

RENEWAL NEWS

SPRING 2018 EDITION
VOLUME 23 ISSUE 1

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A BAR OF SOAP**

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JOIN US APRIL 28 FOR THE CROQUET CLASSIC!

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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 TEENS HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



1,600

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



341

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2017



117

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!**



CELEBRATION CHURCH SHOWS



a little love can go a long way

We want the people here to feel loved. We are here to share the Community Renewal message that We Care."

– Sarah Persia, Celebration Church

When a trailer stolen from a Shreveport church turned up in the Queensborough neighborhood a few years ago, church members discovered a new place for a new outreach.

Members believed God used the theft of that trailer to show them a neighborhood where they needed to share the love of Christ – and they have done so in a big way.

Celebration Church started its partnership with Community Renewal soon after the opening of the Queensborough Friendship House which serves children and families. Celebration volunteers have helped with block parties, Christmas parties and other special events, and a committed group also comes on a weekly basis to help with the after-school Kids Club.

"This shows us how a little love can go a long way. We've seen some of their living conditions – some have no running water or electricity – and it really makes us want to do more," said Sarah Persia, 21, who now serves as leader of the group. She is an LSUS student and also has a job, but she always wants to make time for the Friendship House kids.

"My first time here everything just clicked and I knew this was something I wanted to do. There are so many kids in need."

Sarah and other volunteers help the boys and girls with homework, teach lessons, play games with them and more. They have found they receive as much joy



as they give.

"We want to plant seeds and make a positive impression for Christ. We hope to meet more people in the neighborhood and see it changed for the better," she said.

"We want the people here to feel loved and know that people are here who want to build community. We are here to share the Community Renewal message that We Care."

Tyler Britten is a senior airman at Barksdale Air Force Base from Iowa. He volunteered with his church there and wanted to continue that here.

"I love having an impact in the at-risk areas. This is a lot different than where I am from and I was a little nervous at first, but I've had no problems and now I am happy to come here," he said.

"It makes you feel good when you see the kids smile. I really hope I can be a role model and I hope they can then become good role models themselves."



Marli Chesak, an LSUS business major, is in her second year of volunteering at the Friendship House.

"I love the kids. They are spectacular and they are so excited for us to be here. We always remind them that they can always talk to us and we will always listen because what they have to say is important," she said.

"This is a long-term investment and the kids make it all worthwhile. We've seen shy kids become more confident. We've seen that just being here can make a positive impact in their lives."

GET INVOLVED!

If you have a group that would like to volunteer at or help support a Community Renewal Friendship House, give us a call at 318-425-3222!

LIFE-CHANGING PLAN

starts with a bar of soap



I really feel like I am accomplishing something when I see what they are doing."

- Soap-making instructor Nikki Murrell

Teacher Nikki Murrell and student Dylan Reynolds work on some new creations at the Adult Renewal Academy soap-making class.

Nikki Murrell happened upon a YouTube video about how to make soap when she thought, "I can do that." The creative juices started flowing and the opportunities started growing as she poured herself into a new hobby.

It was an ideal activity for a self-proclaimed introvert. Then she learned about the health benefits of making her own soap. And when she sold her creations at a crafts fair, she discovered potential economic benefits.

At that point, she could stay quiet no longer. This was too good to keep to herself. Last fall, Nikki started teaching a class in soap making at Community Renewal's Adult Renewal Academy.

"I want them to learn this skill to have another source of income and to boost their self-esteem. I am so impressed with them and so happy for them," she said.

"They are learning and growing and gaining pride in what they are doing and they are learning to work independently. I really feel like I am

accomplishing something when I see what they are doing."

Nikki already has new goals, including the creation of specific lines of soaps produced by her students. As sales increase, she wants to reinvest some of that money for new equipment and supplies.

"This reminded me of a lady in our neighborhood who made soap. Then I learned we had a cousin who had made and sold soap and I took that as a sign that I could do it, too," she said.

Nikki's soaps have no chemicals and are made from all-natural ingredients like shea butter, coconut oils and even ground oats and honey. Sharing the knowledge and skills she has learned helps others as well as herself.

"This gets me out of my comfort zone and helps me function better around other people. And when my students create something and see it actually working, that really builds their confidence. They delight in their creation and I remind them they are

God's creation," she said.

Nikki was also happy to partner with Community Renewal. She grew up in Allendale, just a few blocks from the corner where two Friendship Houses now stand.

