

RENEWAL NEWS

WINTER 2017/2018 EDITION
VOLUME 22 ISSUE 3

**STUDENTS DISCOVER
RECIPE FOR PEACE**

SEE PAGE 3

**TROUBLED TEEN FINDS
A BETTER FUTURE**

SEE PAGE 9

**YOUNG ATTORNEY IS
BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND**

SEE PAGE 5

**NEW FRIENDSHIP HOUSE
OPENS IN HIGHLAND!**

SEE PAGES 6 & 7



HAVEN HOUSE RALLY 2017

SEE PAGE 4

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COMMUNITY RENEWAL

INTERNATIONAL

WHO WE ARE: CRI brings together caring partners to restore the foundation of safe and caring communities, making our world a home where every single child is safe and loved.

WHAT WE DO: We restore hope, rebuild caring communities and renew the spirit of cooperation in every segment of the community. We help residents come together to turn neighborhoods into safe havens of friendship and support.

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!

COMMUNITY RENEWAL

BY THE NUMBERS



54,500

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



1,883

VOLUNTEERS GAVE **38,840** HOURS IN 2016



3,500+

CHILDREN AND TEENS HELPED THROUGH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS



1,550

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



337

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS SO FAR IN 2017



114

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



50

STATES IN THE USA WITH WE CARE TEAM MEMBERS



10

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

52%

AVERAGE DROP IN MAJOR CRIME

In The Five Friendship House Areas In The Shreveport And Bossier City Community!

CONNECTING PEOPLE • CHANGING LIVES • TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

STUDENTS FIND A RECIPE FOR PEACE



It's good for the soul when you give back."

– Hallie Smith, sophomore

A gung-ho group of Centenary College students started a new school year this fall by trimming, cleaning and raking at a Community Renewal Friendship House – where they also got a quick course in neighborhood rebirth.

"It's really important for us to realize there is a community outside our school and our friends. And doing community service is one of the best ways for us to do that," said sophomore Hallie Smith.

"It's good for the soul when you give back. It grows us as young adults to do the nitty gritty stuff and it helps us value safe communities and clean communities."

The ongoing partnership between Centenary and Community Renewal is one that we treasure, as we love the passion and energy that young people bring to our neighborhoods. They inspire long-term residents and serve as role



models for the youngest residents."

"It's really awesome to see everyone come together to help the community. What Community Renewal is doing here is amazing," said Mike Francis, a senior. "It impacts the community and you are always here. A Friendship House is like a little sanctuary and it's nice for us to be able to come out and help."

Freshman Dorothy Mims said the students grow closer when they work together to help others. "It's a good way for us to start out our college experience," she said. "Everything that happens in the community affects us and whatever affects us affects the community. It makes you feel better inside knowing that you helped other people."

Eli Williams, also in his first year at Centenary, said the students found a lot of joy at the Friendship House.

"This makes me feel good to be



part of something much bigger than myself. We are here cleaning and we don't have to worry about any negativity and that is so good. It's all worth it to know you can make a difference simply by raking and picking up stuff," he said.

"It looks good on the outside and that makes us feel good on the inside. This is very positive and it makes me more interested in doing more. I believe the way to real true peace is real understanding of each other. When you connect with people, that is the recipe for peace."



GET INVOLVED!

If you or your youth group would like to volunteer with Community Renewal on a neighborhood service project, give us a call at 318-425-3222! We would love to have you!



We have trained more than 1,550 residents to serve on the block where they live as Haven House leaders – volunteers who reach out in love to connect their neighbors through caring. The annual Haven House Rally celebrates the work they are doing and inspires us all. If you would like to know more and attend a free training session, give us a call at 318-425-3222 or go to our website at www.communityrenewal.us.

