

8/16/1998

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“I believe that each of you is interested in living in a community where it is safe at night and in the day! I believe that each of you want a community where children have such a loving and nurturing environment that they have the best chance to grow up as whole and wholesome persons! And I believe that each of you wants to know how we think that we can work together to make that kind of community possible!”

. These are the assumptions which I make when I speak before any group in this city on the vision and mission of Shreveport Community Renewal. It helps me focus my message and not meander in the meadows of irrelevance, because I believe that the rebuilding of our communities is *the priority issue* in everyone’s life. I want always to speak directly to that issue for it is vital to keep the goal and the path of renewal in our primary target sights. It is so easy to get distracted by the *most urgent* in our lives that we all need a periodic realigning with that which is *most important*.

Because this is an historic week in our journey, I think that it is also a good time for us to give another snapshot of the destination of our renewal efforts as well as to illumine the path upon which we are marching. This week Yul and Gwen Taylor along with Chenoa, Ebony, and Whitney, their three daughters, moved into the ICU Youth Friendship House in Cedar Grove. All of us are celebrating as we are filled with anticipation of a great new day. So let’s look again at the aim of our efforts.

We are striving for nothing less than the establishment of a city-wide cooperative effort in rebuilding a truly caring infrastructure of dynamic relationships which will restore a safe, loving, and harmonious environment to every neighborhood. The picture of this product can be best be shown in a four part scenario.

First, we must work to restore the essential foundations of nurture by concentrating on rebuilding the inner family and the *inter* family structure. Second, we must reestablish a strong adherence to a behavioral *ethic* which clearly delineates what our children must do and what they must not do. Third, we must work together to rebuild a strong sense of tradition within the neighborhoods. And fourth, we must recognize the transforming quality of the Transcendent Power of God’s Love for each and for all of us.

These four “ingredients” were the foundation upon which that most successful of all human collectives, i.e. the village, was founded. It lasted for five thousand years longer than any other “invention” for societal living in the history of this planet. Now the key question is, “*How* do we implement a method for achieving the reconstruction of these four pillars of a successful society?”

The strategy which we are using to achieve these four outcomes moves from the broad brush strokes of a mural down to the tiniest of detail. It is unique across these United States. And I absolutely believe that we have been led to discover a workable method for achieving our aim of nothing less than a renewed and a renewing community for one entire city! “*How?!?*”

First, we must build a dynamic force of *ordinary folks* like you and me who will undertake an *extraordinary mission*, that of reconstructing a caring community. This is our

Mission Team. The Mission Team is crucial to achieving our mission. Without each of you, without the people of our city, we cannot succeed in rebuilding the caring relationships necessary to change our community. This means that we must solve the problem of fragmentation. We are so torn and separated that we lack the cohesion necessary to bond us together. The more disconnected we become, then the more dysfunction disrupts us.

And conversely, the more connected through caring we become, then the more we see our community producing whole persons. We must find that common threshold of cohesion! I believe that we have! I believe that the one thing which we all share in common as human beings created in the image of God is our *capacity to care for one another*. This unites us all; male and female, rich and poor, Asian and African and European, and whatever religious preference. We all share *the capacity to care*.

But we can only mobilize that capacity through the *commitment to care*. This is why the Mission Team is such a critical idea. *The Mission Team provides a base of common commitment which unites us in common cause*. Do you want to rebuild a caring community? Then you must act together in common! That just makes sense. There are Five Commitments which must be fulfilled if Shreveport is to be changed. Our Mission Team members must: 1) Understand and Embrace the Vision or Strategy of SCR; 2) Become Visible within the Community as a Team Member; 3) Seek to Involve Others as Mission Team Members; 4) Volunteer to Serve Others; 5) Give Regular Financial Support for the Cause of Rebuilding a Caring Community.

Our Second prong in the strategy to achieve a new foundation is our Block by Block effort of rebuilding caring relationships called **The Haven House Plan**. This plan calls for folks to volunteer to be trained and to serve as catalysts for rebuilding friendships on the block where they live. The motto of the Haven House Leader is “We are remaking our city by making friends on our street!” This is a wonderful way in which we have seen unity of effort being systematically exercised all across our city. Just look for the blue and white wooden “We Care” signs in people’s flower beds.

And finally, **The Internal Care Unit Plan**, is the intensive effort to rebuild the caring infrastructure of neighborhoods that have been wounded and injured and thereby have suffered and are suffering the devastating effects of disintegration. We have implemented an eight step strategy for accomplishing the building of two models of neighborhood *regeneration from the inside out*. This plan calls for us to begin rebuilding the system of caring relationships within the Cedar Grove and Highland Neighborhoods by moving people into the neighborhood to serve the most precious possessions of any community, the children. By earning trust we seek to help the residents to help themselves, determine their own destiny and go with them in the journey.

There are many details to the plans which we are laying as you can imagine. But it helps to see the broad outline every now and then so that we don’t get lost in the forest.

Do not be afraid of the size of the vision or the immensity of the undertaking. It is the dreams of something better that has always challenged humanity. Indeed it is the dreams which make a new reality realizable! Join with us today!