

RENEWAL NEWS

SPRING 2023 EDITION
VOLUME 28 ISSUE 1

**THEY PUSHED
ME AND GAVE
ME HOPE**

SEE PAGE 7

**SAFER,
STRONGER
NEIGHBORHOODS**

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**BUILDING
IT BACK**

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NOW AVAILABLE! NEW BOOK ON COMMUNITY RENEWAL

WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US

SEE PAGE 12

COMMUNITY RENEWAL

CONNECTING PEOPLE • CHANGING LIVES • TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



52,452

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



4,000+

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



1,825

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



297

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2022



170

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



11

FRIENDSHIP HOUSES LOCATED IN 6 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

and click on the **DONATE** link

OR

SCAN THE QR CODE TO MAKE YOUR DONATION **TODAY!**



NEW ON THE TEAM!

NEW STAFF MEMBERS ARE CONNECTED IN CARING



Le'Andrea Taylor

“I want them to go to the next level”

Le'Andrea Taylor's passion for helping youth has taken her from basketball courts to a neighborhood corner – the corner that is home to a Queensborough Friendship House.

Raised in nearby Mooringsport, graduating from Northwood High School, earning a degree in psychology and serving in the U.S. National Guard for 10 years has prepared her for this new opportunity with Community Renewal.

“I asked God to put me in a place to make a difference, and now my prayers are coming to pass. I know that with God I will succeed,” she said. Le'Andrea is a mother of two teenage girls. Her husband, James, is a Shreveport car mechanic.

“Coming into the Friendship House, I am very excited because I want to make a difference when it comes to kids. My goal for the Queensborough neighborhood is to build their self-esteem and let them know they are wanted. I want them to go to the next level,” she said.

“One of the things about Community Renewal that really touched my heart was they were doing things that I was doing. When I was about 19, I started a nonprofit basketball team to keep kids off the street at nighttime. It was called Midnight Madness and while I was doing that, I was introduced to Community Renewal.

“I really believe knowing your neighbor is very important. By knowing and having a friendship with your neighbor, you can protect each other from things. If I know you are watching out for me, that makes me feel more safe when I am home alone with my girls.”

“We want safer neighborhoods and stronger communities”

Nina Marie, our new community liaison, reaches out to current and potential partners – businesses, churches and other organizations – to build the network of caring in our area.

“There are so many amazing resources and opportunities here,” she said. “I created a Circle of Caring that has a monthly breakfast and lunch for us to all come to the table and learn what we can do together. That has already grown tremendously and I am so grateful.”

Nina is a native of Michigan who came south to attend Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, graduating with a degree in business management. She was introduced to Community Renewal by her parents, who both worked with the Adult Renewal Academy.

“My tagline is unity in the community. I have a passion for community development and this was such a good fit for me. I've done a lot of legwork getting to know people in the community, building on relationships that I had and forming new ones,” she said.

Nina would like to see an actively used community calendar, more community events and greater awareness when there is a need for volunteers.

“We intentionally build and grow positive and caring relationships. We expect to see greater depth in our relationships so that we can show a unified front in our neighborhoods,” she said.

“We want safer neighborhoods and stronger communities. I'm excited about this and looking forward to what God is doing. If you are interested in being involved, please reach out.”



Nina Marie

Many neighbors enjoyed a block party at our office in May, when we also recognized artist Eric Francis and the beautiful mural he painted there.



The Shreveport Opera Express gave a fun performance with a serious message about how to stop bullying for some of our Friendship House kids. Bravo!



Tennis anyone? Boys and girls in the Cedar Grove Kids Club picked up a racket for the first time when the Community Tennis Association came to visit.



Students from Word of God Academy came to three of our Friendship Houses for various service projects. We appreciate their hard work!



Come on a Thursday tour to learn more about Community Renewal! Check the schedule at www.communityrenewal.us.

KSLA News Anchor Domonique Benn gave an inspiring talk at the Women of Community Renewal Valentine's Luncheon.



PATRICK DREW: FROM TEARING IT DOWN TO BUILDING IT BACK

Patrick Drew has journeyed full circle in one of Shreveport's more challenging neighborhoods, the Martin Luther King Jr. area, site of the newest Community Renewal Friendship House.

