

RENEWAL NEWS

WINTER 2018/2019 EDITION
VOLUME 23 ISSUE 3

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WWW.COMMUNITYRENEWAL.US



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



1,625

TRAINED HAVEN HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK LEADERS



320

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FRIENDSHIP HOUSE PROGRAMS IN 2018



124

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.



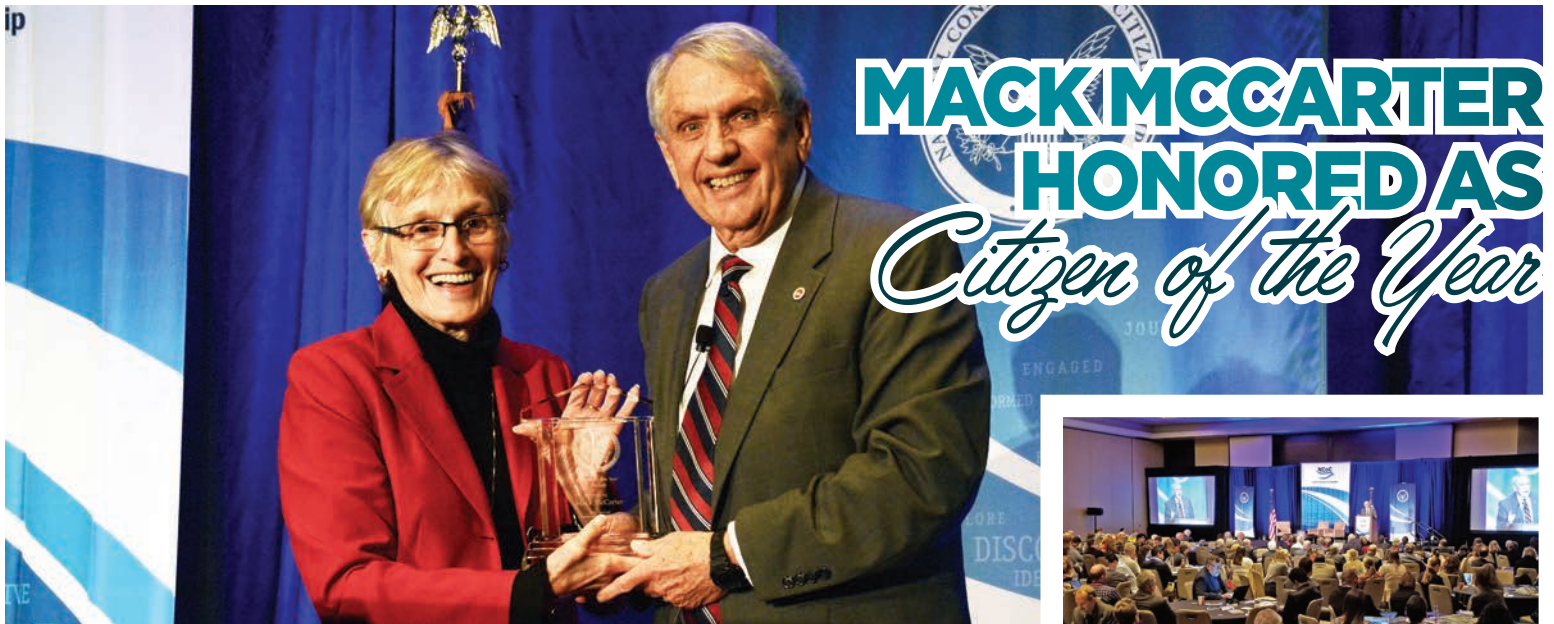
GIVE TODAY!

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!**





Community Renewal Founder Mack McCarter was honored with the 2018 Citizen of the Year Award this fall from the National Conference on Citizenship. The award was presented at the NCoC's annual conference, "It's Your Democracy!" in Washington, D.C.

"With more than 25 years' experience and amazing results in community building and unifying people, the Community Renewal program led by Mack McCarter was an obvious choice," said Sterling Speirn, CEO.

"The organization, through Mack's leadership and partnership, connects neighbors and residents to restore the foundation of safe and caring communities, leading to dramatic outcomes. The unity, the love and healing, and the caring that exist in Shreveport-Bossier is phenomenal. I have never seen anything like this in terms of persistence and prevalence and impact."

