

# RENEWAL NEWS

SPRING 2022 EDITION  
VOLUME 27 ISSUE 1

**AN EDUCATION  
BUILT ON CARING**

SEE PAGE 9

**WORK  
BEGINS  
ON NEW  
FRIENDSHIP  
HOUSE**

SEE PAGES 6 & 7

**“MY HOPE IS TO  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE”**

SEE PAGE 3



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2022 ARA GRADUATES!

[WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US](http://WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US)

SEE PAGE 5

# COMMUNITY RENEWAL

CONNECTING PEOPLE • CHANGING LIVES • TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



**51,816**

MEMBERS OF THE WE CARE TEAM (PEOPLE CONNECTED TOGETHER THROUGH CARING)



**4,000+**

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



**1,750**

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



**172**

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2021



**165**

STUDENTS HAVE EARNED THEIR HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA AT THE ADULT RENEWAL ACADEMY



**55%**

AVERAGE DROP IN MAJOR CRIME IN OUR FIVE FRIENDSHIP HOUSE TARGET AREAS



**10**

FRIENDSHIP HOUSES LOCATED IN 5 TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS, WHERE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS, ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, AND OTHER COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES ARE HOSTED

Community Renewal connects people from all walks of life to restore safe, caring and vibrant communities. We restore hope and renew the spirit of cooperation among neighbors, businesses, churches, schools and other groups.

We envision a world where every person is safe, loved and fulfilling their highest potential in the community.

**HOW WE DO IT:** We focus on three prime strategies:

**RENEWAL TEAM:** The team works citywide to unite individuals, churches, businesses, civic groups and others as caring partners building a stronger city.

**HAVEN HOUSE:** Volunteers unite neighbors on the block where they live. They place "We Care" signs in their yards and bring neighbors together through various activities.

**FRIENDSHIP HOUSE:** These are homes built in low-income areas and lived in by Community Renewal staff who help turn impoverished neighborhoods into havens of hope.

**DONATE TODAY!**

GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT

[WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US](http://WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US)

and click on the **DONATE** link

OR

use the envelope in this newsletter to make your donation **TODAY!**





# COLLEGE GRADUATE SETS HIGHER GOALS

**T**ierra Thrash found her voice – and the road to college graduation – through Community Renewal.

Once a quiet girl who felt a bit unsure about herself, Tierra gained courage and confidence by literally growing up at a Community Renewal Friendship House. She started with the Kids Club in the Allendale neighborhood when her family moved there 15 years ago and this spring she graduated from Southern University Shreveport.

“I loved going out from the Friendship House into the community and how we made gift baskets at Christmas and took them to people. And I loved how we started a garden

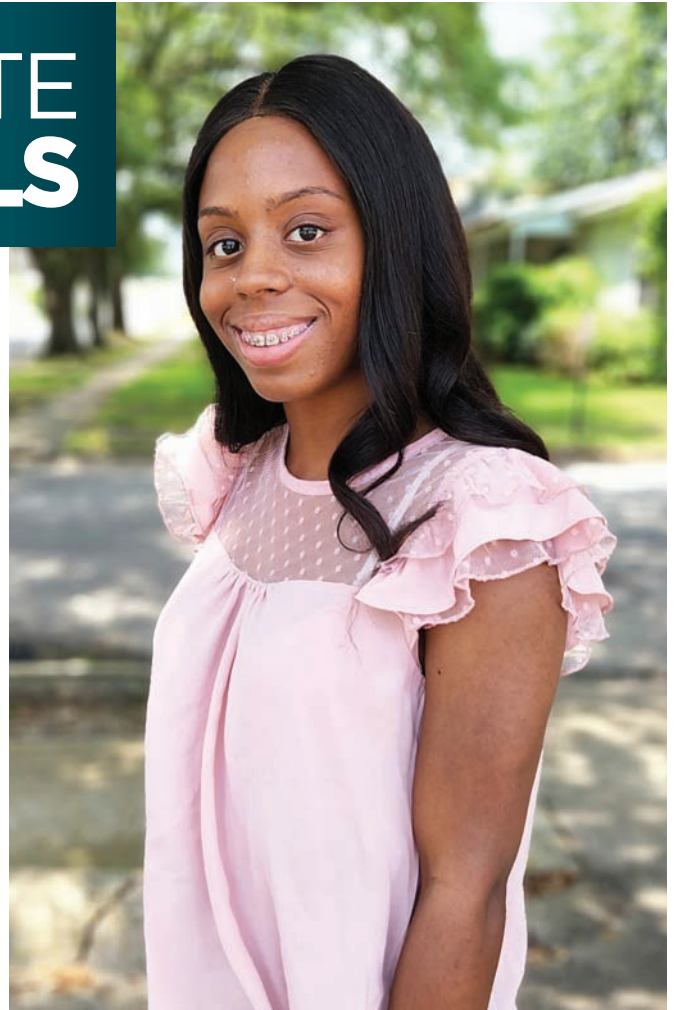
“They kept me encouraged and they kept me on the straight and narrow. They rewarded us when we made the Honor Roll and I liked the Report Card Dinners. They played a big part in me going to college and figuring out where to go and what to do.”

