

RENEWAL NEWS

FALL 2018 EDITION
VOLUME 23 ISSUE 2

**SMALL ACTS OF
CARING HAVE
BIG IMPACT**

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**YOUNG PARTNER
FINDS PEARLS**

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**SCHOOL TAKES CARING
INTO THE CLASSROOM**

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COMMUNITY BUILDERS ARE KEY TO NATIONAL RECOVERY

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL

CONNECTING PEOPLE • CHANGING LIVES • TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



51,600

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



2,128

VOLUNTEERS GAVE **39,180** HOURS IN 2017



3,500+

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



1,600

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



341

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2017



121

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



52%

AVERAGE DROP IN MAJOR CRIME IN OUR FIVE FRIENDSHIP HOUSE AREAS



10

FRIENDSHIP HOUSES LOCATED IN 5 TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS, WHERE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS, ADULT LITERACY 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 HOUSES: 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 HOUSES: These are homes built in low-income areas and lived in by Community Renewal staff who help turn impoverished neighborhoods into havens of hope.



GIVE TODAY!

GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US
and click on the **GIVE** link

OR

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



Amanda Gouthiere, center, tells some Oklahoma visitors about Haven House



HAVEN HOUSE FAMILY SHOWS

small acts of caring have a big impact

Amanda Gouthiere has We Care signs on both sides of her corner house, just to make sure they are visible to everyone who passes by. It's a reflection of her personality – caring on all sides.

Amanda became a Haven House leader more than 20 years ago, after Community Renewal Founder Mack McCarter spoke to her class at Bossier Parish Community College. Today she lives in Shreveport's Shreve Island neighborhood with her husband, Joe, and children Joey and Julianna.

"Mack shared his vision of neighbors helping each other and I was hooked immediately. I love that idea and I want that for our community," she said.

"I want people to know each other and care for each other. I definitely see that making a difference in all communities. It's like having a big neighborhood watch where we all care for each other."

A first-grade teacher at Mooretown Elementary School, Amanda also believes passionately in making caring part of a child's education. She has done that with her own children and her efforts have produced

tremendous results.

"We can't wait until we are adults to teach about caring. We have to start at a young age," she said.

Joey and Julianna have lifted caring to a new level. Joey initiated Geaux Green, which focuses on taking care of the environment.



**Time and
society change -
but caring
shouldn't."**

– Amanda Gouthiere, Haven House leader

He received the 2018 Prudential Spirit of Community Award and has received the President's Volunteer Service Award for his efforts. Each spring he organizes a Geaux Green Day, encouraging people everywhere to plant flowers, clean up litter and conserve our natural resources.

Julianna started Bear Share five years

ago, at the age of 6, and to date more than 15,000 stuffed animals have been donated to children involved in accidents, illness or other traumatic situations. The idea for it is based on the act of caring from a Shreveport firefighter who gave a stuffed animal to Amanda to help comfort her when she was involved in a serious accident. She was only 13 when riding on the back of her father's motorcycle when they were hit by a car.

"I want to show love to everybody because you never know what people are going through," Julianna said. "I got that from my Mom. She is my inspiration."

Amanda and her family have hosted block parties, delivered meals and walked dogs for their neighbors. It is now second nature to take a bottle of water out to the mail carrier on a hot day.

"We can do the simplest things for one another as neighbors and it can make a big difference. Caring can mean so many things that can all let people know they are cared about," Amanda said.

"Time and society change – but caring shouldn't."

JOIN THE **TEAM!**

A Haven House leader simply initiates caring on the block where they live, connecting neighbors and helping build the sense of community. Give us a call at 318-425-3222 to get involved! We have Haven House training sessions every month!

Your donation today will enable us to help more students like Jordan. Use the envelope in the middle of this newsletter or go to www.communityrenewal.us to make your gift. **Your support makes a difference! Thank you!**

THEY MADE ME A

better person



Jordan Sewell started his junior year at Southern University this fall and is on track to become the first person in his family to go straight from high school to college graduation. Community Renewal has played a big role in his accomplishments.

"The Friendship House paved the way for me to go to college. I would not have made it this far and I may not have graduated from high school without the Friendship House," he said.

"They made me a better person and a better student. They looked at me like I could be a leader and they never let me follow the wrong crowd."

Jordan is majoring in computer science and would like to work in cybersecurity after graduation. He grew up in the Allendale neighborhood, where his family includes his mother, an older brother and three younger sisters. He joined the Friendship House Kids



The Friendship House paved the way for me to go to college. They made me a better person and a better student."

