

# RENEWAL NEWS

SPRING 2020 EDITION  
VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1

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# COMMUNITY RENEWAL

CONNECTING PEOPLE • CHANGING LIVES • TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



**51,816**

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



**1,736**

VOLUNTEERS GAVE **36,932** HOURS IN 2019



**3,500+**

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



**1,700**

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



**309**

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2019



**137**

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



**44%**

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 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!**





## NEVER-QUIT ATTITUDE TAKES TEEN FROM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE TO THE WORKFORCE

**D**amerion Sabbath thanks Community Renewal for providing the tools he needed for full-time work at an auto parts store.

Now an 18-year-old who graduated from Byrd High School last year, Damerion spent much of his growing-up years at the two Community Renewal Friendship Houses in Shreveport's Highland neighborhood. He was raised by a grandmother just a short walk away.

"I loved the Friendship Houses. I was involved there since second or third grade. They taught me life lessons and they take care of you like you are family," he said. He credits those connections with leading to the job he has now with O'Reilly Auto Parts.

"I love them all because they all taught me something valuable, like to never stop trying to achieve your goals. They taught me a lot and helped me a lot."

Damerion said the main reason he did well in school and graduated was because of the emphasis on education at the Friendship House. Volunteers there work with the community coordinators during the homework hour and other times to tutor the youth and encourage successful study habits.

With no family vacations on his schedule

during those years, Damerion really appreciated the occasional outings arranged by the Friendship House staff.

"We went on a trip to the prison at Angola and that really taught me a lesson. That's one thing I really never wanted to do was go to jail. When we saw what they go through, I knew I



***They taught me something valuable, like to never stop trying to achieve your goals."***

***-- Damerion Sabbath,  
Friendship House graduate***

never wanted to go through that."

Damerion said his years at the Friendship Houses helped turn him into a people person who now enjoys helping others. Perhaps one day he may also be a mentor and volunteer at the Friendship House.

He started with O'Reilly earlier this year.

"He is definitely a hard worker and he always comes to work on time. He's got the keys to be successful – working hard, being consistent and coming to work on time," said store manager Damon Keener.

"Whatever the job requires – whether it's a big job or a small job – he is able to consistently do what is asked of him. He's definitely a good kid."

Damerion said he gained the confidence he needed for the workforce in the Kids Club and Youth Club.

"It was like my second home. I almost wish I could go back. They definitely care about all of us there. And I enjoyed working with the crew in the summer to cut yards," he said.

"I learned to never give up. Life can be hard, but you gotta be strong and keep on pushing. Don't ever give up."

### YOU CAN **HELP!**

If you would like to volunteer at a Friendship House and help more young people like Damerion, give us a call at 318-425-3222.

You can also use the enclosed envelope to make a financial donation to help support Friendship House programs.





# LET'S TAKE A TOUR!



**C**urious about Community Renewal? The best way to learn more about us is to come on one of our monthly tours. Meet staff and volunteers, visit a neighborhood Friendship House and come away inspired! We are all about restoring the foundation of safe and caring communities. A 90-minute tour can be your introduction to how we do it and how you can get involved.

Tours begin at noon on a Thursday. We start with a free lunch at our office, 838 Margaret Place. Invite some friends and join us on one of our 2020 dates listed here! Call us at 318-425-3222 if you have any questions.

**APRIL 16**  
**MAY 21**  
**JUNE 18**

**JULY 16**  
**AUG. 20**  
**SEPT. 17**

**OCT. 15**  
**NOV. 5**  
**DEC. 3**



# NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVES WHEN ONE WOMAN REFUSES TO GIVE UP



**Brenda Banks, left, and her sister Ann Sherman giving back to their community**

**B**renda Banks has a compassion for others that has led her to hand out coats at a bus stop, plant flowers in her neighborhood, help with service projects, mentor young people and more. And she does it all under the Community Renewal banner that says We Care – because she truly does.