"When I was a little girl there, we played up and down the street and everybody knew everybody. It turned bad when I was a teenager because crack and gangs came into the neighborhood. We couldn't walk anywhere," she said.

"It got better when Community Renewal came in and people showed they really cared. They came to help and they were accepting of us and people regained their pride in the neighborhood. It's a neighborhood again and not just a place where people live. That's why I stayed in Allendale," she said.

"And then I got inspired to get involved. God was telling me to step up and I am glad I did."

YOUNG BANKER FINDS JOY IN SERVING OTHERS

When you invest in other people, there is such a great return on your investment."

– Lauren Boudreaux

Lauren Boudreaux found success early in her life, but not the satisfaction she was expecting to come with it.

"I had reached a point where I had crossed off a lot of things I wanted to accomplish and I wondered what was next. I knew there had to be more to life," she said.

"I was focused on my career and personal life. I wanted to succeed in these things and when I did, that was great. But now what? I had to learn there was more to life than me."

A graduate of Northwestern State University with a degree in accounting, Lauren's search for deeper meaning led her to a Young Professionals social event, which led to new friendships with a few Community Renewal staff members. She got involved with the YoPros who were partnering with a CRI Friendship House and she joined the Women of Community Renewal. In February, she was one of the featured speakers for the Women's Valentine's Luncheon.

"I learned the value of serving. My focus shifted from me to those around me and the community," said Lauren, 28, who is a portfolio manager at Business First Bank.

"I had to learn to let go of things and trust God and focus more on serving others. My perspective shifted as I learned to trust God completely. I love a quote from John

Piper (pastor and author) that says the really wonderful moments of joy in this world are not moments of self-satisfaction, but moments of self-forgetfulness. That's a key. There is so much joy in serving."

Lauren and her husband, Micah, also an accountant, have served together at the Friendship House a couple of times, helping teens with homework in chemistry, math and other subjects. Lauren helps with the Croquet Classic and other YoPro events, like the youth Christmas party.

"When you invest in other people, there is such a great return on your investment. When you hear how deeply you affect someone's life, that's just huge," she said.

Lauren, who now actively encourages her friends to learn more about Community Renewal, said her whole outlook has changed since she got involved more than a year ago.

"I feel more connected with my community and more invested in my neighborhood. Before Community Renewal, we didn't know any of our neighbors, and now we know the majority of the people on our street. We are building neighborhood in our community and that's rewarding," she said.

Her greatest joy, though, is seeing the smiles on the faces of the youth in inner-city neighborhoods who have so many challenges in their lives.

"I see Community Renewal invested in areas where we have some of our biggest problems and making a difference. We are seeing lives changed and impacted," she said. "Once you see the work of Community Renewal, there is no doubting the impact it has. It's huge, for both those on the receiving end and those on the serving end."



GET INVOLVED!

If you would like to volunteer with Community Renewal, give us a call at 318-425-3222 and we will find a place for you to serve!

OPERATION HOPE

AT-RISK STUDENTS LEARN TO PERSEVERE AND OVERCOME ALL ODDS ON ROAD TO SUCCESS

Kalena

"My future will be amazing"

Once a shy girl who was struggling in school, Kalena Nichols' life changed for the better when she got involved at a Community Renewal Friendship House.

"I love coming to the Friendship House. It's not like – it's love. I am so thankful for them for bringing me out of my bubble. I was a D and F student and now I get A's and B's," she said.

"I feel wanted here. It's a family for me and it's a safe place. There's a lot of love here and they teach us about life here."

Kalena, 16, will begin her senior year at Booker T. Washington High School in the fall. She's considering military service after that because she would like to serve her country.

"After the military I want to come back and fix these roads and fix these houses. People shouldn't have to live like this," she said. "I want to help people and see them grow and achieve their goals."

"If I didn't have the Friendship House, I would probably be a high school dropout who didn't care about life. But now I do care and I think my future will be beautiful and amazing."



Robert

"I know I can make it"

Like many Operation Hope students, Robert Renter has faced many roadblocks and detours in his young life. But because of the support he gets through Community Renewal, he's determined to succeed.

"I'm not a perfect person, but I'm a better person than I would be without the Friendship House. They've helped me mentally, spiritually and more," he said.

"They go out of their way to help and that makes me feel good to know that someone cares when other people don't care."

Robert, 17, is earning his high school equivalency diploma at Bossier Parish Community College. Someday he would like to open a barbershop and he is also interested in ministry. He is only able to use his right hand because of a physical disability, but Robert stays focused on the many abilities he does have and refuses to give up.