The Citizen of the Year Award recognizes individuals who use their public presence to inspire others and give back to their community. Mack was chosen for his leadership and partnership to build hope and renew the spirit of cooperation in every segment of the Shreveport-Bossier community. The NCoC noted that evidence of CRI's work can be measured in many ways, perhaps most notably that major crime has dropped an average of 52 percent in areas where we operate Friendship Houses.

"We are honored to continue the tradition of the National Conference on Citizenship by honoring

Mack with this award," continued Speirn. "In this time where national division has taken center stage, Mack and the team at CRI provide a model of unity, caring and healing that compels us to constructively work toward making our country a better place."

Mack gave credit to the CRI team for this national recognition.



Mack and the team at CRI provide a model of unity, caring and healing that compels us to constructively work toward making our country a better place."

– Sterling Speirn, CEO
National Conference on Citizenship

our world one block at a time.

"While caring alone will not produce a loving and caring community, caring together will. Community Renewal truly is a miracle which is unlocking and releasing the best in all of us in the hometown I love. My vision is that all communities will follow its methods to heal our shattered society."

Sally Prouty, former interim CEO of NCoC, said Mack has shown an extraordinary commitment and passion for true community renewal.

"Mack has invested his time, energy and financial resources in developing a methodology designed to tap into the caring spirit we all possess. Mack, we honor you for your kindness, your friendship, your dedication and all the things that are mentioned here," she said at the presentation.

"I am so grateful to witness the results of the work of the dedicated men and women of Community Renewal," Mack said. "It is because of this relentless effort that Community Renewal has begun to cure the cancer of division and brokenness we all are experiencing in our cities – by changing



THE ANSWER TO WHAT IS BROKEN

Many words of congratulations came into our office after the Citizen of the Year Award was announced. Charlie Bain of Shreveport sent this wonderful Letter to the Editor of The (Shreveport) Times:

"Mack's vision to build individual relationships in neighborhoods as a way of building a better world is one on which we all agree, no matter our age, race, gender, address, political or religious affiliation. It is THE answer to what is so visibly broken today, THE answer to holding our city, state, country, if not world, together.

"And so it is with great respect for a life of great purpose that we all salute Mack McCarter. We salute his determination and diligence, perseverance, abounding love and ever present smile.

"We also applaud every local citizen who has given time, talents, energy and money to advance CRI's mission. There are thousands among us and each has contributed to achieving this astounding recognition. We salute the Ark-La-Tex for sharing your caring."



Longtime volunteer Julie Lafargue greets Sherry Brown, volunteers coordinator, at the Allendale Friendship House

VOLUNTEERING PROVIDES ITS OWN SPECIAL REWARDS

Julie Lafargue earns her income in the legal field, but she finds her rewards in the mission fields of Shreveport's inner-city neighborhoods.

The longtime local attorney started her partnership with Community Renewal more than 20 years ago with friends at First United Methodist Church. They started helping the Kids Club at the Allendale Friendship House by sponsoring report card dinners to encourage the boys and girls to do their best in school.

"I just love the kids. They are so loving and appreciative," Julie said. "Every report card party is my favorite day of the week. I believe I get more out of it than they do."

"I've built relationships with these kids and I have great love for them. I also have fears for them because of the dangers that are so close to them."

Julie was also motivated to volunteer with Community Renewal because of the permanency of the Friendship Houses in high-crime, low-income neighborhoods. Each Friendship House is staffed by a community coordinator who lives at the house with their family and who becomes a caring neighbor, not just a visitor.

"The Friendship House is such a safe and

nurturing place for them to learn that their life doesn't have to be spent as a drug dealer on the corner. There are people who love them and want them to be successful," she said.

As a frequent volunteer in Allendale, Julie has come to see that the neighborhood has many caring residents, just like any other area of town. She has no fear about going there because she now has many friends there.



In some small way I may have made a difference in a child's life and that's very gratifying."

- Julie Lafargue, volunteer

"I've been here at all hours and never been afraid. This is a community. I see roses growing and yards cut and people who work and children who attend school," she said. "I see people raising families who want to live in clean and decent housing and who want their children to be safe and educated."