HAVEN HOUSE RALLY 2017

“They say one person can’t make a difference. But with Community Renewal and Haven House, one person can make a difference. We are making Shreveport a better and safer place to live.”
– Robert Handy



“There is no substitute for a friend. A real friend loves at all times.” – Russell Minor



“As I cared more about the neighbors on my street, I got bigger in my caring. Now we have a neighborhood We Care Team and we are planting seeds in people’s hearts.”
– Paige Hoffpauir



“I thank God for the vision of Community Renewal and the Haven House strategy. You all have made me a better man, better son and better husband.”
– Mike Leonard

“It’s our job as Haven House leaders to reach out in friendship and caring to everyone we meet. To know you are not alone is what Community Renewal is all about.”
– Mary Richter



***Shreveport won't become
a better place just
because we live and work
here. We have to put
forth some effort"***

- Josh Clayton, Shreveport Attorney



YOUNG ATTORNEY IS BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND *with Community Renewal*

What started as little more than a game night with other young professionals at an Allendale Friendship House turned into a game-changing moment for Josh Clayton.

The Shreveport attorney was still getting his practice firmly established in Shreveport, but even at a young age he knew that success meant more than winning cases in the courtroom. He wanted to get involved and give back and when he played a game of Monopoly with a few inner-city teenagers at the Friendship House, he found just the place to do it.

"When you spend time with another person, you find connections even when you think you have nothing in common. This is what it's all about. We discovered we have a lot of things in common in an atmosphere that was a lot of fun," he said.

Josh is one of many members of the CRI YoPros – Young Professionals who share a desire to get connected and help make the world a better place by building relationships with the

Friendship House teenagers. Not only do they give financially, but they also give of themselves. And that means the world to our Friendship House youth.

"I thank God for those people. They spend time with us when they have other things they could be doing," said Tray Washington, a senior at Byrd High School. Josh has spent many hours with Tray and even bought him a suit for Byrd's Homecoming last year.

"He's a person whom I can talk to about anything. He helps us find solutions. I wish everyone had someone like Josh to help them."

Lajarvis Agnes, 14, is a Byrd freshman also active at the Friendship House. He is surprised by how involved Josh and other YoPros are with the Youth Club. Activities include game nights, bowling parties, Christmas parties and more.

"I feel grateful to have them here because many people don't do this kind of stuff. And they are a lot of fun to hang with," he said. "They are role models for us and they are making me want to do

what they do and help others."

Josh is certainly pleased to know that he and his peers are having that kind of impact. That inspired him to help fund the playground for the Kids Club at the new Highland Friendship House. And that's why he would like to see more young adults get involved as volunteers.

"Shreveport won't become a better place just because we live and work here. We have to put forth some effort. I want to be boots-on-the-ground with Community Renewal. That involvement can really go the distance," Josh said.

"When you go bowling with a bunch of kids, we learn as much from them as they do from us. I would like to be even more involved. They need as many positive role models as they can have. It's my hope they can get outside the four corners of their neighborhood as we plant seeds in them for their future. I want them to have confidence they can reach their goals and I want to see them succeed."

YOU CAN **HELP!**

Give us a call at 318-425-3222 to find out how you can get involved with Community Renewal and have a positive influence on young people in our community.

NEW FRIENDSHIP HOUSE OPENS IN HIGHLAND!



A two-story oasis of hope opened in Shreveport's historic Highland neighborhood this fall with the completion of Community Renewal's newest Friendship House – a place of new beginnings and second chances.

A Friendship House brings caring residents into low-income, high-crime neighborhoods to make a lasting difference. It is lived in by a Community Renewal staff member, and family, serving as a community coordinator in that area. There are 10 Friendship Houses in the Shreveport-Bossier City area, offering after-school programs, various educational activities, family nights, community service projects and more. Working together, they play a big role in building the foundation for safe and caring communities.

Funded in part by the annual House for Hope campaign, the new Friendship House was built by longtime partner and homebuilder Curtis Loftin with the support of many other donors, suppliers and partners.

"I've got the best job in the world when I

come out and help build this thing and see the attitudes of people here change for the better. I want to thank everyone who had a part in this," he said.

Community Coordinator Sandra Simpson, who started at the first Friendship House in Highland more than 20 years ago and who has seen more than 700 children come through her doors since then, lives and works in the new facility with her husband, Jon. She now has much more room for the afternoon Kids Club, family nights, service projects and more.

"This is very emotional for me," she said. "Every day I get to see the faces of the children who run into the Friendship House to give me a hug. I get

to see the faces of the neighbors who come to serve and give back. And I am very grateful."