Tierra earned an associate degree in human services from Southern and now she’s moving on to LSU-Shreveport to study psychology. Her goal is to earn Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees and become a counselor. She is already gaining experience in that area with the work she does for Project Celebration. She is also active at her church, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, where she does praise dance.

“I’ve always liked helping people and talking with people,” she said, adding that her experiences at the Friendship House will help in her career.

“You never know what somebody is going through and what they are dealing with. People have their own separate battles. That was a good thing about the Friendship House. It could help kids forget about what they might be going through at home.”

Now that she’s moving into adulthood, Tierra is seeing beyond her own street.



**“My hope is to make  
a difference in the world.”**

**- Tierra Thrash**

there. I learned a lot there,” she said.

“I’m an only child and that helped me become more social and learn how to interact with others. I really enjoyed it. If I could go back, I would.”

Tierra says she would have kept to herself more without her Community Renewal friends and mentors.

“I made a lot of friends in the neighborhood because of the Friendship House. It was a great place to go after school,” she said.

“I hope that the crime in Shreveport goes down. I do think that the Friendship Houses can make a difference,” she said.

It certainly made a difference in her life.

“I want to say thank you very much. I was not the easiest to deal with and I do appreciate them for their patience and their passion for working with us,” she said.

“My hope is to make a difference in the world. I really do want to counsel – that’s where my heart is – and if I can do that, I believe I will be fulfilling my purpose.”

# YOU CAN HELP!

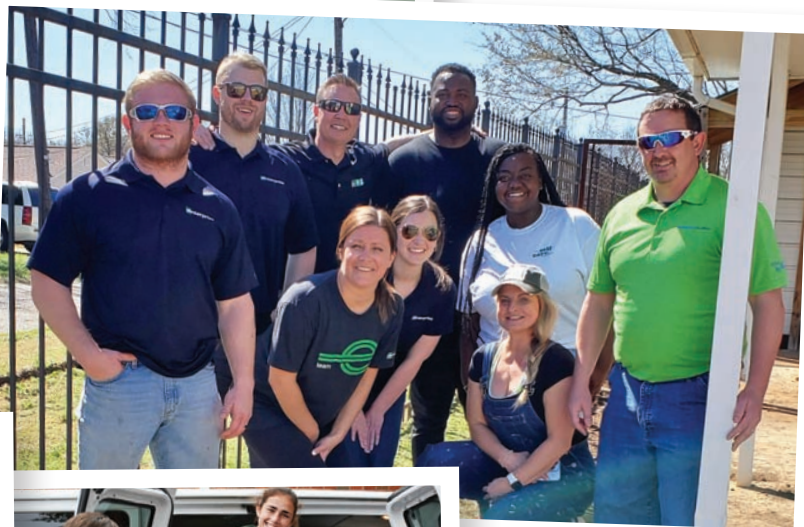
**Your donation to Community Renewal can help change lives by supporting our neighborhood Friendship Houses! You can donate today with the enclosed envelope or at [www.communityrenewal.us](http://www.communityrenewal.us).**

The party was on when families from the Southern Trace neighborhood visited our Highland Friendship House Kids Club!

Several teams from our Friendship Houses, including this group from Allendale, were out in force for the Great American Cleanup! Making our community a better place!



Thank you so much to the good folks at Enterprise Holdings! They created raised flower beds and did some landscaping and cleanup around one of our Friendship Houses! We appreciate all of our caring partners!



Residents in our target neighborhoods got a boost of joy when students at Loyola College Prep blessed us with 150 baskets of food as part of the Shreveport school's annual FAiTH Day! Thank you, Loyola Flyers!