- Jordan Sewell, Southern University junior

Club while in the fourth grade.

"The Friendship House was amazing. I had wonderful mentors. I will always love Community Renewal because of that," he said.

"A Friendship House is a place where you can come and know that people care about you. They keep you out of trouble and they keep you off the streets."

Jordan was motivated by the Report Card Dinners, in which students at the Friendship House are rewarded with a free dinner for having good grades.

"I never missed one," he said. "That inspired me because I knew if I did good I would get that reward."

One valuable lesson he learned at the Friendship House was to set goals and strive to reach those goals. His goals now also include having a stable job, a healthy family and the ability to give back. For example, he would love to start a scholarship fund one day.

"The Friendship House showed me anything is possible if you are willing to do the work," he said.

"You don't want to stop your dreams in your teens. Get your high school diploma and then see what's next. Keep your dreams alive."

KIDS CLUB MEMBERS RETURN

as adults to say thanks

The first children to walk through the doors of a Community Renewal Friendship House are today grown adults who look back on their Kids Club days with thoughtfulness and thankfulness.

Many of them say the Friendship House helped mold them into caring, productive adults. Today some of them are now Community Renewal volunteers.

This summer, members of the Highland Kids Club gathered with community coordinator Sandra Simpson for a reunion. Some were working, some have moved, some were away serving in the military, but those who came shared many warm memories.

We caught up with two of them:

ANDREA WILLIAMS joined the Kids Club at the Highland Friendship House not long after it opened just over 20 years ago. She was about 9 at the time and was an impressionable young girl who could have been lost without the caring mentors she met there.

"Without the Friendship House, I would be on the outs. I would not have had that positive influence and would not have learned the value of helping others," she said.

"That meant so much to me. We became a big happy family and I felt such love and warmth there."

Andrea says her days in Kids Club prepared her for both her teen and adult years. For that reason, she is very thankful for Community Renewal and all those who support the work of the Friendship Houses.

"At the Friendship House, they had faith in me, no matter what. They helped me become a leader and overcome the peer pressure you have as a teenager," she said.

"I became a manager in my jobs and this is where it started. I have a daughter now and I am teaching her the values I learned there and to keep God first and keep the faith. I am very thankful for the Friendship House. It made a big difference in my life."



RAVEN MAYSHACK

also joined the Highland Kids Club about 20 years ago at the invitation of a friend.

"It means a lot for me to be involved in the Kids Club. They never let us down. We had fun and we learned to work hard," she said.

"Mrs. Sandra became like a Mom to me. She is so kind and amazing and she means so much to me."

Raven now has three children of her own, from ages 3 to 10, and like Andrea, she is now passing on to them the principles of caring she learned at the Friendship House.

"I gained more confidence and learned the importance of being kind to others. I would not be as open as I am today and willing to meet other people without the Kids Club," she said. "They brought me out of my shell."



YOU CAN
HELP!

Use the envelope in this newsletter to support our neighborhood Friendship Houses or donate online at www.communityrenewal.us.

OUR FIRST



Building a culture of caring into the curriculum is at the forefront of an exciting new partnership that created the first We Care School in Shreveport this fall.

University Elementary School is emphasizing a We Care approach to all aspects of education, from the classroom to the lunchroom. The South Shreveport school has some 1,100 students from all types of neighborhoods, but it is working to maintain the feel of a small neighborhood school.

“When we look at education, we ask what is the most important thing we can do for our kids. And that is teach them to care about each other,” said Principal Kasie Mainiero.

“We are building community, just like Community Renewal does. These students will become active residents who care about the place where they live and work. It’s going to be powerful.”

A few days before the school year started, about 120 teachers, staff and administrators joined us on our biggest tour ever. We started at the school and then rode on school buses to the four Shreveport Friendship Houses. Everyone met back at the school for small-group discussion and fellowship.

“The goal is to scale this partnership initiative to all Caddo Schools. The concept is that each school will create its own unique culture of caring as the foundation for learning and community,” said Kim Mitchell, director of the Center for Community Renewal. “If the excitement and engagement at University Elementary are an indication, We Care Schools is what education and this community needs.”

Students are grouped into eight “houses” with names such as Respect, Kindness and Mercy – all in various foreign languages. Each house has student leaders, chosen by their classmates, and they will also decide on service projects. Their efforts will be recognized at the school honors assembly. Another new aspect of life at the school will be the Caught You Caring

cards, in which students recognize their peers on a Caught You Caring card that they drop into a We Care box.