Julie has also helped with events like neighborhood cookouts and drives to collect

school uniforms. She was eager to help make a dream become reality when the Allendale Youth Club set its sights on a trip to New York City. Not only did Julie help with funding the journey, but she also joined them.

"It was a life-changing trip for these kids. They saw that the world is bigger than Shreveport. They saw the Statue of Liberty and the 911 Memorial and the Empire State Building. We impressed upon them how things they are learning in school have relevance in the world," she said.

"We wanted to show them they are not trapped in their situation and education is the first step to a better life."

Julie has encouraged friends to support and volunteer with Community Renewal and she will continue to do so.

"I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. In some small way I may have made a difference in a child's life and that's very gratifying. You get more out of volunteering with Community Renewal than you give," she said.

"I don't know what Shreveport would look like without Community Renewal. It would be a far different place and it would be heartbreaking."

GET **INVOLVED!**

Give us a call at 318-425-3222 to find out how you can volunteer with us!



BRIDGE AWARD WINNER KASIE MAINIERO: CHANGE BEGINS IN OUR YOUNGEST CITIZENS

When Principal Kasie Mainiero put caring into the curriculum at University Elementary School this fall, she let her staff and students know that education is about more than quizzes and tests.

As head of the first We Care School in Shreveport, Kasie and her team have created numerous ways to emphasize kindness and caring on a campus of some 1,100 students. The goal is for students to make a giving, selfless attitude part of their daily lifestyle now and in the future.

Because of her own commitment to her school and community, Community Renewal awarded Kasie the 2018 Bridge Award at the annual Cornerstone Luncheon in November. Kasie received the award from Community Renewal's Ro White and Mike Leonard, and then delivered a powerful keynote address to a full banquet room at East Ridge Country Club.

"I am so honored to be receiving this award and I want to recognize the Community Renewal team for seeing what I do and recognizing the importance of that work," she said.

Kasie was introduced to Community Renewal by friend Mary Richter, who realized we were all speaking the same language and



We can change this community. We just have to reach them when they are really young."

**- Principal Kasie Mainiero,
2018 Bridge Award Winner**

reaching for many of the same goals, but in different places.

"We are all trying to teach children early on to care about each other and break down the walls and start really making a go of it. You are trying to do the same thing with the whole community and I am doing it on a smaller scale with kids," she said.

Kasie told how her parents died when she was very young and she was raised by her grandparents. They taught her to have a

strong faith in God and a strong desire to help those around her. And that's something she wants to pass on to the students in her school.

"Our kids come from many different backgrounds with varied difficulty, and if their village is broken, we have to be their village. That's where the idea of a We Care School came from. A lot of students are broken inside and no one even knows it," she said.

"Our teachers have become much more caring and compassionate toward one another and the kids are seeing that model of caring and compassion. Our counselors have been there from the beginning and they have seen the transformation in the staff and the children. In the first year I was there we had 798 pupils enrolled and 563 formal write-ups for discipline. By 2017, we had 1,049 students and only 21 discipline write-ups.

"And now our attendance rate is soaring because our kids want to be there. I want everyone to know that we can change this community. We just have to reach them when they are really young. We live in such a divided world and my hope is to combat that by instilling love and compassion in the hearts of our youngest citizens."



CADDO SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT

the Spirit of Community

Dr. T Lamar Goree, Caddo Parish Schools Superintendent, in his remarks as keynote speaker for the 2018 Haven House Rally:

I am so humbled, so honored to stand before you today to proclaim my love for God and to proclaim my love for community and to proclaim my love and appreciation for what my friend Mack McCarter and everyone with Community Renewal have done for this amazing community we call Shreveport. Let's give it up for Community Renewal.

Community Renewal has impacted my life and it will impact the lives of those who come after us.

When we talk about caring friends, a loving neighborhood and restoring community, I am reminded of my beginning in Shreveport because I had the advantage of having all of those things. Our children won't have that advantage because they move. We live in communities now where we don't know all of our neighbors. So when we talked about caring friends and loving neighbors, that's the beginning of a conversation.

