

## *A Word from Mack*

We march to a cadence of caring

The village was the wonderful and unique invention of woman. And it transformed human existence. We have existing archeological roots for the village that go back to about 15,000 BC. But it must be much older. It was nourishing and nurturing for the human beings who lived together thus. In essence we must recapture the strength of caring so shown in the village. We must re-village-ize our cities. If we don't pull together, we will keep pulling apart.

So we start with the whole city. We blend together three initiatives for the overall strategy of connecting caring people. First, we have The Renewal Team with its major group called "The We Care Team." Rich and poor; black, white, brown; male and female; young and old; all have the capacity to care. So we just "connect" those already existing caring folks. Sign an "I Care" card and tell just one thing you are doing to help another. Then put on your "We Care Pin," put your "We Care Bumper Sticker" on your car, and place your "We Care Sign" in your yard. This makes you and all the others visible to one another so you can begin the first step of connection – recognizing folks like yourself from all walks. More than 50,000 people are on the "We Care Team!" and it's growing every minute! Our goal is 130,000.

Next, we must go block by block, house by house, apartment by apartment, to reconnect caring folks intentionally. We call this initiative Haven House. The idea is to enlist, train, and enfold ordinary folks to be the catalysts for reconnecting the people who live around them. The first step is to get to know one another. And then help them get to know each other. (When I grew up, we knew everyone on our street and they all knew us. Now, we can e-mail folks all over the world and not know who is living and dying just three houses away. We have become disconnected and this brings dysfunction. It is really no enigma why we collapse after all.) We have trained more than 1,200 Haven House Leaders. They meet together in our Care Clusters in groups of 20 each month. Our slogan is: "We are remaking our city by making friends on our street." Our goal is 5,000 Haven House leaders in our city.

Finally, how do we help those friends who have found themselves in high crime and high poverty areas of our cities? We must go to them and live with them and work with them to transform the darkness into areas of light! We call this our Friendship House initiative. We recruit, train, fund, and send remarkable folks we "Community Coordinators" who move, with their families, into high-crime, high-poverty neighborhoods to live. Their task is to regrow the infrastructure of caring relationships. And we build "Friendship Houses" which are large houses with a "community room" to launch this process.

Our Community Coordinators begin by rebuilding trust through serving. They start by serving the most precious possessions of the neighborhood, the children and the youth in after-school "Kid's Club" and "Youth Club" at the Friendship House. Then, with trust growing in the adults, education, health, jobs, housing, leadership, safety, and loving common values are

centered and launched from the middle of the neighborhood itself. The Friendship House is leaven for caring. We now have 10 Friendship Houses in five neighborhoods. Our goal is 60 Friendship Houses in 30 neighborhoods in Shreveport and Bossier City.

Our cities are like our swimming pools. You cannot just have a healthy swimming pool in some sections and not the other sections of the pool. The whole pool must be addressed. So it is true what John Donne spoke so long ago, we are inextricably bound together in bonds of common humanity. If one speck of sand is washed away, then, he said, Europe is the less.

We are embarked on a tremendous journey. It is High Cause to give our children and those who follow a way to grow a new world where caring for one another reigns supreme. We call it Community Renewal and we invite everyone to join this march that steps right off the map of history and into a new land of loving. Thank you each and all of you for keeping the cadence of caring!