State Rep. Raymond Crews attended the dedication ceremony because he has seen the positive impact of Community Renewal – major crime has dropped 52 percent in our Friendship House areas – and wants to see it continue.

“WHEN I AM IN SCHOOL, I CAN'T WAIT TO GET HERE. THEY HELP US SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS. I LOVE IT HERE. IT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD. IT'S AWESOME HERE.”
– Jaydin Terry, 10



"Community Renewal is a key to a lot of the problems we have in Louisiana – social, economic, you name it. You start with building good families and educating children about the importance of hard work and they can become productive members of society and improve the whole economy of this state," he said.

The children of Highland are certainly excited to have a larger Friendship House and playground.





MY BIG SISTER GOT TO COME HERE FIRST AND NOW I GET TO COME HERE AND IT IS SO COOL. IT MAKES ME FEEL VERY HAPPY TO COME HERE. I FEEL WELCOME HERE."

– Estrella Ariciaga, 8

YOU CAN **HELP!**

We need your financial support to operate 10 Friendship Houses in the Shreveport-Bossier City area! Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation today! We also need volunteers to help with after-school programs and more.

Give us a call at 318-425-3222 and we can plug you into a volunteer role that's right for you and help you make a difference in our community!



THANK YOU!

FOR HELPING TO MAKE THIS DREAM A REALITY, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR MAJOR DONORS AND PARTNERS WHO MADE THIS NEW FRIENDSHIP HOUSE POSSIBLE:

Mr. & Mrs. David M. Oliver
 Mr. & Mrs. Samuel W. Smith, Jr.
 Wheless Family Foundation
 Curtis Loftin Builders
 NWLA Home Builders Association
 House for Hope fundraiser
 Booras Family, original owners of this site
 Kinsey Family Foundation
 And the many other donors, partners, suppliers and vendors who made this possible.



I'M EXCITED TO BE HERE. I LIKE THE BIG ROOM AND THE PLAYGROUND AND BASKETBALL COURT. AND I LIKE DOING MY HOMEWORK HERE."

– Noah Trejo Monroy, 9

PARTNER CITIES SEE ATTITUDES GO UP

as Community Renewal comes in



Community Renewal is growing in other cities as civic leaders see the value of the We Care movement in rebuilding the foundation of safe and caring communities. Citywide coordinators from Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas recently gathered in Shawnee, Okla., where ground was broken for the first Friendship House there.

“Something amazing is happening in Shawnee. A cultural shift is recognizable in the attitudes and actions of people,” said Brandon Dyer, executive director. “Across the diversity of our city, we are intentionally connecting individual capacities to care. We are growing a relational foundation.”

Shawnee is literally mapping out progress there with a large map with colored dots locating 2,037 members of the “We Care” team and 107 trained block leaders (Haven House Leaders). Shawnee is a city of 30,000 residents just east of Oklahoma City. Community Renewal Pottawatomie County officially launched as a CRI replication model there in April 2016 after a 15-month preformation phase. Sixty community leaders, invited by the

Avedis Foundation, traveled to Shreveport for training through CRI Experiences. From those travelers, Brandon was mutually selected, trained in Shreveport, and became the first CRPC citywide coordinator. Brandon has added five exceptional staff members since then and their work is ahead of schedule to achieve full-scale CRI model replication in 2021.

During the day-long gathering of partner cities in October, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to begin construction of Shawnee’s first Friendship House, named in honor of the Cleo L. Craig Foundation, who along with Avedis Foundation, provided funding. Community Coordinator Travis Flood, his wife, Abbey, and their children have begun connecting caring in the Kickapoo Park Neighborhood. Travis expressed to the audience his excitement, commitment and thankfulness to be part of CRPC and the Community Renewal movement. A site is selected for a second Friendship House sponsored by the Absentee Shawnee Tribe.

Citywide Coordinators attending from other replication communities included Terry Cagle from Connecting Caring Communities in Abilene Texas, Lynn Willhite from We Care Palestine Texas and William White from our newest replication initiative, Community Renewal Lawton Oklahoma. Attending from Shreveport / Bossier City were CRI Associate Coordinator Mike Leonard and Center for Community Renewal Director Kim Mitchell. Also attending from Palestine were board



members Amy Rigsby and Leon Willhite.

