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## A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

I am heartened by the wonderful response which has greeted each issue of *RENEWAL NEWS* !

We have received phone calls, letters, and personal comments on every edition which we have printed and the encouragement is contagious! With almost 2000 copies mailed each month (soon to be over 5000 this Fall!) our newsletter serves the purpose of heralding the progress which we are making on many fronts in the renewal movement. It also serves another vital purpose.

It is used to provide the ideas which claim us and use us in rebuilding the foundations of a safe and a loving community. It is not easy to read this newsletter. It is not written for a quick scan and a fast discard into the recycling bin. We are not here to simply describe a subject. We have an **object**. We use this newsletter to help us to mobilize the caring people of our community to join with us in the strategies necessary to restore a vital and living hope to the citizens of Shreveport and Bossier City.

Each month I dedicate this last page of *RENEWAL NEWS* to the proclamation of the philosophical, historical, theological concepts of community renewal. (And every now and then, I describe some practical methodologies.) I do not believe that any renewal movement has a ghost of a chance to succeed unless it makes sense! When we took our first firm steps into the arena of this community, we entered into a battleground of conflicting ideas. I believe that only when we stand on the solid rock of reason and clearly communicate the greatness of the ideas that use us in their service- only then - can we hope to displace the decaying present with an exciting new future.

Now for seventeen years I have been caught up in this great adventure of finding a way to arrest the decline phase of our society. But I have discovered in this process that a far more sublime goal is at hand. It is one thing to staunch the hemorrhaging. It is quite another to experience transformation. How can we participate together in this grand quest of replacing the cycle of decay with a cycle which brings perpetual renewal for our lives and our communities? That is the driving question for us all.

Let me summarize for you our mission and our method.

*The purpose of Shreveport Community Renewal is to rebuild the system of caring relationships necessary to restore "community."* We are rapidly losing the loving connections which provide the invisible but critical infrastructure upon which society is based. And a necessary corollary to our purpose is to rebuild this system of caring relationships *by helping people to renew their trust in the transforming power of love.*

We are following three basic methods to achieve our purpose here in Shreveport and Bossier City. First, *we are seeking to enlist everyone possible* in the cause of rebuilding a safe and a caring community. We call this component, “*People Committed To Caring.*” We cannot change a city unless the people in that city truly and intentionally dedicate themselves to this critical cause. So we present a base of common cause. If you wish to participate in the reclaiming of our lives, then come and join us. Caring can never be accidental. It is a decision of the will. It is saying, “I will seek the good of another.”

We have four levels of involvement for our “*People Committed To Caring*” and they are: The Interested Level, The Entry Level, The Committed Level, and The Dedicated Level. Each of these levels of involvement has concrete steps which we need to take in order to make a difference. And each level calls for a deeper involvement than the last, until one reaches The Dedicated Level, which involves doing the five things necessary to change a city (which are: involve others, give financial support to the effort, become visible, understand the basic game plan for renewal, and serve others.) Our goal is 1000 Mission Team Members (The Dedicated Level) by the year 2000.

The second basic method we are using to achieve our purpose is a systematic block by block neighborhood rebuilding process called, “*The Haven House Plan.*” This is a proven method for constructing strong neighborhoods which are the essence of renewal. *We train a person to be the catalyst for caring on the block in which they live.* So each person begins to fulfill the Haven House motto, “We are remaking our city by making friends on our block!” Each Haven House Leader is simply trained to be a friend and to help the people on their block to make friends with one another. It is simple and revolutionary. Our goal is one thousand Haven House Leaders by the year 2000.

And the third basic method we are using to bring our purpose to fruition is called “*The Internal Care Unit Plan.*” (Or “*ICU Plan*”) This is our most complex plan because it calls for us to undertake a creative collaborative effort to effect sustaining change in the neighborhoods of our community which are help captive by crime, drugs, poverty, and broken lives. We are targeting two neighborhoods in which to develop prototypes of a strategy for transformation. In each target area we will move an *ICU Children’s Leader* and an *ICU Youth Leader* to live and to work with children and youth in that neighborhood! Our goal is two ICU models by the end of 1997. You are already hearing of the fantastic results which our Yul Taylor and Sandra Simpson are having in their respective neighborhoods!!

So this is a synopsis of our mission and our method. We need your help. Won’t you call today to join with us! We are seeing incredible growth daily. Don’t miss this chance to be a part of this vital cause!