



Where Needs Meet Love January, 2016  
 As God's grace reaches more and more people,  
 there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.  
*2 Corinthians 4:15*

## Mark Your Calendar. . .

### By the Numbers . . .

#### December, 2015

925 Families  
 3071 Individuals

#### December, 2014

804 Families  
 2608 Individuals

- **January 25-February 15, 2016 – Agape Volunteers are invited to participate in a class "What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty."** Sponsored by Bedford Christian Ministries the **free** classes will be held at the Bedford Community College from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Contact Gardner Simpkins for more info at [grdsimpkins@gmail.com](mailto:grdsimpkins@gmail.com) .
- **JANUARY 25–APRIL 25, 2016—Agape Volunteers are invited to participate in the LifeLine Caregiver Training** program at Blue Ridge Community Church on Mondays from 6:30-9:30 pm. Details of the program are outlined in the December, 2015 Agape Newsletter. For more information contact Jan Hogle at [tofinishstrong@gmail.com](mailto:tofinishstrong@gmail.com).
- **All-Volunteer Training Scheduled for Saturday, March 12 from 9-12 noon.** Every volunteer is encouraged to plan to attend this-half day meeting to be encouraged, updated, and to participate in providing feedback to make The Agape Center better. More info will be sent soon.

## Welcome New Volunteers

**Leslie Bradley** - Household  
**Rashad Cobb** – Gift Shop, Runner  
**Emmi Dagley** - Clothing  
**Patty Ann Gillespie** - Clothing  
**Sandy Gravley** – Household  
**Laurie Henderson** - Telephone  
**Erin Hodges** – Gift Shop, Runner  
**Robbie Hodges** – Gift Shop, Runner  
**Doug Lowe** - Pantry  
**Mary Jane Lowe** - Clothing  
**Diana Miller** – Data/Filing  
**Raymond Perry** - Furniture, Pick-up  
**Gary Shifflett** – Pantry, Transportation  
**Sharon Sweet** - Gift Shop  
**Mike Walter** – Pantry  
**Jane Zimmer** - Clothing

See Page 2 for Final Christmas Report on all that God accomplished this past holiday season!

### Special Donations

- A donation of \$1305 was received from Kroger from the use of the Kroger Rewards cards for the quarter ending December, 2015.
- Over 300 individual donors contributed to the financial health of The Agape Center during 2015.

**Start the New Year with two painless ways to donate to The Agape Center without any effort on your part!**

**First, sign up for the Amazon Smile Program**, designating a portion of your purchase to be donated directly to The Agape Center – SML. Once you have registered your charity in “The Smile Program”, every time you make a purchase, Amazon will take a portion of your purchase price and donate to The Agape Center.

**Second, register your Kroger card on-line**, and each time you make a purchase at Kroger, a portion of your purchase will be donated by Kroger to The Agape Center. If you have not renewed your Kroger card, it must be renewed for donations to continue to The Agape Center. Go to Kroger.com and update your renewal **NOW!**

## **Agape served record numbers in December!**

For the first time in its history, The Agape Center provided gifts to over 3000 residents of Bedford and Franklin Counties. 925 clients, representing 3071 individuals, each saw a mentor, received a personal gift basket, plus gifts for their family members, during the month of December. That is over 900 individuals who were touched with the love of Jesus by everyone they encountered within Agape, from the front desk, to mentors to the store clerks and the gift shop hosts, and then the pantry and furniture volunteers! What an opportunity to serve our community on behalf of Jesus!

In addition, the Warm Hearts-Happy Feet program provided over 900 children from 377 families with either a new warm jacket or coat, or new shoes or boots.

Many thanks to the church members who purchased and wrapped these items, and to the special volunteers who sorted and prepared them for distribution to each family.

The lovely gift baskets have been in the making throughout the year. Janet Sellers and Eileen Hawkins co-chair the Gift Baskets. Janet praised the “abundance of beautiful items received during the year, the awesome volunteers, and the seven ladies who actually put the 2465 baskets together. We had enough gifts to last through the very last day! It melted our hearts to see the clients’ tears of gratitude, especially from delighted children who had no reason to expect anything for Christmas. And the best part is that each gift included a tract pointing them to Jesus. Our cups ‘simply runneth over’. So many of the volunteers agreed that this is the one place we can witness to so

many people in the comfort of our own community. Our ministry can only be attributed to the prayers that cover each and every day!”

## **New Year’s Day at Agape**

It was New Year’s Day, January 1, 2016. The Agape Center was closed, but the volunteers were still working. In fact, the place was buzzing with activity, from books to clothing, from sorting intake items to the regular Friday food pick-up, as volunteers prepared for opening day of 2016.

