



The Community Coordinator: A Profile

The position of community coordinator is a demanding one that can take an emotional toll, says Michael B. Leonard, D.D.S., associate coordinator of [Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal](#). "The person has to be called to do this work. They have to have a transcendent call."

He gets no argument on that point from Tina Sheffield, one of two community coordinators for the Barksdale Annex area of Bossier City. "It's a full-time mission," says Sheffield, who retired from the Air Force as a senior master sergeant after a 21-year career.

She first got involved with Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal as a Haven House Leader. Then in 2003 when the Friendship House opened in Barksdale Annex—near Barksdale Air Force Base—she moved in with her husband, Lonzo Sheffield III, an Air Force careerist on active duty at the base.

The neighborhood's other coordinator, Manuela Standard, lives in her own private house across the street. Standard, a native of Germany with a previous career in education, is White. Sheffield is African American.

Together the two conduct regular neighborhood "prayer walks"—praying with people on the street and in their homes and offering sympathy, encouragement and direction. "We just try to be here. It's so important to have somebody here people can turn to," says Sheffield.

The two community coordinators also oversee activities inside the Friendship House. The afternoon programs for children are a primary focus. Frankie Thomas, the mother of six, has a 13-year-old son in the Barksdale Annex Youth Club, a group for older kids overseen by Sheffield.

"I just thank God for her and her husband," Thomas says of the Sheffields. On occasion, she attends the adult education program, Thomas adds. Arthur Raney, another neighborhood parent, appreciates the Friendship House as a safe sanctuary. His four school-age children are there on days he is late getting home from work.

The Friendship House is not an overnight shelter, but the Sheffields are not ones to turn away people in need. She tells of a man who showed up at 4 a.m. in distress, perhaps chemically induced. While they prayed for him, he fell asleep. They covered him with a

blanket and went back to bed. The next morning when they returned from church, their guest had departed, leaving a note of thanks.

Tina Sheffield, a person of strong Christian views, grew up on a hard-scrabble east Texas farm and says she knows what deprivation—emotional as well as economic—is all about. "My heart always went out to people suffering," she says.

She sees evidence of a positive change in Barksdale Annex. For one thing, the neighborhood is physically cleaner—an improvement she attributes to increased interaction between the residents.

However, she also recognizes problems remain. One of her major concerns is out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancy. Three drop-outs from her afternoon club were pregnant at the time she was interviewed for this report (April 2006). To address the problem, Sheffield emphasizes the importance of marriage and stability and discourages risky behavior, she says.

(Based on a site visit and interviews conducted in April 2006.)