After working for many years at the Providence House homeless shelter, Brenda came to Community Renewal about five years ago as a volunteer. There was an automatic connection for her – daughter Deidra Robertson serves at a Highland neighborhood Friendship House.

“I fell in love with the program. I was already doing this work, but Community Renewal gave me the platform,” she said. “Now I say that I am with Community Renewal and this is what we do.”

“My prayer every morning is for God to use me for his service, whatever it is that He would have me to do. I was raised that way. My Dad fed everybody in the neighborhood. If you didn’t have a place to go, you were welcome at our table. I learned by example.”

So it was only natural that Brenda became an active Haven House leader. She lives in Shreveport’s Lakeside neighborhood and she wants it to be a place where people care about and are willing to help one another.

“We love our neighborhood, but it started

to go down as more renters came in. There was drug dealing and there was a shooting nearby where people were gambling.” She said.

“But I was persistent. They were not going to take over our neighborhood. And I meant that. And I went into earnest prayer and I got



***I just want to let other people know that there is hope.”***

**– Brenda Banks**

some courage and I became a Haven House leader. And I learned not to be angry or afraid. I started visiting with people and I found that most people were very nice.

“Neighbors started to join me and we are seeing very positive results. We don’t have that high crime anymore and I rarely see a police car now. I feel safe in my neighborhood. I’m not afraid to go out at night. There was a house that I was afraid to go to at first. But we got to know each other and now we help watch each other’s house. Instead of having fear, we just need to get together and communicate.”

Brenda says she makes it a point to visit with her neighbors.

“When you show love, you get it back in return. When you volunteer for a length of time, you get to see some change. You get to see these kids develop and grow. You see that you are helping and that is so rewarding,” she said.

“I love people. And with Community Renewal I get to meet so many people in all walks of life. I love these kids at the Friendship House and it’s wonderful to see them develop self-worth and know that they belong.”

Brenda says her service with Community Renewal has filled her with hope for her neighborhood and her city.

“I want us to all love and respect one another. You don’t have to live in a big home to show love. That’s free. Let’s go out and show those who do not feel love. Make your community better. Don’t leave it – make it better,” she said.

“I just want to let other people know that there is hope.”

## GET INVOLVED!

Call us at 318-425-3222 and learn how you can become a Haven House leader like Brenda and make a difference in your neighborhood!

# VOLUNTEERS PUT LOVE INTO ACTION



Christ in our community. Our desire is to see God's love and grace spread throughout the whole Shreveport-Bossier area and beyond. And one of the great ways to do that is by helping each other."

Members of First Baptist Church Shreveport wanted to give back to the community as part of their 175th anniversary weekend and they chose a Highland Friendship House for one of their projects.



**V**olunteers of all ages are helping our community in many ways this spring and summer. And many of them, especially the younger ones, are learning that when they give to others they also receive some unexpected benefits.

"It's fun helping people. This shows people in this area that we do care and we do want to help," said Maddie Price, 13, who is learning the value of volunteering. "This makes me want to do it more. It makes me feel good that I helped other people."

Maddie was part of a team from Norris Ferry Community Church that painted the inside of one of our Cedar Grove neighborhood Friendship Houses recently.

Her dad, Norris Ferry member Jeff Price, who has lived in the area about two years, likes to involve the whole family when volunteering. "It's showing them what it is to serve your community and what it means to love God and love others," he said. "This is love in action. It's coming to a neighborhood that we wouldn't normally come to and help

the community."

Tracy Graham, pastor of Norris Ferry Community Church, said his church wants to be a partner in building the foundation for safe and caring communities.

"I love what Community Renewal is doing. Our church is built on community and we want to help Community Renewal

show the love of Christ in practical ways. God transforms communities, cities, nations – one person, one family at a time, being transformed by the love of Christ," he said.

"This is our way of expressing the love of



***This shows people in this area that we do care and we do want to help."***

**- Maddie Price, 13**

## YOU CAN HELP!

GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT

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

There are many areas in which you can serve!





