

## A Word From Mack

We have a new name! It is not the first time in the short 14 year history of Community Renewal that we have changed our name, but this time our name should reflect our mission for some years to come. *Community Renewal International* is now our name which trumpets both a reality as well as a hope. As a matter of fact the procession of our names is a wonderful example of the growth of our common commitment to the high calling of caring for each and for all. From *Shreveport Community Renewal* to the understanding that a river unites us with our sister city, hence *Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal*, to the enlarging of our vistas to the world in *CRI*, we all accept a wonderful challenge.

And that challenge is precisely this: We must continue a rigorous devotion to the local work while keeping our sights on a horizon which is global. That is not going to be hard for us. For you see, together, from the beginning of this adventure, you have been encouragingly dedicated to one of the precepts that penetrates all that we do. And that truth is simply the echo of John Donne's famous words, "no man is an island entire in itself..." and Martin Luther King's gripping dictum, "We are bound together, inextricably, with bonds of commonality, so that what affects one of us affects all of us."

Fourteen years of hard slogging in hands-on caring have taught us all this truth. We are connected and interconnected in a thousand ways to one another. Therefore, you cannot just fix one street in your town ignoring the others, or claim just one fine neighborhood in your city to the dereliction of the others, or lift up just one shining state in your nation while keeping the others in darkness, or even seek to isolate one booming nation from the ravages of global need. It will not work, now or ever, because we are connected to each other. I tell our team over and over again, "In a dirty swimming pool, you cannot just clean the spot where you are swimming!"

So from the beginning of our work, all of us together, have fully recognized that we must fiercely devote ourselves to the perfecting of a model of renewal that works. And the only way to do that is to stay in one place, here in Shreveport and Bossier City, and hit the same nail on the head until it is driven completely in. Then we can show other cities and states and nations. And they can inform and teach us and each other new and better ways of perfecting the methods of making our communities paragons of caring and love. We must be narrowly local so that we can be expansively global.

The strength of a model that works lies in the ability to improve and replicate that model over and over. This has always been our goal. Devotion to the local always must be joined by eyes fixed upon the global. In a far more innocent and uncomprehending day for me, I did not know that we could possibly be connected to the wilder regions of Afghanistan. But on Sept. 11, 2001, to my horror, I learned that we were disastrously connected.

As I write these words to you, Dr. Valentin Miafo-Donfac, a native of Cameroon, Africa, and the Director of International Relationships for *Community Renewal International* is on a four-nation mission in Africa. In Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria, he is meeting in-depth with high commissions and leaders in business, NGO's and government agencies. The trip has been months in planning. It is all preparation for the first African Summit in Community Renewal to be held here in Shreveport-Bossier City this fall. We are expecting representatives of more than 30 nations to attend. They will

come to see the local model in action and to learn how it can be translated to their culture and country. And we have answers for their questions.

So do not let our new name fool you. Yes, it is *Community Renewal International*. But we are not planting our feet firmly in mid-air! To the contrary, we are walking the same path here in order to make that way luminous for all the world to see. And we are plucking the same set of heart-strings here that we might fill the whole world with the music of love and caring for one another.

Thank you for so believing and helping and walking together on this team of renewal. Our children and their children will send their songs of joy down through the years to each of you. God bless you all!