Our Women of Community Renewal celebrated Valentine's Day with fun fellowship, words of inspiration and lots of motivation to keep caring in our community!



Learn more about Community Renewal by joining us on a tour! You will have a light lunch, meet staff, visit a Friendship House and learn how you can get involved! And bring a friend when you come! Call us at 318-425-3222 to save your seat! Upcoming tours: June 16, July 21, August 18, Sept. 15, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2022 ARA GRADUATES!

**W**e celebrated the Class of 2022 at our Adult Renewal Academy in May with a beautiful commencement service at Noel Memorial United Methodist Church. We now have a total of 165 graduates – adults who didn't finish high school but who have now earned their high school equivalency diploma and are on their way to a successful future! And that number keeps growing! Give us a call at 318-425-3222 to learn more!

“

My life was going downhill. I was hanging out with the wrong crowd. I dropped out because I wasn't worried about my future. I was just having fun. When I got pregnant, I knew it was time for me to wake up and get going. If you don't think you can do it, you can. Everything with God is possible. Hold His hand and run with it!

– *Kiran Davis*

”



“

There were times I thought I wasn't going to be able to do it, but I pushed through it. I would like to thank the people at ARA for giving me the chance to believe in myself once again. It doesn't matter if you are 18 or 100, you can always achieve your dreams. If Jesus is with you, who can be against you? Just keep going!

– *Lashunda Walters*

”

“

I dropped out of school at 16 and started running the streets. At 22 I started trying to get my life back together. I met incredible teachers and staff (at the ARA) that got me through tight situations. At 25 I met my lovely wife and now we have four amazing kids. They helped me through this journey and pushed me to graduate and now here I am!

– *Mickey Ferguson*

”

“

I almost gave up, but I kept going and kept going and I studied a little bit more, a little bit more. And when I took the test, I passed! I was so ecstatic! I feel like now I can do just about anything! Thanks to the ARA, I am on my way!

– *Sheila Eugene*

”

“

Before the Adult Renewal Academy, I was struggling. My friend recommended the ARA and at my very first class I just felt so welcome and I felt like I was doing something great with my life. Now that I am graduating, I am going to miss these people with all of my heart.

– *Aislinn Wiles*

”



# WORK BEGINS ON NEW



**C**ommunity Renewal is on track for a new Friendship House – the 11th one in the Shreveport-Bossier City area and the first one in North Shreveport’s Martin Luther King Jr. neighborhood.

Our new friends at Kansas City Southern Railway are sponsoring this project and are committing to a larger investment of \$625,000 to help children, youth and families in the neighborhood.

A Friendship House builds hope in the community through youth activities, adult education, family events, service projects and more. Construction on this newest symbol of

neighborhood renewal is being handled by Brad Rivers and T&B Construction.

“This is one of the best days of my career. We are so pleased and proud to be a part of this,” KCS President and CEO Pat Ottensmeyer said at the Feb. 10 groundbreaking ceremony.

“KCS is committed to being a positive corporate citizen in the communities through which our rail network operates and where our employees live and work. KCS is very impressed with the work Community Renewal is doing in Shreveport, and we are proud to join in their efforts to strengthen neighborhoods, create solutions and be a bright spot in the community.

“If you build up neighborhoods, you build up companies, you build up institutions, you build up everything. This is at the heart and soul of our company and our community. We are extremely pleased and proud to be here.”

Shreveport home builder Brad Rivers said he is honored to serve as general contractor on the project. The Friendship House is a two-story home, lived in by the family who serves as community coordinators, with a large community room for Community Renewal activities.

“It seems I was recommended by several of my peers, which in itself is an astounding honor,” Rivers said. “I am super excited to get this project



# FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

underway. Pray for our success as we embark on this journey. To be involved with these incredible folks is one of the best accomplishments of my career. You better believe I'll be bringing my A game; I don't want to disappoint anyone."

Community Renewal formally started work in 1994 and the first Friendship House opened soon after. Today the 10 Friendship Houses are operating in the Allendale, Cedar Grove, Highland and Queensborough neighborhoods in Shreveport and the Barksdale Annex neighborhood in Bossier City.

"All of us are encouraged beyond words to have this high opportunity to partner together with Kansas City Southern Railway and with the people of our historic MLK neighborhood in advancing the cause of caring for one another. KCS is demonstrating that they not only serve all of our communities along their rails but they are stepping out to strengthen the very life of those communities as well," said CRI Founder and Coordinator Mack McCarter.