We lost a dear friend when Bob Griffin passed away on Feb. 3. Since then, daughter Kristy Payne has become more involved and she was delighted to meet ARA student Abraham Gardner at our weekly staff gathering – especially when she learned Abraham was wearing a sport coat given to him by Bob.

Jinny Henson, left, inspired us all with her talk at the Women of Community Renewal Valentine's Luncheon



CBS Sunday Morning spent three days with us in February! Watch our Facebook page for updates!

Good Neighbor Seminars are held regularly, training residents in building friendships among the neighbors where they live.



**SIGN UP TODAY AS A PLAYER, SPONSOR, REFEREE OR VOLUNTEER!**



21ST ANNUAL

# CROQUET *Classic*



9 a.m.  
Saturday  
**25**  
APRIL

**LSU-SHREVEPORT CAMPUS**

A FABULOUS FUNDRAISER BENEFITTING OUR ADULT RENEWAL ACADEMY, THE CROQUET CLASSIC ALSO INCLUDES DELICIOUS FOOD, WONDERFUL FELLOWSHIP AND MORE!

**CALL OR GO ONLINE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS AND GET MORE INFORMATION**

**[www.communityrenewal.us](http://www.communityrenewal.us)**

**318-425-3222**





# STUDENTS AND TEACHERS GROWING IN CARING

**A**nnaleigh Hester didn't know her school custodian, Ricky Fisher, but she knew he might appreciate a bit of help at the end of the day.

Although only 9 years old, this third-grader has kindness on her mind because caring for others is now part of the curriculum at her school, Shreveport's University Elementary – our first We Care School. The movement to emphasize caring in education is now growing to other elementary schools and will soon be promoted in a Shreveport high school.

"I really love to help people. It's one of my favorite things to do," Annaleigh said. "I thought about sweeping my classroom and it made me happy when I started doing it. Then I started writing a letter for Mr. Fisher every day and then I got to meet him in person and I am so glad that I did."

In this second year of We Care Schools at University Elementary, trained administrative team members are guiding six strategic-doing teacher groups in culture of caring pathfinding. One new initiative is credited for an increase in the number of students documenting caring acts. Every morning selected caught-you-caring cards are read by students over the intercom. Increased practice is attributed to gains in what and how students consider caring acts. When the game began last year,

many cards were for caring acts like picking up litter, something appreciatively noted by the school's neighbors. Now, caring acts include examples like Annaleigh's sweeping of the classroom. Skills to see good in others are growing within a school culture of caring.

"The more I look for good in my students and others, the more I recognize positive changes in me." Master Teacher Gwyne Clavijo shared this observation about the schoolwide caught-you-caring cards game to her colleagues and Community Renewal team during a recent monthly leadership team meeting at

Atkins Elementary School in Shreveport. Shifting the foundation for learning to a school culture of caring is the purpose of We Care Schools.

How many ways can we share and prioritize caring in our lives? "Gwyne's discovery confirms brain science research about helpful chemicals produced from committing, watching or hearing about caring acts. The intentional practices of looking for and prioritizing caring begins to change the way we think, the way we behave, the way we feel. It moves the school community from individual good intentions to shared intentional good."

In seeking new pathways to Atkins' culture of caring, principal Belinda Stewart

asked, "How could Community Renewal be more visible and recognized on campus as the caring people?" The response is a new volunteer opportunity, Growing Me to We. Prepared volunteers periodically visit campus to recognize and call attention to caring acts, then help everyone nearby celebrate. It is fun, important work, coaching a priority shift to a school culture of caring. Team member Tanja Robinson is coordinating this initiative and has prepared an initial group ready to share the love. Volunteers are presented a Growing Me to We T-shirt, game cards, stickers and a short training.

When an entire school community engages in creating cultural practices, the power of caring together emerges as a creative force for common good. Principals are now creating space in school schedules for teacher gatherings to share encouraging experiences about creating a school culture of caring.

