

## A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter March 1999

### “The National Center For Community Renewal”

Three years ago a process for solving problems on a societal scale began to be revealed in our thinking and planning here at SCR. As we surveyed the genesis and history of successful national and international movements as well as models in the business world, there began to emerge a distinct pattern. Every group followed a process which encompassed five phases. “The Five Phase Test,” as we call it, is now part of the fabric of our every step. What did we see about those groups?

First, they were able to *Analyze* a root problem or need. They were not enticed to treat symptoms but followed those streams to the source. Then they set about to *Conceptualize* a solution or answer. In some cases this was a group process, and in others an individual had the insight, but in any event, an answer was *thought of or imagined*. (The history of invention is the recognition that true *realism* consists in what is *realizable*! That makes *imagination* a key ingredient! Then the sky is the limit!) Now the crucial step is the third step in this process. They had to *Actualize* the conceptual model to be successful. Leonardo da Vinci could *think of and draw* a flying machine, but it was little ol’ Orville and Wilbur who *actually* built one! Now to help all of society, the last two steps were essential. They must *Standardize* the model so that it could be reproduced in massive quantity. And it had to have an effective way to be delivered to the masses themselves, therefore they had to *Mobilize* a logistical system for dissemination.

More than a year ago, I asked Bob Honig our Director for Strategic Planning to begin to flesh out the idea of The National Center For Community Renewal. More than a year ago I knew that we must begin to plan for *Standardization and Mobilization*. It did not take genius of insight at all. It was simply this. I began to receive the reports from our ICU personnel in the Highland and Cedar Grove neighborhoods about the stunning impact which was being made in the lives of the people of those neighborhoods through their work. I also saw the virtual explosion of our Mission Team numbers and the door swinging open for a huge growth in our Haven House block Leaders. I knew then that the *conceptual* model was becoming *actual*, regardless of *however rudimentary* it was. It worked! (The *difference* in the Wright Brothers plane and the supersonic Concorde is one of *refinement and embellishment*. *It is not one of principle*! The principles of each flying machine are exactly the same. We have much refining to do, but the model itself works!)

Now Bob set to work to find a way to *standardize and mobilize* through the medium of forming The National Center For Community Renewal. My only requirement was that the National Center would be located here in Shreveport, Louisiana. He readily agreed that this heartland location was essential if we were to successfully train others in what we now call “The Shreveport Plan.” Our meeting took place in February of 1998 in Washington, D.C.

By May of '98, Bob had put the finishing touches on a comprehensive draft plan for the establishing The National Center For Community Renewal. He delivered it to me during his May on-site visit with us here in Shreveport. The plan was immediately electrifying to me. It was wonderful. The significance of having a national training center, a world class “think tank” for community renewal, and an ongoing resource for lending encouragement, problem solving capabilities, and support for other cities who joined with us, is simply incalculable! But to have that National Center located here in Shreveport, in the city I love, is sheer dynamite!

Now comes something astonishing. I am still in wonder. With our model in its early beginnings, still at the “Kitty Hawk” stage as it were; with us having the audacity to already begin planning for national replication through The National Center; and with at most meager resources to see the job through here; *a door is opened for national exposure on a stupendous scale*! In late May of '98 I received a telephone call from The Pew Partnership of The Pew Charitable Trust. They wanted to come to Shreveport to look at the work of SCR!

Within a month Pew was in Shreveport going into Cedar Grove and Highland, sitting in on Haven House Leaders’ Training, and meeting with staff personnel by groups and individually. We were then informed that SCR had been selected to be one of the “best practice” programs in their initiative: *Wanted: Solutions For America*. They will select up to fifty programs out of the thousands of programs nationwide to be a part of their initiative. *Then we were informed that we would be one of the top four pilot programs for the entire national initiative!*

The Pew Charitable Trust, a 4.5 billion dollar foundation, would underwrite the initiative that would send the best social research groups in the nation to study, measure results, and validate each program in the initiative for three years. Then they would give massive publicity to every program in the initiative throughout the entire communications media of America. "The Shreveport Plan" will be nationally known in three years!! This is not conjecture. It is fact.

In the late Fall of 1998, I began to receive telephone calls from leadership groups in other cities. They had seen and studied our website. Some were even ready to send personnel to be trained!!! I had to inform them that we were not ready. But I knew that we had begun on our National Center not a moment too soon! I anticipate that in three years time we will be receiving 50 to 100 calls a week requesting training information! Imagine that!! Remember, true realism is what is truly realizable! Next month, I will flesh out the broad picture of The National Center For Community Renewal for you. I tell you it is exciting!! Stay tuned!