In Abilene, the CRI Haven House program is named “Neighbor to Neighbor.” Police Chief Stan Standridge recognized connecting neighbors through friendship as an effective means to a safer city. He has shut down Abilene’s neighborhood watch program and is investing support for CCC’s neighbor to neighbor work. When someone calls about neighborhood safety, the police department now refers them to our Abilene replication of the Community Renewal model.

Each CRI replication city forms its own non-profit and raises its own funding. This was the second gathering of citywide coordinators. The first was held in June 2017 to convene citywide coordinators as a learning community. Sharing innovations, progress and challenges between cities grows our knowledge for the work of renewing our relational foundation. The Center for Community Renewal and its Institute support CRI model replication and model development.

PARTNER WITH US!

If you would like more information on CRI partner cities, contact Kim Mitchell, director of the Center for Community Renewal, at 318-425-3222.

TROUBLED TEEN TURNS INTO A *Promising, Productive Young Adult*

Once a troubled teenager with a temper, today Jasmine English is a promising young adult with many goals and much gratitude.

Jasmine credits the teams at a Community Renewal Friendship House and then at the Adult Renewal Academy for the turnaround in her life. She has gone from school dropout to school success and is today a full-time health-care worker and full-time student, as well as mother of a 2-year-old son.

"I was a mess when I was trying to find my way as a teenager. I was irresponsible and confused and I had quite a temper," she said.

"Then I came to the Friendship House and got around positive people who wanted to see me succeed. They showed me there was more to life than where I was at the moment. They were very caring and that made a difference."

Jasmine, now 27, started at the

Friendship House Youth Club when she was only 12. She has gone on to earn her high school equivalency diploma from the Adult Renewal Academy and then earn an associate degree in surgical technology at the Career Technical College. Today she is a surgical technologist at the University Health hospital and is a student again – working on a degree in nursing at Bossier Parish Community College.

"She was headed the wrong direction when we met her. We saw potential and we nurtured her and she's done very well," said Tina Sheffield, community coordinator at the Bossier City Friendship House.

"We are already reaping the dividends from the investment we made in her. She persevered and got her diploma and went to work and now she wants to give back. She is a role model now for our current students. We love her and are very proud of her."

When she was younger, Jasmine struggled with negative thinking about herself and those around her.

"But at the Friendship House I learned to think positive and I became a leader. I wanted more out of life and I learned to make goals and work for my goals," she said.

"Now I want to finish nursing school and I want to buy a house for me and my son. My first goal is to take care of him. And I want to help at the Friendship House. So many teens are lost like I once was and if I can help them find their way, I want to do that."

Jasmine said she can't imagine where she would be today without the caring support of Community Renewal in her life over the years.

"I don't know why they started the Friendship House, but I am very grateful they did," she said. "I learned how to keep pushing ahead when things get hard, just like the little engine that could."

**SO MANY TEENS
ARE LOST LIKE I ONCE
WAS AND IF I CAN
HELP THEM FIND
THEIR WAY, I WANT
TO DO THAT."**

– Jasmine English



The Broadmoor Baptist MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) met at a Cedar Grove Friendship House to make care bags for new neighbors, senior citizens and others.



CRI's Sandra Simpson and Jimmy Graves join Amy Seitz and Margo Clendenin of the CHRISTUS Foundation on the playground at the new Highland Friendship House. Thank you to the foundation and attorney Josh Clayton (see page 5) for providing funding for the playground!



Residents throughout the city planned many block parties to celebrate National Night Out this fall.



Jimmy Graves presented the annual Bridge Award to the CRI Young Professionals at the November Cornerstone Lunch.



Congratulations to Cissie Smith of Shreveport on winning the 2017 House for Hope! CRI and three other nonprofits received proceeds from the fundraiser. Shown here during an Open House: David Westerfield, KSLA's Scott Pace, Lynn Bryan, Kim Alpough and James Melvin.



Taking a tour is the best way to learn more about Community Renewal. Most tours are the third Thursday of each month. **Check the schedule at www.communityrenewal.us.**

Coming Soon... Another Community Renewal

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE



www.communityrenewal.us



FRIENDSHIP HOUSE SPONSORS

Make a difference in our most at-risk neighborhoods as a Friendship House sponsor or co-sponsor!