“If you can reach kids at this age, they can apply it in high school and as adults and they can help stop some of the problems we have,” said Zach Bolzan, assistant principal. “We are revamping the idea of what school is for students, teachers and staff. We are reigniting the fire and passion about education. It’s a fresh new start.”

The importance of caring for others will be a central component of all school activities.

“We are like a small city with villages and streets and blocks,” Mainiero said. “Caring will be part of everything we do. The kids will hear that





TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CARING

on constantly. We want them to think about that everywhere they are."

Third-grade teacher Renate Michael has taught at University for almost 20 years and she is as excited about a new school year as she has ever been.

"This is so cool because it brings us together as a school and as a community. Our kids are very diverse and this will bring more understanding and help us find our common ground," she said.

"Teaching them to care and be kind and be inclusive is as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. This is how we can change our culture."

Mainiero said elementary schools reach

children at a crucial age when they can more easily learn to appreciate the differences in people because on the inside, we are all basically the same, sharing many of the same dreams for the future.

"People everywhere are longing for positive, caring, relationships. It's one language we all speak – the language of loving one another. If we can spread this love, I do believe this city will change," she said.

"I am so glad to be a part of this partnership. We have so much work to do, but it's the best kind of work, the kind that makes a difference!"



Caring will be part of everything we do. The kids will hear that constantly."

– Kasie Mainiero, principal



Teaching them to care and be kind and be inclusive is as important as reading, writing and arithmetic."

– Renate Michael, third-grade teacher



MACK MCCARTER TO RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARD

We are proud to announce that Community Renewal founder Mack McCarter is receiving the 2018 Citizen of the Year Award from the National Conference on Citizenship.

The award will be presented Oct. 18 at the Annual Conference on Citizenship in Washington, DC.

"We have seen first-hand the innovative community engagement work that CRI has been developing and growing for more than 25 years in Shreveport, Louisiana, and its efforts to connect and mobilize neighbors and citizens across race and class in powerful ways. Mack, along with CRI staff, local volunteers and community members have created a contagion of caring that is yielding remarkable results in Shreveport and other cities," the National Conference said.

"Your efforts to establish the Community Renewal International initiative beginning in 1994, and the remarkable "We Care" movement you have built across many parts of the greater Shreveport region demonstrate the tremendous positive power citizens can unleash when they are connected for mutual support and in common purpose."



COMMUNITY RENEWAL IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF NATIONWIDE CIVIC REVIVAL

New doors are opening for Community Renewal from our nation's capital to corners across the country.

"We are filled with hope. The world is beginning to see that a system of caring relationships is vital to our future," said Community Renewal founder Mack McCarter. "We are both humbled and honored to be on the forefront of a new paradigm that can change the world based on our common capacity to care for one another."

One of those doors opened this summer when Mack and New York Times columnist David Brooks led a session in Washington, D.C., for the John and Margaret Dalton PathNorth Series on Civility. They shared with corporate and civic leaders how the power of caring for one another can transform our society. John Dalton, former secretary of the Navy, is chairman of the Community Renewal National Advisory Board.

PathNorth was founded to address the social isolation among corporate executives: "It is not good for any of us to become isolated, particularly such gifted leaders with standing and influence. PathNorth has created a safe place where senior executives can share candidly with peers and acquire skills needed to navigate our demanding times."

Brooks, who has visited the Community Renewal model in Shreveport, is a strong

proponent of the idea that a successful society requires healthy relationships. He joined the Aspen Institute this year to lead a new initiative to understand and reduce the growing fragmentation, alienation, and division in our nation. The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues.

Brooks will spearhead workshops in diverse communities across America to help find common ground and uplift those working hard for positive change. The long-term goal of the new initiative is to draw attention to organizations (like Community Renewal) that are already healing social divisions, to see how their efforts can be applied to the national level.

"Community builders are the key to the national recovery," Brooks said in a speech earlier this year at the Aspen Ideas Festival. He shared a brief history of Community Renewal in his talk and outlined the strategy that is helping secure the foundation for safe and caring communities in Shreveport and other cities.

"I look around the country today and I see a civic revival. There has been a rise of civic organizations designed to help address the crisis of isolation and fragmentation and division," he said.

YOUNG PARTNER FINDS PEARLS

in the inner-city



Shanerika Flemings learned well enough while growing up in a single-parent, low-income home to become the first college graduate in her family. She went on to earn her law degree from Southern University and today this young attorney works for the State of Louisiana in Shreveport.

