

**11/23/1998**

## **A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter**

In our last issue of *Renewal News*, I began to share with you my perspective on the remarkable news that is flowing in the wake of the progress of Shreveport Community Renewal in rebuilding the neighborhood system of caring relationships necessary to restore a safe, loving, and nurturing community to our city. I also said to you that there was so much more to share! And there is!!

**NEWS!** This past year has been “The Year of The *ICU*.” Our goal has been to establish our Friendship Houses in the neighborhoods of Highland and Cedar Grove. I can now report to you that our goal will be met! We now have a Children’s Leader in Highland. (Sandra Simpson at 2204 Creswell has now been a resident of Highland for two years.) Thanks to the efforts of First Presbyterian Church through the D. Thomason Fund, this house, The D. Thomason Friendship House is serving the neighborhood with marked distinction.

Sandra has reached out in incredible ways! In May of 1997 she held a meeting of parents to initiate her *Kid’s Club* after school ministry. After canvassing the neighborhood for three months prior to the meeting, she felt that many parents would respond. She had zero parents show up. She started *Kid’s Club* the next week with three kids she had met doing weekly volunteer work at Creswell Elementary, the neighborhood school.

Sandra has now served Highland with *Kid’s Club* for eighteen months. She closed the school year last year with over 50 children in her program! She has had two family picnics with a turn out of over 100 people. She now has 36 kids in her house after school and she has started a successful parent’s group where 12 parents regularly come on Friday’s for pizza and support! And that group is her fastest growing group.

Add to this fact that Sandra is on the streets on Monday’s and Wednesday’s before *Kid’s Club* calling house to house. And on Monday’s after *Kid’s Club* she is calling on parents in their homes. It is no wonder her work is a resounding success! (Her husband, Jon is no less responsible for Sandra’s effectiveness. His devotion to the cause of spreading God’s love is simply a paragon of dedication.)

But there is more great news from Highland. In July of 1998, another remarkable couple moved into the SCR Youth Friendship House. (Located at 402 Prospect, this large three story house has been a great gift of The Committee of One Hundred and The United Way of Shreveport.) Phillip and Prescola Williamson and their children settled in and began to follow the SCR “Neighborhood Penetration Plan.”

Phillip is from the Bahamas. A CPA who received the call to ministry, Phillip and Prescola both received Master’s Degrees from Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Ft. Worth.

They walked the streets meeting the residents of Highland. Phillip started his middle school youth group with two youth. One was his son, the other was his son's friend. It was September 15<sup>th</sup>. Now there are 35 middle school youth coming to the Friendship House after school! He has five high school youth who have showed up to volunteer to help - so he has formed them into a teaching team and meet with them. He has inaugurated a Junior Achievement Program teaching the youth to be job ready as well as an effective program called "Character Counts." We are seeing miracles in outlook and behavior!!!!

So in eight short weeks look what is happening! Phillip tells me that he is seeing from three to five new faces at every meeting. He has also been elected a vice president of the Creswell PTA. Phillip spends Monday and Wednesday afternoons going from block to block getting to know Highlanders. He has already held three cook outs which have been amazingly attended! He will be starting a "Whole Family" group after the first of the year reaching out to families one evening a week for nurture, education and support. Of course Prescola, a former teacher, who now is completing her work on Drug Counseling Certification, is a pillar of support and a huge help with the young ladies in the group.

I am running out of space again! So let me compress the news of Cedar Grove. We completed the building the ICU Youth Friendship House in July. (Thanks to Broadmoor Baptist Church's generosity, the house is a wonderful model of renewal at 536 East 78<sup>th</sup>) Yul Taylor has 43 middle school and high school youth who come to his house after school during the week. This program is eight weeks old. He also calls in the neighborhood. He will be beginning a AA Meeting in his house weekly following the first of the year! Gwen and their three girls are making a difference there.

Carolyn Abner, our ICU Children's Leader will move into her ICU Friendship House by December 20<sup>th</sup>! (The Community Foundation of Shreveport/Bossier has made this house possible through their wonderful generosity.) She meet with her *Kid's Club* at the St. Catherine's Community Center. She started with five children and now has 28 in regular attendance. William, her husband has been a huge support in getting the house ready for a great work.

**NEWS!** We have just received the police report for Reporting District 101, known in police circles as "Cocaine Alley." It is where our two ICU Houses are located. It was the highest crime area in the city. John Young, the Community Liaison Officer of the Shreveport Police has given out the statistics that show since January of 1998, "Cocaine Alley" has had a 42% decrease in crime and is now one of the *lowest crime areas in the city!!!* (This is all SCR, but it isn't all coincidence either.) Congratulations to the wonderful work of St. Catherine's, Father Bill Spencer, and Robert Alford. Congratulations to the neighborhood churches. Congratulations to Yul, Carolyn, and to Sampson Cawthorn, the SCR Neighborhood Ambassador.

Well, there is still more news. So stay tuned!! God Bless you all.