From our teacher gathering experiments at Atkins Elementary, first grade teacher and leadership team member Sherri Andrews commented, "This time together has become important to me. I can see a difference in others and myself as we share and hear positive messages."

## WE CARE SCHOOLS

is an Institute for Community Renewal learning-doing collaboration with several schools – University Elementary, Atkins Elementary and Captain Shreve High School.

If you are interested in helping, give us a call at **318-425-3222**.





# GETTING TO KNOW YOU: TEENS AND POLICE COME TOGETHER

**T**eenagers in our Friendship House neighborhoods are getting to know local police officers – not because they committed crimes, but because they are committed to caring.

Four Shreveport officers met with Youth Club members recently for an informal question-and-answer session at a Queensborough neighborhood Friendship House. In getting to know each other, they learned more about working together to make the streets safer for everyone.

“You can help us make the community better. We can’t do it alone. We have to have your help,” Officer Mike Dunn, a 20-year veteran, told the teens.

“Neighborhood watch is probably one of the best ways (to reduce neighborhood crime.) We cannot be everywhere all the time. If you watch my house while I am gone, and then I watch your house, and we communicate, and then we extend it to the next house and the whole block, that works.”

Corporal Joshua Dowell works in Queensborough, where there are two Friendship Houses. He said citizen-police cooperation is vital in promoting safer neighborhoods with a real sense of community: “In your neighborhood, if someone shoots

somebody, and you turn them in, you’re not a snitch, you’re a concerned citizen. That’s somebody saving their neighborhood, saving their streets.”

Community coordinator Emmitt Welch, who works at an Allendale Friendship House with his wife, Sharpel, told the teens that he has seen with his own eyes the value of police-



***You can help us make the community better. We can’t do it alone. We have to have your help.”***

**- Police Officer Mike Dunn**

neighbor partnerships.

“When you have concerned citizens and you have concerned police, you have a win-win situation,” he said. Welch shared about an occasion when a community liaison police officer found a teen girl who was absent from the Youth Club and brought her to the Friendship House. “He brought her back and today she is about to graduate and she is a 4.0 student,” he said.

One of the teens asked the officers if they are ever afraid while on duty.

“You have to have a sense of awareness about every call that you go to. If you don’t, you don’t need to be a police officer anymore. You cannot be relaxed or lackadaisical. You might be afraid, but we took this job for a reason and we have to go,” said Corporal Adrianne Hall.

Youth club member Ashanti Blue asked about dealing with discrimination and making on-the-job decisions while people around are judging their actions.

Officer Jay Castaneda said he is an Hispanic from New York City who had to adapt to Southern culture when he came to Shreveport 20 years ago. He definitely appreciates residents like Community Renewal Haven House leaders who promote caring and friendship on their streets.

“I’m an Hispanic, but I am an individual. Not all Hispanics are like me,” he said. “There is racism and sexism and we cannot be blind to it. But if we work together, I hope the next generation can be free from that.”

Why do they do it?

“Most of us have a desire to help people,” said Corporal Dowell. “It’s not all about arresting people and taking people to jail. We get great gratitude from helping people in our communities and in our neighborhoods.”



# Happy 75<sup>th</sup> Mack!

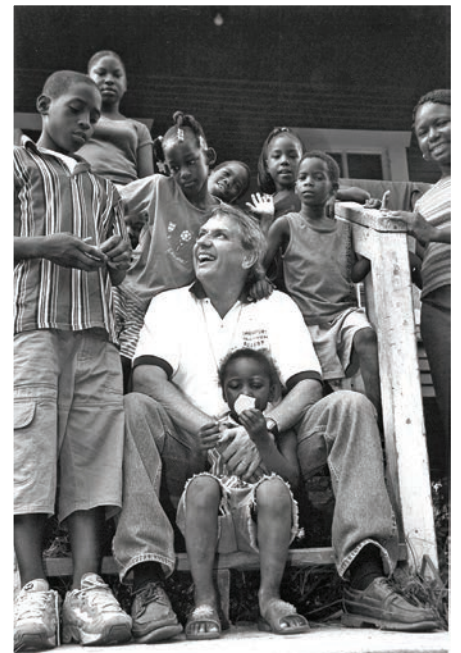


This March we celebrated our founder, Mack McCarter, on his 75th birthday! Please join with us in this landmark celebration. Our goal is to raise \$1,000,000 in Mack's honor to support the work and movement of Community Renewal. Nothing would make Mack happier on his 75th than to see his life's work sustained and strengthened going forward.