When I see neighborhoods like Southern Trace embracing what we need to do to become neighbors, I am encouraged to say, 'How can we bring that to my neighborhood? How can we bring that same love of neighbors to every neighborhood?' As an educator, I always

Award winners, at left, top to bottom: Dr. T. Lamar Goree, keynote speaker; Bob Griffin and Dr. Harry Blake (award accepted by his son) Lifetime of Excellence Award; Autumn Anderson, Panda Express, Friendship Award.



We must make sure we are creating powerful homes where we do embrace the spirit of what it truly means to restore a love of community."

— Dr. T. Lamar Goree, superintendent, Caddo Parish Schools

embrace change. Change is good. Growth is good. I will certainly do everything I can for the children of Caddo Parish to not be left behind.

But how do we leave behind things that make us such wonderful people? How do we embrace the future but also keep the past and those things that are important? I am proud to be among a

diverse group of people who embrace that conversation and want to continue that.

When you look at the word community and you think about what community really means, I think you are really talking about three things: the home, the

church and the school. We need to get those things right. If we prepare our children and provide them with the opportunity, they will be successful. We must make sure we are creating powerful homes where we do embrace care, where we do embrace love and where we do embrace the spirit of what it truly means to restore a love of community.

We as adults have the power to create opportunities. We've got to make sure that those opportunities do not just exist in places like Dallas and Houston. We need those opportunities to exist here in Shreveport. We have to create those opportunities and that's where I commend Community Renewal. We must all continue to support this wonderful work.

I grew up in a community where I knew all of my neighbors and my neighbors knew me. I went to the neighborhood schools. And I truly believe that it was because of the foundations established here that I have seen the successes that

IDENT EMBRACES Community Renewal

I have seen in my life.

As we continue this work of Community Renewal, how do we make sure that the children are a huge part of that focus? How do we make sure that we teach children the importance of caring for friends? How do we make sure that we teach children the importance of loving our neighbors and helping out in the neighborhood? How do we create a community where there is opportunity for people to live, to shop, to play and to just be good people? That's what we want for Shreveport. Caddo Parish Public Schools stands committed to do everything we can to renew not only our school system, but even more importantly, the heart of our community.



HAVEN HOUSE RALLY CELEBRATES A SIMPLE CONCEPT WITH POWERFUL RESULTS

One neighbor at a time, one new friend at a time, residents become connected by caring.

And when they do, a neighborhood builds the foundation for a safe and caring community.

Taking the lead in this effort are residents in all types of neighborhoods who give a little bit of their time to serve as volunteer Haven House leaders. Community Renewal has now trained more than 1,600 men and women of all ages to become Haven House leaders on their street.

We celebrated all of them in October with the annual Haven House Rally, drawing caring citizens from all across the Shreveport-Bossier City area for fellowship and inspiration. This year's event was hosted by Mt. Canaan Baptist Church and featured Caddo Parish Schools Superintendent Dr. T. Lamar Goree as keynote speaker. (See excerpts from his talk on these two pages)

As division grows in some parts of the country, Haven House leaders help create connections through kindness, believing that positive change begins right where you live, making friends on your street.

Haven House. It's a simple concept with powerful results.

GET INVOLVED!

Community Renewal hosts Good Neighbor Seminars on a regular basis to train residents in the Haven House model. Most sessions include a free lunch and last no more than 90 minutes. Contact Haven House Director Russell Minor at 318-425-3222 if you would like to get involved.



NEIGHBORS CONNECT THROUGH CARING ON NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

When neighbors come together and love is expressed ... the sky is the limit! Neighbors from across the Shreveport-Bossier City area came together for National Night Out in October. Families renewed friendships. Meals and laughter were shared. Phone numbers were exchanged. Televisions were turned off. Strangers became friends. Maybe we should do this more often than once a year! What do you say? The sky is the limit! Contact us at 318-425-3222, visit us at www.communityrenewal.us and follow us on Facebook to learn more about connecting through caring in your community!



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS





ARA GRADUATE RISES ABOVE DARK CLOUDS

A math test tripped up Maria Shaw on her way to high school graduation. She completed her senior year at Woodlawn High School, but didn't receive her diploma because she didn't pass the required math exam.

"It was devastating. It made me feel discouraged. It made me feel like I couldn't accomplish anything. It made me want to give up," she said.