His confidence has grown tremendously at the Highland neighborhood Friendship House Kids Club and then Youth Club.

"In 10 years I see myself being financially stable and doing something to help the community. Maybe I could come back here and help with the Youth Club – that would be a wonderful feeling," he said.

"They have taught me here what a man is and how to be a man of God. If I apply myself, I know I can make it."



STUDENTS SERVING OUR COMMUNITY



I grew up here and I want to do something that will have a lasting impression. Volunteering means so much and it does so much for us as well as the people we are helping."

– Nakoma Walker, Centenary College senior, who helped paint a porch at a Highland Friendship House and one of about 55 students who participated in Centenary's Big Event community service day in March.



It's a humbling and rewarding experience to serve someone else. It's so amazing to bring joy to someone just by being kind and caring."

– Jaycie Martin, 17, one of about 50 teenagers who worked at various Friendship Houses in March as part of the Disciple Now weekend at Summer Grove Baptist Church.



VOLUNTEER!

Give us a call at
318-425-3222
if you or your
group would like to
volunteer with us!

9 a.m.
Saturday
28
APRIL

PARTICIPATE IN THE CROQUET CLASSIC AS A
PLAYER, SPONSOR, REFEREE OR SPECTATOR



19TH ANNUAL
CROQUET
Classic



LSU-SHREVEPORT CAMPUS

PROCEEDS RAISED FROM THE CROQUET CLASSIC ARE DEDICATED TO
OUR ADULT RENEWAL ACADEMY, WHERE STUDENTS OF ALL AGES CAN
EARN THEIR HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA, AS WELL AS
COLLEGE CREDITS AND TRADE SKILLS. WE CURRENTLY HAVE 117
GRADUATES, WITH MORE EXPECTED THIS SPRING!

*DELICIOUS ONO'S TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN CUISINE
WILL BE SERVED TO PLAYERS AND SPECTATORS*

CALL OR GO ONLINE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS AND GET MORE INFORMATION

www.communityrenewal.us | 318-425-3222



Thank you to the Junior League of Shreveport-Bossier for once again bringing the Kids in the Kitchen program, focusing on fitness and nutrition, to our Kids Clubs!



The Disciple Now youth from First Baptist Church in Bossier City did a terrific job with their service project at one of our Barksdale Annex Friendship Houses!



Bring a friend and take a Thursday tour for a first-hand look at Community Renewal in action! Upcoming tours: Noon on April 19, 4:30 p.m. on May 17, noon on June 21, 4:30 p.m. on July 19 and noon on Aug. 16.

We had a wonderful Valentine's Luncheon with 150 women at East Ridge Country Club! Shown here: Rebecca Scott and Shana Durr with a new Women of Community Renewal logo; and Kasey Tompkins and Lindsey Holland.

Block parties are helping Palestine, Texas, residents come together.



Action Team volunteers gave out We Care signs during National Night Out.

EAST TEXAS CITY BUILDS

caring through Shreveport model

The Rev. Lynn Willhite first read about Community Renewal more than 10 years ago and knew immediately this was something she wanted in her hometown of Palestine, Texas. When she was growing up in this East Texas town of 18,000, it was a simpler time, when people sat on their front porches and kids played together outside.

"Today, most of us do not know our neighbors, and as a result, isolation, mistrust and crime increase," she said.

"The CRI ministry captured me because it was making a real difference in the community, not just putting Band-Aids on problems. By helping people build relationships with their neighbors, they were fundamentally changing the culture of the community."

Willhite led the effort to start We Care Palestine in 2016 and in only two years the volunteer-led group has made a great impact. "We want every citizen to be part of this movement to connect neighbors across the city through friendship and caring to radically change the future of Palestine," she said.

In February, the group honored long-time Palestine resident Celia Smith with its

first-ever Best Neighbor of the Year Award and recognized 13 other Good Neighbor nominees who exemplify a caring and compassionate presence where they live. Smith stood out among the rest not only for what she does for her neighbors, but how long she has been doing it. The 91-year-old is known for bringing



We want to strengthen caring relationships across the city so that every citizen feels a sense of belonging, connection and purpose."

— Lynn Willhite, director, We Care Palestine (Texas)

food to her neighbors when they are sick and keeping an eye out on their homes when they are gone.

The award was presented at a banquet where CRI Founder Mack McCarter served as guest speaker. Willhite and others from Palestine have made several trips to Shreveport to immerse themselves in the

Community Renewal model.

