

2/20/2001

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“Looking Back And Looking Ahead III”

The momentum of a mission can always be measured best by the progress of the frontline workers combined with the enthusiastic engagement of all of the supporters of that mission. That is why I always consider it essential to keep each of you abreast of the monthly advances that we are seeing in mobilizing our forces to rebuild the caring infrastructure so necessary for community to be formed. But I seek to go one step further with you. I believe that you need to be aware of the *actual strategic planning* that lies behind the day to day work of our staff and volunteers. Your understanding and support brings community renewal to our cities!

So for the last two issues of *Renewal News* I have outlined the major imperatives that ignited our efforts in the year 2000 and which provided a dynamic launching platform for our mission this year. We have seen the first two of those imperatives and how they have molded our thrust. We examined the first priority, which is to **strengthen and stabilize the model of renewal** being planted here in Shreveport and Bossier City. And in the last issue, we saw the progress of our second initiative equally successful in its birth and growth as we worked to **build the capacity of our resources** to fuel financially the model of renewal. Now, let me share with you the third and final imperative of our new millennium movement. We sought in the year 2000 to **lay the foundation of our National Center For Community Renewal.**

In the very beginning of our work, we were confronted by the challenge implicit within the concept of community renewal itself. That challenge spoke to us in this way: *For community renewal to be true renewal it must seek to see “community” as a universal quest for universal reality. We cannot selfishly seek success in one city or one community to the exclusion of other cities and other communities. Surely, we must build locally, but always with an eye to the national and global need of community renewal in other cities.* So let’s look back and look ahead.

Laying the Foundation of Our National Center For Community Renewal:

- 1) In May of 1998, Bob Honig, Director of our Office of Strategic Planning, submitted the initial draft vision for the National Center For Community Renewal. One month later, we are asked by the Pew Partnership For Civic Change to pilot their national initiative called, “Wanted: Solutions For America.” They would provide both research support through a local researcher (Dr. Norm Dolch of LSUS) and validate that effort using the Rutgers University Center For Urban Planning. Then in

September, 2002, they would bring to bear a massive publicity effort nationwide, publicizing the 19 programs selected as “solutions.”

- 2) In 1999 we are joined in partnership with the Louisiana Crime Prevention Institute under the leadership of Dr. Harold Ledford with the goal of forming the Southern Consortium For Crime Prevention. Our charge is to provide the model and the training in community renewal for a five state area, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma. Resources in this effort will provide staffing and program for a “training center” located here in Shreveport-Bossier under our direction.
- 3) In the Fall of 1999 we are asked to join the first White House Conference on Community Renewal. That initiative has continued with monthly meetings and resulting in our engagement in a “best practices” initiative for community renewal in the Anacostia section of Washington, D.C. Bob Honig heads up that effort on our behalf.
- 4) In the Spring of 2000, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, one of the premier philanthropic groups in our nation, made an onsite visit to our model. Floyd Morris, the Senior Program Analyst for RWJ, was encouraging in his assessment of the possibilities at hand in our work. He returned in the fall with Judy Stavisky and Caroline Roan to further assess our potential as a renewal strategy. Through their trust, a very significant development grant has been awarded to SBCR which will take us to a new level of capacity in developing a national strategy for community renewal.
- 5) Expansion of the strategies of renewal begins in 2000. Through the work of Shelley Lester, other cities in Louisiana become the seed beds for our Haven House Strategy of Community Renewal Block by Block. Monroe, West Monroe, Bogalusa, Lake Charles, St. Bernard Parish, Gretna, and Baton Rouge are all cities in which the seeds of our renewal methods have been sown and received enthusiastically. In May of this year we will host our first statewide community coordinator training for these cities. This becomes the initial launch for our National Center.
- 6) Finally, we are seeing the shape of the National Center For Community Renewal develop. And believe me, it is past exciting!! I fully expect to see a major site develop for the National Center in downtown Shreveport. Imagine having a center which will house people from all over the nation and train them both conceptually and practically in the means and methods of community renewal which we have all experienced here. Imagine equipping them, sending them, and then encouraging them with a support team able to help them restore the caring infrastructure of their own cities. Imagine Shreveport and Bossier becoming known nationwide as the home of the National Center For Community Renewal. Do you know that with your help and trust and support *it is going to happen!!* Take care and continue to believe!!