Maria tried again for a brief time to earn her diploma, but by age 22 she was getting married and starting a family. Life would go on without any further education. "I just didn't think it would ever happen," she said.

It was starting a family, though, that convinced her to try again.

"I had a baby girl in 2016 and that made me realize I had to get my high school diploma to get out of the struggle and be what I could be. I knew I had to do it for my baby," she said.

Maria checked out her options and was recommended to Community Renewal's Adult Renewal Academy.

"I went to the ARA and I could feel a spiritual connection there and I could feel everyone was very concerned. They would stay after class to make sure I understood and that I was confident about the test. And in three months I got my confidence back and realized I can do whatever I want to in life," she said.



***I got my confidence back
and realized I can do
whatever I want to in life."***

- Maria Shaw, ARA graduate

"I was stressed out because I didn't have child care. But God put the right people in position to help me, even after I lost my job and my husband lost his job. It went beyond a student-teacher relationship."

Maria passed her test on Aug. 23, 2018, a day that she will never forget.

"I prayed first and I felt good about it. And when I found out the next day that I passed with a 12, when I had only gotten a 4 before, I started screaming and crying and then my baby started screaming! From that day on I have been accelerating up and up. The next day was my birthday and it was the best birthday ever," she said.

She quickly enrolled in the nursing program at Southern University – Shreveport with plans to become a registered nurse. She's tackling classes like chemistry and physiology, earning two A's and a B on her midterm exams. Maria gives much of the credit for her success to the Adult Renewal Academy.

"Community Renewal can help people in a dark place find their way. That's the best gift you can give anyone. You know they care," she said.

"It's only up from here. The cloud is no longer over my head. I can go wherever I want to in life."

YOU CAN **HELP!**

Send in your donation today in the enclosed envelope and help other students like Maria reach their dreams!



Pam Barker, (center, left photo) joined friends Carla Riordan and Melinda Jones to teach a class in etiquette for our Friendship House teens.

Community Renewal hosts tours each month. Our first tours of 2019 are at noon on Jan. 17, Feb. 21 and March 21. Make plans now to bring a friend and join us!

Student government leaders at Bossier Parish Community College came in costume to treat the Barksdale Annex Kids Club to a fun afternoon.



838 Community Renewal International



Congratulations to four of the Ringgold community's most caring residents - David Saucier, Chinere King, Sue Thrash and Alonza Alford - who earned certification in Community Renewal after a week-long CRI Experience!



Members of the CRI Young Professionals took the Friendship House Youth Clubs to the Norton Art Gallery for a tour and then a time of creating their own artwork.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

IF NOT ME, WHO?



A Community Renewal tour is a great way to learn how we can all be connected by caring and how you can get involved!

UPCOMING EVENTS! **SAVE THE DATES!**

CRI TOURS: 12 - 1:30

JAN. 17, FEB. 21, MARCH 21, APRIL 18

By Jimmy Graves

Director of Development

Fifteen years ago I joined the team here at Community Renewal because I saw a movement forming – one that I believed had the power and potential to bring real change in lives, in our community and throughout our country. I saw an effort in motion that was helping people of all types discover new meaning and purpose in life; an effort that was bringing people together from all walks of life – young, old, black, white, rich, poor and everywhere in between – all to build safer, stronger, more caring and vibrant communities.

What a journey it has been! Over the years, much progress has been made. I've witnessed thousands of changed lives, crime reduced in troubled areas, and bridges built for historic gaps. Other cities across our country have made their way to Shreveport-Bossier searching for answers and solutions to their similar challenges; now some of those

CRI EXPERIENCE: 9 - 5

FEB. 11, APRIL 8

cities are replicating the work of Community Renewal. Yet there is so much more to be done, locally and across the country!

While much emphasis and many resources are given to address the dysfunctional symptoms of our culture such as homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, crime, domestic violence, etc., very little attention up until now has been given to the relational disconnect that actually causes the litany of dysfunctional symptoms. By and large we have continued to patch and paint over the cracks in the walls, yet neglected the foundational problem causing those cracks. On a personal level, if there is relational disconnect in a home, cracks of dysfunction and division will appear; in a community, if there is relational disconnect among citizens and leaders then strife and lack of progress will prevail. This principle holds true both on a small and large scale. And so we must address the issue of disconnect! We must restore the relational foundation upon which

CROQUET CLASSIC: 8:30 - 1

APRIL 27

we can build stronger families, communities and country.