"We want to strengthen caring relationships across the city so that every citizen feels a sense of belonging, connection and purpose. We want everyone to love your neighbor as yourself," she said.

We Care Palestine has a board of directors made up of members of the community and a small volunteer staff. A Renewal Team has been formed and is enlisting members across the city, and neighbors are signing up to serve as Haven House leaders.

"These block leaders receive training and support to build friendships on their block. They join with other block leaders on a regular basis to develop relationships with neighbors from across the city," Willhite said. The long-term goal is to build Friendship Houses in at-risk neighborhoods, like those built in Shreveport and Bossier City.

"The ultimate goal of the WE CARE Palestine community renewal effort is to transform our city by restoring and strengthening the most important foundational unit of every community—its positive, caring relationships," Willhite said.

LEARN MORE!

If you would like to take the Community Renewal model to your city, contact Kim Mitchell, director of the Center for Community Renewal, at 318-425-3222.

FOR THE CHILDREN

WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A WORLD WHERE EVERY SINGLE CHILD CAN GROW UP SAFE, LOVED AND REACHING THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL



***Let us sacrifice our today
so that our children can
have a better tomorrow."***

– A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, scientist,
author and former president of India

PLEASE **DONATE!**

Use the envelope in the middle of this newsletter and mail in your donation today to help us continue building the safe and caring foundation for the next generation! You can also donate online at www.communityrenewal.us. Thank you! Your support makes a difference!





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a word from mack



ONLY A CRACK IN THE WALL?

When we were looking to buy the house we now live in, we noticed several hairline cracks in the wall of the hallway leading to the master bedroom. Hairline. And then outside on the brick wall in that area, you could see some separation in the mortar snaking from bottom to top with a repair job of caked cement which looked years old. But it was enough for us to have an inspector look at the foundation.

The verdict was one we could live with: there was a slight foundation problem, but the house was over fifty years old and after all we were buying in a neighborhood, our expert told us, where the mixture of clay and sand in the soil just made for foundation irritants in all of the houses. It just came with the territory.

We love the house. It is one of those places where you just immediately feel "at home." And we were. Days rolled into years and the sands of time streamed away. Unfortunately the hour glass wasn't the only place where the sands were shifting. Something was moving one entire wing of our house.

The doors wouldn't shut and those that were shut needed a member of the Justice League to open them. The hairlines had grown to threads and the threads into twines and the twines into rope sized cracks that were the perfect outline of the state of Florida in our hallway. It was all so slow you didn't notice it and in a strange way you just got used to it. "There's my old friend 'crack in the wall.'"

Wake up. And, of course, "Hyperbole Mack" was on the scene, thinking "Forget California breaking off from the mainland with the San Andreas split!! The whole wing of my house is gonna end up in Bayou Pierre only a mile away."

Now, let me be perfectly honest. Its not like we just ignored the shift. We didn't. We painted over the hairline before we moved in. Then we caulked and painted the twine-size. And, then, we taped

and bedded and plastered and repainted the rope split. We (or vastly more accurately, Judy!) were not idle!! I was serving in my usual self appointed "Advisory" capacity.

Solution? One company said they must jackhammer through cement floor of the entire house following all of the pipelines. It would take at least 3 months and the cost would be the entire left side of Fort Knox. We might never get the fine cement dust out even though we moved to a motel and put everything in storage. Or...

We could sell our house "as is" take the original real estate bath and move to another neighborhood to escape all of the "vintage." Those were our stark options until a New Paradigm appeared: A "sheath" of wondrous composition had been invented. It could be inserted in the pipes, solidify, and make the old just like new! It would just take two weeks. And with primary source of the problem solved, we could address the soil which can give us a new foundation. Then we can fix the cracks permanently. Voila!!

And that's just what we did!!

I know you see it now. I didn't see it at first. But Jimmy Graves, our Director of Development opened my eyes. We keep fixing the cracks in our society. Over and over. But the problem is our crumbling Foundation of connected and caring relationships. We must go there. It is hard. It is slow. But it must be done. And we have truly pioneered a New Paradigm for repairing the existing structures through renewing our relationships scientifically and systematically. And that is why the world is beginning to come to see what is happening here in our midst.

Remember when God said through Isaiah: "For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?"

Now I do!! And I hope you do, too! Thanks Jimmy!! And this new thing needs all of you!!!



about **MACK MCCARTER**

Mack McCarter is founder and coordinator 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