

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

January 1999

“Our Next Three Years Together”

When December 31st shades into the last night of the year, we are always advised to look back before we look ahead to the dawn of a new year. At the end of 1998, I looked back three years! I was absolutely amazed at what I saw and I want to share with each of you that retrospective picture because if there was ever compelling evidence that takes us into the future with bold confidence, then simply looking back provides it. Here is what I saw.

Renewal Mission Personnel. In early January 1996, I was the only person in the employ of SCR. Now we have 12 persons working everyday in a full time capacity to bring about a solid restoration of a caring community. This team is divided into mission personnel and mission support personnel to form our whole *Renewal Mission Personnel Team*.

The Growth of “Renewal News.” In mid-January 1996, Ellen Reynolds, a public school teacher with a Master’s in Technical Writing, became SCR’s only part time worker. She composed and edited the first edition of *Renewal News* in March of that year. Now, under Ellen’s leadership, *Renewal News* has a circulation reaching 7,000 homes! As one reader described it to me, “It’s like getting *hope* in an envelope every month!”

Funding Support For The Cause. Every war costs. We are seeking to destroy the destructive forces which are devouring our lives and the lives of our children and this is a real war. But it must be the “moral equivalent of war,” as William James puts it. “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” Paul wrote to the Corinthians. We have marveled at the broad base of support for this unified effort which has grown from ninety nine thousand dollars in 1994 to over six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in 1998!

The Mission Itself. I looked at all fronts. The Mission Team - folks like you joined together to change one American city through committed caring - has grown to a group approaching one thousand persons! The Haven House Plan - people committed to rebuilding relationships of friendship on their own street - has over 100 city blocks now in the embrace of the “WE CARE” sign. And the Internal Care Unit Plan has now been planted in Highland and Cedar Grove with positively stunning results. From zero kids in 1996 to over 150 children and youth ministered to every week by the end of 1998 and hundreds of homes wrapped in the arms of our Neighborhood Ambassador, we have seen miracles of growth haven’t we?!

Now it is time for us to look ahead. Where do we go from here. Strategically, I believe that we need a year of consolidation. We need to spend this first year in the next three year plan in deepening the roots of our growth in order to reach even higher to a new level of city-wide impact. Now “consolidation” is a relative term, because actually our goals will show you that we will be still growing like crazy! Here is what I see.

The Year of The Haven House. We have officially designated this year, “The Year of The Haven House,” because we plan to give our priority time to expanding the number of Haven House Leaders almost exponentially. Our goal is to have 1,000 Haven House Leaders by the end of the year 2000. With five of the largest congregations in our city, along with six other major congregations opening their doors to enlisting their membership, holding training sessions in their churches, and mobilizing their members as Haven House Leaders, we could well reach our goal this year!! Imagine 1000 city blocks working together! That is about 60,000 people or better than one-fourth of our city’s population!

Move To Broaden The ICU Scope. With all four of our ICU Friendship Houses in place and operating, we will now move into the heart of our eight-step strategy for connecting the residents of Highland and Cedar Grove into a dynamic thrust for rebuilding the caring infrastructure within the neighborhood. We have LSUS and Centenary involved in the process of on-going and indepth measurements for the success of our work in the lives of everyone in those target areas.

Perfect “Operation Antioch.” We have been overjoyed with the initial success of a plan to enable the churches of our target neighborhoods to join together in common mission. In Highland, we have held our first meeting with representatives from each congregation and our ICU personnel to facilitate their mission together. There are twelve churches in Highland and seventeen in Cedar Grove which will eventually form a “cluster” for a united mission effort!

Mobilize Financial Development Team. With Karen Logan and Barbara Stiles leading the planning effort, we will see a successful effort for “Campaign 500” which will raise five hundred thousand dollars a year for three years in order to give a firm foundation to our funding. This will enable us to give our attention to the development and perfecting of the model of renewal which can be replicated nationwide.

Develop The Concept Of The National Center For Community Renewal. Within the next three years, SCR will receive massive national publicity through the Pew Initiative, *Wanted: Solutions For America*. We have been selected as one of their 50 “best practice” programs in the nation. With this window opening, we want to be ready to replicate the principles and tactics of SCR through a quality training center located here in Shreveport.

The next three years just like the last three years will be filled with unbelievable progress bringing a new hope to all of us because of each one of you!!! You are the reason that a new spirit is springing up all around. Your support, your love, and your devotion to the highest that we can reach is the cornerstone of success. Thank you for believing. Thank you for joining with us. And thanks to you, its working!