Community Renewal has 10 Friendship Houses in 5 Shreveport-Bossier City neighborhoods – Allendale, Barksdale Annex, Cedar Grove, Highland and Queensborough.

A Friendship House is a place of relentless hope and constant caring, offering after-school programs, adult education, family nights, community service outreach and the type of mentoring that makes a life-changing impact.

Our Friendship Houses have helped more than 3,500 children and teens in these neighborhoods! And they have helped major crime drop by an average of 52 percent there!



If you or your business would like to invest in our community as a Friendship House sponsor, contact Director of Development Jimmy Graves at 318-425-3222. Thank you to our newest sponsor, attorney Scott Chafin and his team, pictured above.



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INTERNATIONAL**

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a word from **mack**

CONNECTED PEOPLE MAKE A LASTING IMPACT

The astonishing successes of the human race throughout our walk upon this earth are simply breathtaking! Moving from caves to skyscrapers, from juju beads to gene therapy, are accomplishments that stagger us. Try to list the fields of progress and their steady steps. No one can. The successes are too numerous.

But there is a nagging defeat that keeps us from truly cutting loose in an all-out celebration of conquest. The human race has yet to find a way to grow a society of "us" that gets better and better from generation to generation. We can invent a car and improve it from a putt-putting Model "T" to a purring Maserati. But we haven't been able to solve the seemingly impenetrable puzzle of improving society at a base level so that it is forever rising from parent to child. Why? We do so many things so brilliantly. Why can't we cut this Gordian Knot of genuine developmental growth?

Let me be clear. Would I rather be living now than in medieval England? Of course. But we still have hunger. We still have war. We still have greed. And so on and so on. Can we ever arrive at the threshold of the door leading into a "home" in which our earth and her people are united in assuring that every single child can grow up safe and loved? Can we ultimately demolish the strongholds that bind us?

To me that is both the fundamental question and the fundamental challenge to every person on earth. The tragedy, it seems to me, is that we have lived with defeat so long that we either cannot conceive that it is possible to have a better world or we dumb down our expectations so as not to live in perpetual disappointment. (Remember Pope's famous couplet: "Hope springs eternal in the human breast..."?) But the next line reads our lives: "...man is always to be, but never is blest..."!) We have lost the corporate ability to see what kind of a world we could have as a safe and loving home for everyone.

And if perchance we do dream of that world, we dismiss it as "utopia" (which literally means "nowhere") and we just settle for less. To me that is utterly even more tragic. We spin out our one life to live in a Shakespearean "strutting

and fretting our hour upon the stage." So we spend our days for everything but the Main Thing: Leaving our children with a real foundation to build a real and lasting "home" and also handing them the blueprint to continue the construction.

Now you may rightfully ask me: "Why the black crepe of mourning, Mack? What is the point you are seeking to make?" Here it is: We must face the reality that we have not succeeded. But that is only the beginning place! The next step is a resolve to tackle this most vexing of all human challenges and the failure to do so can now be catastrophic given the conditions globally.

And on this one elemental issue my whole life changed late one October evening in 1981, I had spent the prior eight years immersed in the self-surrendered quest for meaning and clarity of vision all prompted by the imperative resting in the question: "God, what kind of a world do You want?" During those eight years I was a blind man only hoping for blurred sight. I sought content for the "What," I couldn't begin to even dream of the "How."

And on that 1981 October day, I could say with conviction that God's eternal, fundamental, and transcendent desire was to have a world filled with people who were ruled by love and were loving to all.

I was now ready to proceed! And I saw the first clue to "How." I was reading the third volume of Arnold Toynbee's, *A Study of History*, and he defined "society" as a "system of relationships." I jumped straight up! "Can that be true?" I asked myself. "If it is true, then we can cure societal disintegration one day and walk ever upward to a society that is ever and ever perfecting." On that day I took the first step into the land of "How." I committed myself to the trust that the basic nature of society is a system of relationships and I began to seek ways to start, grow, and nourish connected people based upon our common capacity to care for each other.

After walking in this same land for 30 years, I now know that Toynbee was right. And I know that we can succeed! I know it! God bless each of you for proving it every day. Onward! Upward!



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