But some lessons she learned the hard way.

That's why she is now an active mentor, volunteer and partner with Community Renewal – reaching out especially to teen girls who remind her so much of herself.

"I come from the same type of background that most of them do. I am honest and very transparent with them about my prior experiences and past mistakes, in hopes that they recognize that though they weren't dealt an "ideal" hand, they don't have to be a product of their environment. They can be successful; there is hope for them," she said.

Shanerika credits her mother for taking the time to stress education, even while busy working two jobs to support the family.

"We can't forget that for most of us, at some point in our lives, we needed help. Despite the fact that my mother always worked two jobs to provide for us, she somehow always made time to help my brother and me with our homework. I can't imagine who I would be or what I would be doing had it not been for my mother being there, pushing me," she said.

"Unfortunately, a lot of our youth today,

and especially those growing up in the inner-city neighborhoods, don't have that mother or father to help them with their homework or impart on them how important an education is to their future. I believe it is incumbent upon me to be that extra push in someone's life when they may not be getting it from anywhere else."



***I want to let them know
there are so many
opportunities out there."***

- Shanerika Flemings

Shanerika is active with the CRI YoPros, a group of young professionals who are giving back, primarily through Friendship Houses. In 2016, she and close friend Melody Scott founded Girl Pearls to aid inner-city girls in discovering their true beauty, worth, and virtue.

Girl Pearls includes discussion times in which no topic is off limits, goal-setting, service projects, resume-writing, rewards for academic success and much more. To learn about the responsibilities of parenthood, each

girl had to care for a hard-boiled egg for two weeks. To help victims of Hurricane Harvey in Houston, they created and sent customized care bags.

"My reward is the thought that something that I've said to or done with the girls has had such a positive impression on them that they won't have to learn so many lessons the hard way, like I did," Shanerika said. "Every second, minute, and hour that I am in their presence, I do my best to be a walking example of what to say, what not to say; what to do, what not to do. I want to let them know there are so many opportunities out there.

"In the two short years that I have been working with the girls, I have noticed that maybe something I've said has rubbed off on them. Some of them used to be so angry, negative, and just seemingly hated life. But as time has passed and we've spent more time together, they have become nicer and just more pleasant to be around. On my worst days, when I walk into the door and am bombarded with their hugs, smiles, and willingness to help and serve, my spirits are immediately lifted.

"God deserves all the glory for it is only by His strength, grace, infinite wisdom, and the tons of patience that He has given me, that I am able to stand in front of these amazing young ladies and do what I do, all in hopes of changing their lives for the better."

GET INVOLVED!

Give us a call at 318-425-3222 to find out how you can help support the Friendship House program and other life-changing initiatives at Community Renewal!

CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

Each fall our Adult Renewal Academy extends a helping hand to a new class of students of all ages who want to learn and who want to live a better life. And each spring we celebrate with those who have graduated and are moving on to college, the workforce or the military.

As of this fall, we have more than 50 students enrolled in ARA classes meeting at five different locations throughout Shreveport and Bossier City. We currently have a total of 121 graduates – students who have earned their high school equivalency diploma – and that number continues to climb!

We asked four of our most recent graduates for their thoughts about the ARA and the impact it had on them:



“

“My sister and I were both scared but we knew we needed to do this. When we passed, we were both screaming and crying. I wanted to pass the test before I got married and when I did it was so exciting. We met people who encouraged us and made us want to improve. They had faith in us. **I accomplished something** I never thought I would be able to do and I did it with my sister.”

– Teneisha Markray

”

“

“When I got my diploma, that was the most exciting thing that could happen. It helped me to set goals and be positive and have hope. I learned not to give up. I was driving when my teacher called to say I had passed the test and I had to pull over to the side of the road because I was so excited. It was the **best feeling in the world.**”

– LaKeithra Houston

”

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“I was starting to get discouraged and feel bad about myself. When I started the classes at the ARA, I got more confidence. I saw I could actually do this. The ARA gave me the boost I needed to keep going. When I passed the test, it was my **happiest moment ever.**”

– Quinton Lee

”

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“I was having a tough time in my life and I didn’t know where I was going or what I was going to do. I had hit bottom. But the ARA welcomed me with open arms and helped me finish what I had started. They are awesome and I am very thankful. They wanted to see me do better and that helped me push myself to go to college. **My future is definitely bright.**”

– Nathan Ellenburg

”

YOU CAN **HELP!**

Send in your donation today in the enclosed envelope to help support the Adult Renewal Academy! We thank you – and our students thank you!