Patrick Drew is serving as community coordinator at the new Friendship House.

"I thank God for this opportunity. I was born and raised in this neighborhood and I haven't always done the right thing. But coming back to the neighborhood to serve this community is a big opportunity," he said. "I used to tear down the neighborhood and now I am part of building back the neighborhood. I can't wait to get started."



***This is one of the best days of my career. We are so pleased and proud to be a part of this."***

- KCS President and CEO  
Pat Ottensmeyer

# YOU CAN HELP!

**Your donation to Community Renewal can help change lives by supporting our neighborhood Friendship Houses! You can donate today with the enclosed envelope or at [www.communityrenewal.us](http://www.communityrenewal.us).**



# CROQUET CLASSIC IS BACK IN ACTION!

**T**he croquet fields came back to life this spring as the Bob Griffin Croquet Classic once again hosted teams from throughout the area to benefit our Adult Renewal Academy! The annual fundraiser was held on the LSU-Shreveport campus on a beautiful Saturday morning.

We would like to thank all of our sponsors, teams, volunteers and everyone who makes this fun event possible! Lives are changed at the Adult Renewal Academy and the Croquet Classic provides some much-needed funding to keep the ARA going strong.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S WINNERS:

COMPETITIVE DIVISION – Brad Gosslee and Kempton Schwab  
INTERMEDIATE DIVISION – Patrice St. Romain and Donna Feliciano  
RECREATIONAL DIVISION – Michael Hinton and Bryce Watts



# TCU EMPHASIZES AN EDUCATION BUILT ON CARING



Students and staff from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth are building their education on a foundation of caring – with Community Renewal serving as their model.

Jason Titus, associate director of housing and residence life at TCU, led a team of seven student leaders and five staff members who visited Community Renewal this spring.

“We want to foster relationships and get students to connect and to empower them to be the best version of themselves that they can be. That comes from our relationship with Community Renewal and understanding the power of caring,” he said.

“We want them to be a whole person. You can be competent, but you need to be compassionate and understand the value of others and care for others. The common goal is to develop caring relationships.”

TCU developed its “Knowing Connecting Empowering” philosophy largely on the Community Renewal model.

The We Care Initiative is flourishing in campus housing, where student hall directors make sure everyone is included, respected and valued, starting with a large block party that welcomes students to campus. Activities like “Fireside Chats” and mealtime socials help build relationships. Everyone is urged to look beyond themselves.

Ademola Oyindamola, a resident assistant going into her junior year as a finance major, said her visit to Shreveport gave her new

insights on how to spread a caring attitude across campus.

“At TCU we have people from all different backgrounds coming together. And people do their best when you support them and show that you care,” she said.

“It’s not just having an education that gets you through. You have to genuinely care.”

Caroline Loy is a senior assistant hall director who is planning to attend graduate school and become a therapist.

“You have to care first before you can build a greater purpose and have a foundation of caring for others. People should feel loved and safe in the place they call home,” she said.

“You have to have caring connections with people or you will never go anywhere in life

without them. You won’t have real joy in life if you don’t know people and what makes their heart beat so that you can be there as a friend. That connection matters so much more than your degree.”

Tommy Holloway is a senior assistant hall director.

“We get to know our residents first and then connect them to the community around us. We empower them to be successful in life. I believe humans thrive on connection and we were built to be together,” he said.

“A lot of people don’t even take five minutes to sit down and talk with someone at the end of the day. Just taking those five minutes to be there for someone can really change their path in life. Just by showing that you care.”



***It’s not just having an education that gets you through. You have to genuinely care.***

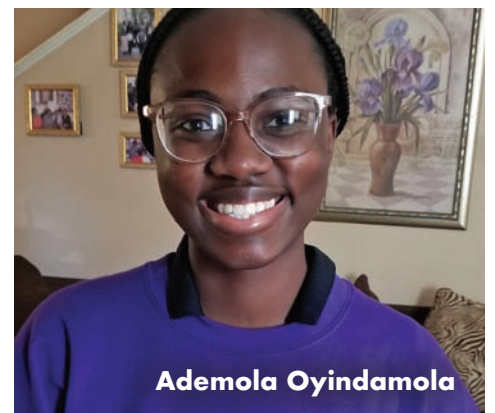
– Ademola Oyindamola,  
TCU junior



Caroline Loy



Tommy Holloway



Ademola Oyindamola



# TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

**A**t a time of unease, when even our most basic need for safety seems to be in question and every direction appears to be a dead-end, is there really an answer? We at Community Renewal respond with a resounding YES!

