew is going to generate all over the media for us. Now this is news! But that is not all. There is more, much more.

NEWS! Over the past three years we have been praying and working for the day when a united effort within the faith community could begin to meet the challenge of the disintegration and dysfunction which we have seen around us. All of us have recognized that we cannot be effective partners with God in the building of God’s Kingdom of Love unless we are shoulder to shoulder together in the work. We simply have to have a united effort to take the city, because no one church and no one program will be able to successfully accomplish so daunting a task. Even while recognizing the uniqueness of our expressions of worship there had to be a common cause to which we could be yoked together.

Last month an outstanding group of pastors met together to undertake a plan which would meet the two greatest challenges facing the faith community of Shreveport. Those challenges are: 1) How can we function together as an army of God’s Love, and 2) How can we help our willing members find a handle of ministry in the local neighborhood.

I want to report to you that a major step has been taken in meeting those challenges! The idea is to *cluster* the churches which are *within* a neighborhood in an intentional investment in the mission to love and to serve *that neighborhood*. SCR is to serve as the platform for that mission. Because we already have *missionaries of serving love* in the Highland and Cedar Grove neighborhoods, the congregations can partner together to use our ICU Leaders living in the neighborhood as *their own neighborhood mission base* to build lasting friendships and covenant bonds with the neighbors of their churches in a strategy to rebuild the caring infrastructure in all of our neighborhoods.

There are already many shared ministries going on among our churches, but the unifying element of joining a united mission support team to facilitate unified action is compelling! There are many more details of this plan to share with you as it unfolds, but I see a supremely significant step being taken which can become a model for the nation.

I can’t believe it! I am out of space! And there is so much more to tell you about what is happening in Highland and Cedar Grove and citywide with the Haven House Plan! You are a part of it all.

I think of those of you who have so faithfully support this work with your gifts and your encouragement!

It is you who fill me with hope!!