"I used to tear down the neighborhood and now I am part of building back the neighborhood. I thank God for this opportunity," he said. "I was born and raised in this neighborhood and I haven't always done the right thing. I made a lot of bad choices. But coming back to serve this community and help young people make right choices is a big opportunity."

Community Renewal's 11th and newest Friendship House - and the first one in North Shreveport's MLK neighborhood - is



This is not a job - it's a lifestyle. With God in front of us, who can be against us?"

- Patrick Drew



neering completion. New Community Coordinators Patrick and CaRonda Drew started working with children, youth and families in the neighborhood this year and are eager to open the doors of the new Friendship House.

Patrick, who recently graduated from our Adult Renewal Academy, is serving as community coordinator overseeing the Youth Club, with CaRonda working with children, while they both work with families.

"In order to make change, you have to be hands-on," Patrick said. "This is my calling from God. I wanted to do this because I wanted to be someone who makes positive change. To do that, you have to really be active and have boots on the ground and love people."

One of CaRonda's goals is to build a caring self-confidence in the neighborhood's children.

"I want them to know they can, whatever it is they want to be, I want them to know it is possible," she said. "I want them to experience life and know that nothing is out of their reach. They need love. And when you show a person love, it goes a long way."

Patrick said they have already seen grades go up and behavior improve in children who now realize they are loved.

"It's exciting but it is also a challenge," Patrick said of their new assignment. "This is not a job - it's a lifestyle. With God in front of us, who can be against us?"



As a business member of the neighborhood, Kansas City Southern Railway is lead sponsor for the new Friendship House. AEP SWPECO has donated highly efficient appliances and operational support. Many other partners have also come together on the project, with Shreveport home builder Brad Rivers serving as general contractor. 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. A Friendship House builds hope in the community through after-school programs, adult education, family events, service projects and more.

YOU CAN HELP!

Your donation to Community Renewal can help change lives by supporting our neighborhood Friendship Houses!
You can donate today at www.communityrenewal.us

CROQUET PROVIDES A BOOST FOR THE ARA!

Weather forecasts and cloudy skies threatened the 2023 Bob Griffin Croquet Classic, but the April rains held off long enough for this annual event to make it into the record books. LSU-Shreveport once again hosted teams from throughout the area to benefit our Adult Renewal Academy.

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S WINNERS IN THREE DIVISIONS:

1ST PLACE, COMPETITIVE:
Brad Gosslee/Kempton Schwab

2ND PLACE, COMPETITIVE:
James Ferguson/Paul Wilson

1ST PLACE, INTERMEDIATE:
Michael Hinton/Bryce Watts

2ND PLACE, INTERMEDIATE:
David Durel/Thomas Simms

1ST PLACE, RECREATIONAL:
Jimmy Gosslee/Thomas Gosslee

2ND PLACE, RECREATIONAL:
Kevan Alger/Jennifer Alger



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 ARA GRADUATES!

We celebrated the Adult Renewal Academy's Class of 2023 in May at Noel Memorial United Methodist Church. We now have a total of 170 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!

“

This was such a blessing for me! I made it! I want to encourage others. No matter your age, you can continue to move forward in your education. Don't let anything stop you!

– Marlin Blaze, 52

”

“

At the ARA, the instructors were amazing with me. They pushed me and gave me hope. When I thought I was going to fail, they were there for me. When you get your diploma, it is the most amazing feeling inside. Now I plan to go to college to get into nursing.

– Brittany Decker

”

“

I dropped out and I did absolutely nothing. I was depressed, but when I went to the Adult Renewal Academy, they taught me how to get my life together.

– Eli Conradi



WE CARE SCHOOL HELPS CONNECT A COMMUNITY

Stories feed imagination and emotion. When an adult reads to a child, magic happens. Somehow, while delivering thoughtful words and art from a book, experiences accumulated over a lifetime shine brightly. Wholeness grows in both reader and listener. It is beautiful to behold.

Now imagine a group of adults from many walks of civic life caring together as a team that reads to all pre-k through 2nd grade classes twice every month, what would that look like? Community Renewal Catalyst Tina Kendrick and Homer Elementary Principal Alyson Perry answered that question over the course of the 2022-23 school year.