Thanks to you, Community Renewal is becoming a movement of HOPE helping to restore the relational fabric of our lives and create safe, loving and caring communities. Each of us shares the capacity to care and to love, and when we connect in that spirit, miracles can happen. And miracles are happening! May your heart be filled with HOPE as you view the impact highlights listed on page 2.

And talk about HOPE! Several generous donors have issued a **\$500,000 MATCHING CHALLENGE**. That's right. Your donation will be doubled!

Help us seize some vital growth opportunities before us such as:

- Expand the work of Community Renewal to the historic MLK community
- Build a second Friendship House in the MLK community
- Enhance our Communications, We Care Schools and Partnership Development initiatives

Please respond today and double your donation! Know that every \$1 gift counts and is significant to this work. You can use the enclosed envelope or donate online at [www.communityrenewal.us](http://www.communityrenewal.us).

Together we can make a difference!



## PLEASE DONATE TODAY!

**IF WE CAN RAISE \$500,000, THAT AMOUNT WILL BE DOUBLED FOR A TOTAL OF \$1,000,000!**  
If you would like to help, you can make a donation in the enclosed envelope, donate online or contact Jimmy Graves, director of development, at 318-425-3222.





# A COVENANT CIRCLE OF CARING

By Mack McCarter  
Founder, Community Renewal

**T**his spring, I had the transforming privilege of speaking again to a gathered group from all over three states. It was the Christian Youth Fellowship Reunion of 2022!! I last spoke to them all in their summer camp setting in 1987!! Now we are all 35 years older!!

The theme was “Memories and Mustard Seeds...Be the Seed!” On Saturday morning, I shared about the time that Jesus said to a gathered group in Galilee during Rome’s armed occupation when all was dark, “Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

It is a Rule of Love and Loving in dark times that will win the day. One “camper” brought his one-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter to one evening session. He was suffering so in his own heart. You see, we had received word of the horrid act of a white supremacist walking into a supermarket in a black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, and shooting person after person with an assault rifle, killing and maiming God’s most prized and precious creations, His children.

That indescribable tragedy became a mustard seed moment for us!! A group gathered quickly around our little “Precious” and in an unbroken and unbreakable circle

of loving Louisiana hearts pledged to remake the world before our “Precious” and EVERY precious child had to encounter a mindless and heartless hatred as they grow up!!

Her face shows her utterly dependent trust that we WILL take care of our Covenant to truly Care. This little circle is a seed. I am asking ALL of us to join this circle of Promise!! I can’t go to all the world and neither can you!! But we can ALL go to ALL the world!! We can’t just WISH for a world filled with love!! We MUST act NOW to make it so and grow it into a NEW TOMORROW...TODAY!!

If you are not already on our We Care Team, I want you to go to our website NOW – [www.communityrenewal.us](http://www.communityrenewal.us) -- and go to the bottom of the home page and click on the “We Care Team” and join up!!! We can ALL care together and remember CARING ALONE WILL NOT HEAL OUR WORLD BUT CARING TOGETHER WILL!!!!

We will be the mighty army of God’s Love!! Please don’t stop with you joining up...please SHARE this picture representing every child and all of us whom they are trusting to fix this broken world!!! Let us BE THE SEED!!

Love to each and to all as we become the biggest gang in the world and with Love, win this war against the darkness around us!!!



***“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”***

I John 4: 19-21



***“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”***

John 13: 34-35





**COMMUNITY RENEWAL  
INTERNATIONAL**

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# A SIGN FOR OUR TIMES



Did you know that Community Renewal has a sign for our times?

**IT'S A SIGN  
OF HOPE!**

It's simple and it's powerful!

**We Care!**

You've probably seen these signs in yards across Shreveport and Bossier City. They also stand in yards in Washington, D.C., Boston, Austin and other cities. You may have one in front of your house. If not, give us a call at 318-425-3222 or stop by our office at 838 Margaret Place and get your We Care yard sign today!

*Please turn to page 11 for "A Word from Mack" and this issue's column "A Covenant Circle of Caring."*