Who would have thought that one person with a vision and a dream written out on 121 index cards could have impacted and inspired so many. The two words community and renewal have inspired Mack his whole life. Helping to heal broken lives, rebuilding communities and renewing the relational fabric of our country has fueled Mack each and every day. Now a team of thousands has joined in this movement of Community Renewal, all believing and working toward a new day for our communities and our country.

Our lives together can make a big difference too! As Mack often says, God simply looks for the willing and then empowers them to do great things. Together we have a role to play in this work of Renewal. And it will take all of us sharing our time, talents and treasures with one another and a world desperate for renewal.

Let's step forward and make a difference! We will be presenting the list of donors to Mack along with a special gift of appreciation.



## PLEASE DONATE

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

and click on the link

OR

use the envelope  
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a word from mack



### GROWING THE BEST IN US

All the way up on the top shelf of my bookshelves is a section that I call "Seminal Books." These are books that have strongly influenced my thinking and therefore my life. They have wired me and in some cases re-wired me when I read them. It is less than 30 books. (And in case you are wondering if the Bible is among those 30 books, the answer is no. It is here on my desk, in front of me.)

There is one book up there that has arrested me once again today. And even though it is out of print, I think that it can help us now. Right now. And we need it! It is *The Heart of Man: Its Genius For Good and Evil*, by Erich Fromm, the well-known psychiatrist and author.

Fromm speaks first of the wide divisions among clusters of a single species on this one earth called Homo Sapiens. How sad is that. But folks, that is us. We have never outgrown cannibalism. And while we congratulate ourselves that we have grown past actually dining upon each other, we still seek to bite and devour one another. This is the beast in us. As one wag put it: "It is not enough for us to succeed, but our best friends must also fail." It was a brooding Nietzsche who called this impulse, "the will to power," and he believed that this urge controlled everything about us. When we look around today we are forced to conclude that this must be true. But wait, let us go even deeper.

I see this prevailing shadow of ourselves in every audience to whom I speak. I will often stop and ask, "Has anyone here ever said, or thought, or simply willed, 'I want to do what I want to do, when I want to do it!' Have you?" Silence. And I go on, "Now if you have, I want

you to raise your hand. Raise your hand and keep it raised until I tell you to put it down." The hands start going up. They start to become a wave. "Keep them up!" But some have not raised their hands.

It is then that I say, "If you have not raised your hand, then you are telling us when you were 2 or 3 years old that you were not a 'normal' child. Are you sure you want to do that?" Now the hall is filled with a unanimous show of hands. And I say, "Now look around. Look ALL around! Look at EVERY one. My friends, you see my hand up too!" True evil is living a lifestyle of "I want to do what I want to do, when I want to do it." And when you put us together it is massed "powers and principalities."

What is more disturbing than anything is this: I speak mostly in churches. This is the beast within us and it is supposed to be our best! But now let us go even deeper.

What I have shared with you is true. But it is not the whole Truth! There is a real way for the best in us to overcome the beast within us! I have seen it with my own eyes! There is a way for all of us to come together for massed good that will lift every life on our planet! There is a way for our nation and our world to be healed forever and delivered from our besetting beast! It will bring us true community renewal because it will bring us to the true renewal of ourselves.

Please save this issue of Renewal News because in our next issue I will share how we will be "Growing the Best Within Us." There is hope abounding in my heart for you and for me! And for our nation and our world! God bless you one and all!



#### 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