Tina, a retired educator, and her husband Terry, a retired physician, moved from a Shreveport home to their retirement life on Lake Claiborne. During her 2020 Community Renewal Catalyst training, Tina learned about the pilot We Care School (WCS) at University Elementary (UES) in Shreveport (Principal Kasie Mainiero 2018-2022; Principal Ashley Atkins 2022-23+). Tina's educator career melded with her Catalyst training into an innovative new strategy to replicate the CRI model in their adopted community of Homer, Louisiana: Start with We Care Schools, then grow citywide.

Tina's first pathfinder initiative: engage a school community in adapting CRI principles and practices to create a culture of caring as the foundational priority for learning and community. Tina shared the vision with Claiborne Schools Superintendent William Kennedy and Special Education Director Mary Prior. Homer Elementary (HES) became a We Care School the 2021-22 school year (Principal Monica Morrow) and continues through a second year (2022-23+ Principal Alyson Perry). Tina is a volunteer, champion, and advocate for growing relational capacities of the school community. Every school needs a Tina.

The next pathfinder initiative: connect the Homer community to the school culture of caring. Tina invested time volunteering with community organizations like Homer Main Street, the Garden Club, and also co-founding Tapestry Community Women's Ministry. Her social networks grew along with

her creative insights about relationally connecting community and school. A We Care Campus Clean-Up project led to organizing a larger We Care Campus Beautification/Community Garden project.

Sharing ownership in ideas can grow trust, align networks, and combine resources to do more together. One example: Resources invested by Homer Main Street networks aligned with resources available through Piney Hills Master Gardeners and Garden Club. Tina shared discovering a volunteer resource, "Sanctioning the We Care Campus Community Garden project for Master Gardeners service hours requirement is a win-win!" A pattern of change is emerging.

During the 2022-23 school year Tina collaborated with Principal Perry in another community relational connecting idea, HES We Care Reading Café. Tina recruited volunteers, organized schedules, participated as a reader, and managed the process for community civic leaders to read to all pre-k through 2nd grade classes twice monthly. These volunteers are growing the boundaries of the HES culture of caring beyond school walls.

"Reading Cafe Sessions have been



Mutually Enhancing Relationships are growing. I am extremely grateful!"

- Tina Kendrick

extremely well received by faculty and students," Tina said. "Volunteers know and are known by students and teachers. Mutually Enhancing Relationships are growing. I am extremely grateful!"

At We Care Schools, Pathfinder Awards recognize individuals and groups that help us better understand and grow the school culture of caring. On May 11, a team of 15 We Care Reading Café volunteers were celebrated as Pathfinders for activating the power of caring together to grow relational connections



between school and community.

The collective civic gifts of the Reading Café volunteer team inspire hope. They shine in serving community as former Head Start teacher, gifted artists /musicians, summer arts camp teacher, director and board members of Homer Main Street, former teacher / coach, retired CPA's, Home Sweet Homer volunteers, Library Board president, former elementary teacher, grandmother, church members, Garden Club members, Keep Hope Alive volunteer, Food Pantry volunteer, co-founders of Tapestry Community Women's Ministry, columnist for The Guardian, former physician and English professor, VP branch manager and community development officer of GIBSland Bank, professional forester, and Special Education Department volunteer.

Tina describes volunteer team character traits in their Pathfinder Awards: compassionate and caring, conscientious caring leader, radiant smile and caring heart, champion cheerleader, compassionate community servant and relational leader, generous giver of many talents, true blessing, immersed in serving HES students with acts of kindness and caring, dedicated servant leader, humble and caring heart, giving and loving personality, always willing to go above and beyond to help others.

We congratulate and celebrate Gale, Pat, Christy, Jimmy, Nancy, Graham, Denice, Michelle, Christi, Terry, Sherry, Sylvia, Phillip, Mary, and Weston. Thank you!

Stories move us. Connecting our capacity to care together is a powerfully renewing force for community.

ARE YOU SIGNED UP?



Did you know that Community Renewal has a sign for our times? It's a sign of hope! It's a sign of neighbors connected in caring! It's a sign of better things to come!

It's simple and it's powerful!

WE CARE!

You may have one in front of your house. If not, stop by our office at 838 Margaret Place and get your We Care yard sign today! Or join us on our next monthly tour and get one then!



WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT ON THE FRONT LINES

Ken and Sharon McGivney each learned early in their adult lives what it was like to be caught in an economic crunch. And they each decided that if fortunes changed and the day came when they could quietly help others, they would do so.