Congratulations and thank you to all of our winners, players, sponsors and volunteers in the 2018 Croquet Classic! Our first-place winners: Championship Division – Ronnie Bergeron and Frank Knafelc; Recreational Division – J Garcia and Frank Gaensehals. The annual event benefits our Adult Renewal Academy.

We love our life-saving partnership with our friends at ROCK SOLID Impact Center! They provided swim lessons this summer for youth from our inner-city Friendship Houses!



Students from Word of God Ministries are among the many groups who have given their time to partner with us in service projects this year.



Join us for a tour and see how you can get involved! Our remaining 2018 tours will be at noon on Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 8 and Dec. 6.



AMGEN employees turned into painters for a day at our Queensborough Friendship House.

A group of 42 Friendship House teens went to the Kids Across America summer camp. Thank you to everyone who helped make this life-changing trip possible!





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a word from mack



OUR REASON FOR LIVING

Last May, it happened to me again. It happened just like it has happened every year for 65 years (plus change) of my life. And I suppose that it will continue to happen every May until I no longer have memory. But now I do remember. Every May I remember.

Now the memory. And riding bareback on that memory dashing through the molecules of my mind are the feelings, as fresh now as they were then in that May of '52. Summer's comin'!! Oh no!!

I know how hard it is for you who are younger to believe it now. But back then, every child was scared to see summertime come. For summertime then gave with one hand and snatched away with the other. It was the time of the great polio epidemics.

Polio! I wish I could adequately describe the absolute horror we kids felt. The dreaded disease struck like a silent scythe through fields of children in our land and around the globe. It loved summertime because it could spread its noxiously mysterious infection when we crowded together. I have no words for the fear. Summer's comin'.

Our moms reacted with a strategy of total retreat. Protection became paramount. It meant no movie theater. No swimming. No crowds. A nap every afternoon. But then, some hidden switch was flipped and our moms, burning with an anger born of love, no longer tried to hold the fort. They resolved to storm the heights. They began to march!

The March of Dimes had begun in the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to combat Infantile Paralysis (polio.) As we know, he was a victim of its scourge. But in the late 1940s, the moms grabbed the reins and The Mother's March of Dimes was born. The goal was to fund the war on polio by finding a vaccine that could prevent it. My mother was the block captain for East Fairview.

And I can remember in successive years from my pre-school to the fifth grade walking with her to distribute the plastic tubes for the dimes and then going door to door to pick them up. It was all dimes. No nickels or quarters or dollars. And they kept marching. They took a poll: polio was more feared in the early fifties than nuclear war! And that was when we were practicing "duck and cover" under our desks at school.

I can't tell you how many newspapers did not carry the banner headlines. But my guess is not one failed to trumpet in some note or other: SALK FINDS VACCINE FOR POLIO! I was in the fourth grade. And every school child lined up in Creswell auditorium, walked across the stage and was inoculated. I don't remember one kid crying. The next year we took the booster on a sugar cube.

When the memory happened this May, I was sitting in my den reading the paper. My two youngest granddaughters were playing dolls across the room. Emma Clair had just finished the fifth grade and Jacqueline, the fourth. Then I was struck, Summer's comin'!! And I remembered the terror.

I put the paper down and looked over at two soft little girls. I said, "Hey y'all, I want to ask you something." Sure Papa. "Emma Clair do you know what polio is?" No. "Do you Jacqueline?" Nope. I was quiet. Together they asked, "Papa, what's polio?"

My dear friends, I believe with every ounce of my soul, that if we can march with all that we are and all that we have for Love's Renewal, then the day will come when someone's precious grandchild will look up from their play and innocently ask, "Papa, Mimi, Mommy, Daddy, 'What's hate?'"

I long for that day to come. Don't you? It is more than just a goal. It is more than our hope. It is our reason for living.



about **MACK MCCARTER**

Mack McCarter is founder and co-ordinator of Community Renewal International. A native of Shreveport, La., Mack holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in religion from Texas Christian University and a Master of Divinity Degree from Brite Divinity School.

He served as a pastor for 18 years in Texas before returning to Shreveport in 1991 to begin implementing his vision for community renewal. CRI was formally organized in 1994 and under Mack's leadership has grown into an organization which has received national and international recognition for its life-changing impact.



Many people have had their dreams crushed and through the power of friendship we give them the courage to dream again."

- Mack McCarter