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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU by Mack McCarter

We have made stunning progress in the last year as people from every corner of our city have joined with us and Shreveport Community Renewal for the great task ahead; that of rebuilding a caring community. When I think about the incredible variety of avenues which have led so many to service, I am simply overwhelmed! In the face of a real and lethal threat to the foundations of our neighborhood security, we are seeing the artificial barriers of “difference” come crashing down as we unite in heart and deed to remake our city. Rich, poor, black, white, Catholic, Jew, and Protestant are all coming together united by the common cause of caring!

So the question, “How do you go about bringing lasting change to a community which is the size of Shreveport/Bossier?” The sheer immensity of the task, when we first think about it, inflicts us with that peculiar 20<sup>th</sup> century malaise which Lewis Mumford called, “the paralysis of the will.” Confronted by massiveness, our first reaction is to freeze. This has proved a deadly choice in civilizations gone before and now gone altogether. In order to survive, we must look to the simple solutions grounded in the granite principles of time tested truths. (Notice, that I said “simple” and not “easy!”)

This will help us to act decisively in the face of massed evil.

Here is what I mean. To renew a whole community, you must renew three elements which comprise that community. You must change persons. You must change institutions. And you must change the psychological perception of a community held by its constituents.

The greatest need in Shreveport is the need for changed people. We need folks who have been changed from being self-centered to becoming “other-centered” human beings. Our strategy is to rebuild the historic “factory” which can produce “other-centered” human beings. That “factory” is the caring

infrastructure of the “village.” Our city-wide Haven House Plan and the I.C.U. Plan for at-risk neighborhoods are two very measurable ways in which the caring relationships so necessary for basic community will be rebuilt.

Existing institutions are highly resistant to change because they have a symbiotic relationship with societal status-quo. Institutions, then, can never be changed by confrontation or coercion, but can be fundamentally transformed by the leavening power of key people within those structures who have been experienced transformation themselves. This is already beginning here as we witness institutional support and begin to form caring coalitions of the institutions.

And finally, a simple thing like placing a carved, wooden “WE CARE” sign in your flower bed can help to change the psychological perception of your community! Imagine a day in the close future when you see 2000 homes with “WE CARE” signs. Then you have the impression that you no longer live in a city of fear, with a few caring exceptions. But instead, you will have the more realistic perception that you live in a city of vast caring with a radically few “bad eggs.”

I am so glad to be associated with you! Because we will grow in number and in might! We plan to win! We will win because we are willing to out live, out die, and to out think the opposition! Have a great day. And remind some one person to LIVE IN HOPE!