“We both have a heart for people and we want to give back,” she said. “We grew up with the idea that if you can give back, you give back however you can.”

Friends shared with each of them about Community Renewal and they liked the emphasis on connecting caring people and on reaching out to youth and families living in challenging situations. And when the day came that they could give back, they did.

“We grew up learning that an individual can make a difference,” Ken said. “That can seem overwhelming. You may not see the results right away. But God will take care of it.

“A lot of what Community Renewal does, while there are some short-term results, but you may see the real outcome 10 or 15 years down the road. It’s for future generations.”

Sharon said she sees Community Renewal improving the quality of life in all types of neighborhoods. “Shreveport needs everybody to pull together for our kids and grandkids,” she said.

At Community Renewal, we know that this is one of those moments where we must come together, step up and engage. We’re at a critical juncture in history where much is at stake. We’re in a battle for our children, our communities, our future.

Community Renewal operates 11 Friendship Houses serving on the front lines in some of our most challenging neighborhoods. Here we find some of God’s precious children simply looking for a hopeful future. These children represent all of our children and we all share a responsibility to help each one live into their God-given potential.

Our goal this year is to secure designated funding for each of these 11 Friendship Houses. This funding will allow each Friendship House to be completely self-sufficient, having all the resources needed to help provide every opportunity for these children and youth to succeed.

To operate a Friendship House is \$120,000 annually. If you would like to lead or be a part



of a House sponsorship team, please contact Jimmy Graves, our director of development, at 318-425-3222. If you prefer to simply be a silent partner in giving extra this year toward this vital effort, please respond today. Let’s step up in a new way to help the children of our communities have every opportunity to succeed and not become another sad statistic. Let’s do our part in helping them become all that God has intended. We need you, but more than that, they need us. Please respond today!

YOU CAN HELP!



Your donation to Community Renewal can help change lives, restore hope and build safer communities! You can scan the QR code on this page – or go to our website www.communityrenewal.us – and donate today! Or send your donation to Community Renewal, P.O. Box 4678, Shreveport, LA 71134. Thank you for your support!



LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND LOOK TO THE HEAVENS

By Mack McCarter
Founder, Community Renewal

How often have you and I heard the old expression, “Love is blind?” I venture that it has been often enough for those three words to find their way into the hallowed halls of human truisms, and there to be enshrined with all the other epigrams which distill our experiences into guiding wisdom. I get the truth behind the saying, “Love is blind!”

On the smiling side of that power of compelling attraction, is this wonderful truth: we all know that the shine of the beloved can be so bright that the heart once stirred can run past and leap over all of the intervening hurdles as if they simply were not there. There are no walls but only doors when love grabs you.

And yet there is a sad side to the “blinding” power of love. As we journey together in this land of relationships, and our attraction begins to move invariably ever deeper into attachment, the revealing routines of life together begin to highlight the blemishes, the pitfalls, and the “warning signs” which were shadowed off stage by the klieg lights of “love.” Then, “seeing is believing” and the disillusionment can slowly grind and crush. How can this be?

Well, I am totally convinced that the old saying, “Love is blind” is simply not true. Love is never blind. On the contrary love always sees and perceives. Love sees things in the beloved that those who are not captured by love can possibly behold. “I don’t see what she sees in him.” Well, that is because she is looking through love’s telescope and seeing things to genuinely love from afar. And she looks as well through love’s microscope having seen things up very close and personal which we could never see without love’s magnification.

And here is the key that separates a faux love’s “blindness” from true love’s all-seeing eye: it is the lover’s conscious commitment and devotion to the highest and best within the beloved. It is precisely this loving and conscious commitment which actually calls forth that high quality into crowning visibility into our everyday that the lover sees when

love’s special spectacles become life adorning. Love sees. Love lives in devotion to the seen, even though unseen by others. And love births into reality that which is seen through an all loving and never leaving devotion.

The covenant, “for better and for worse, to love and cherish until death do us part,” will hold us through the inevitable self-centered conflict and bring us to that place we all so desperately long for, the communion of our souls. But that will happen only as we see and cling to the highest and best that we see in one another. And for all of us the highest and the best is to truly know that we are the precious creations of God. We genuinely begin to live when we understand that fundamental truth. Each and every human being is precious as a unique, unrepeatable miracle of God.