Our city can be restored and renewed; our community can become vibrant again; our lives can take on new purpose and meaning as we each step out, connect, and engage. This is the movement of Community Renewal – you, me and thousands of others connected together for a Cause greater than our selves; a Cause that brings each of us new meaning and purpose in life; a Cause that brings out the best in you, me and our community!

As you reflect during the beginning of a new year, let's ask ourselves the questions: What can I do, how can I help, what role can I play in this movement of Renewal? And as we move forward into 2019, may we determine to reject the voices of procrastination and fear and answer His call to step out, connect and engage.

If not now, when? If not me, who? Now is the time and you and I are the answer!

YOU CAN **HELP!**

Your donation today will help us build safer, stronger, more caring and vibrant communities! Please use the enclosed envelope or go to www.communityrenewal.us to make your tax-deductible gift! Thank you!



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a word from mack



WHY COMMUNITY RENEWAL?

Albert Einstein, in surveying the cultural landscape of the twentieth century, observed, "Ours is a generation in which we have perfected the means and forgotten the purposes of life." No commentary could be more wrenchingly accurate for so much of the activity around us. We all know that. And that is why it is important, every now and then, in the buzz of busyness, to stop, step back, take a breath, and redirect our thoughts to the "why" of life's work.

Knowing the "why" of your life and your work is absolutely critical in order to acquire the directed power to achieve purposeful results. Compare, for instance, Benjamin Franklin's razor sharp truth, "He who has a clear end in mind, makes all things serve," to the meandering reminiscences of the park-bench-jockey, who confides to a fellow squirrel-feeder, "You know, I've learned a lot in these last 65 years. Unfortunately, most of it has been about aluminum." Yes! We were made to be shaped and sharpened by the "why's" of everything we do.

Recently a friend precipitated that very philosophical pause that refreshes by asking me, "Why Community Renewal?" So I stopped. And I thought. I listened. And I went aside – alone to ponder. "Why?"

As you can attest by reading this issue of Renewal News, we are a flood of activity, events, and all sorts of happenings. Quiet time in the car brought the clarity that I remembered and needed again.

"Why Community Renewal?" I believe that **we are dedicated** to community renewal because first and foremost it is **our life's duty**. The prophet Amos spoke God's demanding sentiments when he said, "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness [right relationships with others] like a never-failing stream." We are here to follow the orders of the One who formed us and called us to live together in a fellowship of lives devoted to seeking each other's well-being. We are commanded to love one another.

It is our duty.

But as high as that calling to duty is, there is something even higher as a reason to commit ourselves to community renewal. Devotion to the renewing of our community in caring love reminds us of **our life's design**.

How painfully poignant to witness a fish out of water. It thrashes! It gasps and gasps! It must have the ocean. Just so we were made for community. No one lives to himself alone. We were designed to swim in the ocean of human kindness. Physiologists now tell us astonishing things. They tell us that when we give an act of kindness, our serotonin level increases! And our immune system is strengthened! But further, when we receive an act of kindness, our serotonin level increases! And our immune system is strengthened! And amazingly, when we human beings even see an act of kindness our serotonin level increases! But then more! When we hear about an act of kindness done to another, our serotonin level increases and our immune system is strengthened!! We were made to swim in the ocean of human kindness. It is our elemental design.

But there is something even greater than our duty and our design as critically sublime as those "why's" are. Our dedication to renewing our community is the only highway to reach and to experience the richness of **our life's destiny**! We are fulfilled only as we serve others. We are complete only as we give ourselves to others. And we are perfected only as we seek to love others. What strange paradoxes in the realm of God's Spirit! Our individual destiny is inextricably bound to the unconditional love which only loving others can provide.

So as we go forth into this Season of Peace and step into a New Year of Hope, let us do so with a renewed dedication to our earthly call to duty, our elementally human design, and our eternally highest destiny: Let us build today's bridge to a new tomorrow ... Together!



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