Now go with me both deeper and higher.

I believe, with all that I am, and with all that I have, in my everyday living with everyone around me on this planet that we call “Earth,” that Love Works. This means seeing and seeking the good within other folks just the same as I seek my own good. And I believe, with all of my heart, that at the very end of all our mindless conflicts and divisions on this beautiful blue and white planet, which stands in solitary magnificence wrapped in the bolt of black that surrounds us, that we will come together as one in our precious humanity, and then, Love Wins.

I believe that when Jesus says, “Everyone,” he means EVERYONE. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” And I believe that when the scriptures say, “Everyone,” they mean EVERYONE. “Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” And I believe that when Jesus says, “Whoever,” he means WHOEVER. “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” And when the scriptures say, “Whoever,” they mean WHOEVER. “Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love.” Love sees not just close at hand but with larger and expanded vision what

God sees: All the children of the world.

I believe that our life together on this planet must be understood as “marriage on the grand scale,” and lived that way because I believe with every fiber of my being that this is the very Will of God. We must see that we are “married” to humanity seeing the good in each and every and all. That is the cure for our collective blindness.

Dear friend, will you pause right now and consciously commit your life to care for each and every and all people? And now having made that commitment, will you realize that “Caring alone will not heal our world but CARING TOGETHER will!” So go to our website -- www.communityrenewal.us -- and sign up for the “We Care Team” and finally will you bring others who are so devoted to join this whole team committed to renewing our world in True Love! Thy Kingdom Come on Earth Just as It Is in Heaven.



Each and every human being is precious as a unique, unrepeatable miracle of God.



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BOOK TELLS THE INSPIRING STORY OF COMMUNITY RENEWAL

The inspiring story of Community Renewal is now available in book form! **How to Remake the World Neighborhood by Neighborhood** was released in November in paperback by Orbis Books. The 168-page book was written by our founder, Mack McCarter, and Tim Muldoon, a Boston College professor, scholar, and author or co-author of ten books, and editor of two others.

The book tells the story of how Mack returned to his hometown of Shreveport after many years as a pastor in Texas. He found a city that was racially divided and suffering from violence. With a small group of like-minded people, he intentionally and proactively began engaging with residents from all parts of the city who wanted to be connected in caring. Seeds were planted and in 1994 Community Renewal was formally founded.



Mack McCarter has spent a lifetime forging loving communities out of complete strangers. This revealing and thoughtful book documents how caring, friendship, and the gift of kindness can bring about powerful changes in our world."

- Lee Cowan, Correspondent, CBS Sunday Morning

GET YOUR COPY TODAY!

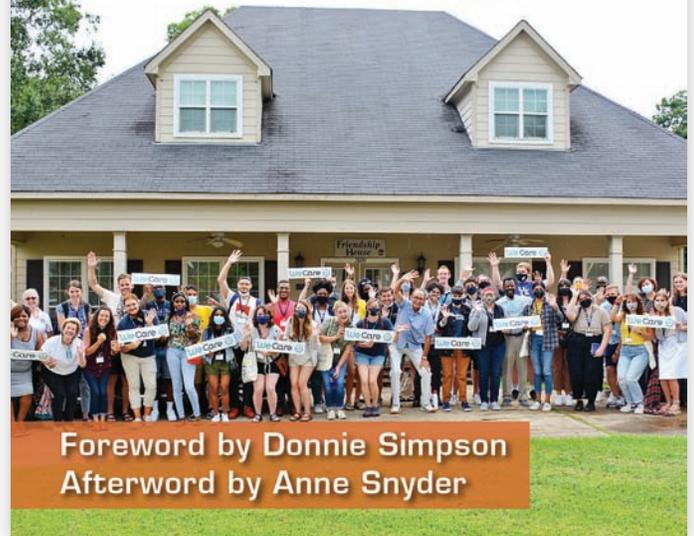
How to Remake the World Neighborhood by Neighborhood is available at our office at 838 Margaret Place and is also available on Amazon. Don't miss your chance to have your own copy of this inspiring work! This book also makes a great gift!

HOW TO REMAKE THE WORLD NEIGHBORHOOD BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Mack McCarter

Founder, Community Renewal International

with Tim Muldoon



Foreword by Donnie Simpson
Afterword by Anne Snyder