**Jim Stanley (left) and William Wallace (right) prepare for the pick-up at Wal-Mart. William comes to Agape as often as possible to fulfill his community service requirements for his high school.**



**Robbie Hallock getting ready to make the Friday Bonsack Wal-Mart pick-up.**

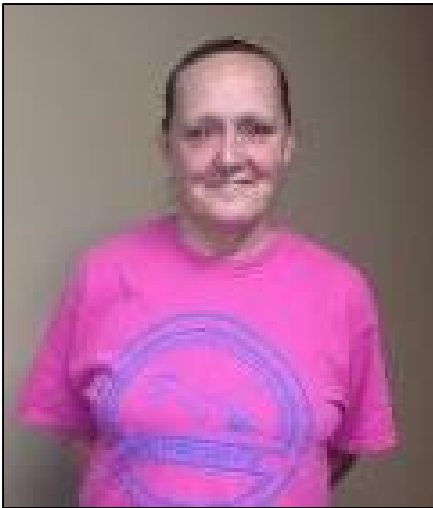
**Bonnie Fiori and Brenda East rejoicing over a case of presentation Bibles. Agape is always in need of Bibles, especially for children and teens. If you have an old, tattered Bible, Agape partners with a ministry that uses worn out Bibles overseas, so bring them in!**



## GOD STORIES

### A Living Faith

In Spring 2015, Melissa Hairston wasn't expected to live. She had been beaten up in her own home by two women, one of whom she knew. After they left, she struggled to get herself onto her sofa. When a family member came and found her later, she was taken to the hospital. As a result of her injuries, she had a stroke, lung damage, and a bleak prognosis. After two weeks on the ventilator, Melissa woke up and was eventually moved to PCU from ICU. Her memory started to return but she still had no feeling in her legs, was very confused, and had no balance from the head injury she had suffered.



**Melissa Hairston**

Melissa was very angry with the women who had harmed her. However, as her hospitalization wore on and as her healing was restored, and she had plenty of time to think. As she became more alert, she just kept praying and trusting God for healing. She knew the Lord would help her and she gave Him her anger and her heart.

Melissa eventually realized the only option she had was to forgive her attackers.

When she returned home after her extended hospitalization, her son wanted her to bring charges against her assailants. But she refused, saying, "I've already forgiven them."

Melissa's physical healing was completed by fall, 2015, as all remnants of the assault are gone. She has no limp and now claims that her memory is better than it was before. While she was in the hospital, as she was recovering, and since she returned home, her constant refrain is 'God is going to fix that'.

Mentor Gini Lohmeyer remembered her first visit with Melissa about five years ago, "when she was in a desperate state of mind. It was at that point that she accepted Jesus as her Savior and Lord. Melissa's response in the midst of such trauma during 2015 demonstrated God's faithfulness in Melissa's life".

Gini concluded, "The fact that she keeps giving everything to God is truly a testament to her strong faith in Him. It is a privilege to see clients over a period of time as their walk with the Lord is progressively stronger and to see how God works in each individual's life."

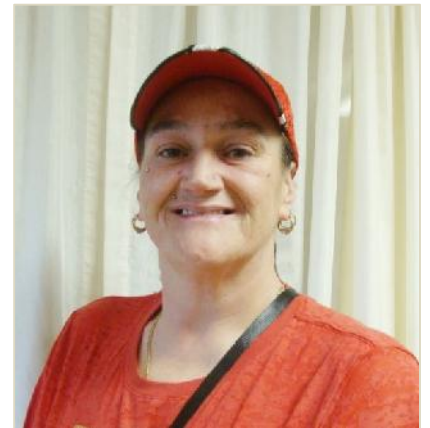
### My Two Strongest Soldiers Passed Away in My Arms

Regina Rodriguez "never asked for any help, but Christmas was coming and I wanted to provide something for my three kids, aged 11, 13, 14...all in middle school in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades". My mom encouraged me to come to The Agape Center, and I felt comfortable the minute I walked in the door. People have been friendly, wanting to help me."

Regina described how she had been turned away, rudely, by an organization because she didn't live in their service area. That made her very skeptical about coming to another 'helping organization'.

Her mentor on that first visit was Marion Reed, whom Regina calls 'my angel'. "She treated me like I am someone and encouraged me to be clear about my needs and not to be ashamed."

In the midst of an already difficult holiday season, Regina's father passed away on December 31, 2015. She lost her brother four years ago in February. These two losses have been extremely difficult for her, adding to the financial and emotional stresses of the holidays. Between tears, Regina continued to thank the volunteers at Agape for "making me feel like I can hold my head up and not be ashamed".



**Regina Rodriguez**

## GOD STORIES

### Just What I Needed

Kathy Richards worked hard for 15 years at Michael's Crafts when she was told that her job would no longer be full-time and that her hourly wage would be cut. She had assumed she would retire from Michael's, a job she really enjoyed. But once that job was reduced, she could no longer afford driving to Roanoke for the work, and had to face reality. She decided to return to school and try to do something she would find truly rewarding – the medical field.

In May, she will graduate from Virginia Western Community College with a double-major in Medical Office Management and Medical Coding and Billing. She thought she was all ready for the two internships she needed to complete at Carilion Clinic this spring, but then learned that she needed to wear a uniform for the job.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”  
*Jesus* (Matthew 11:28-29 MSG)

Once again Kathy turned to God, praying that The Agape Center would have what she needed. She was overjoyed to walk into the store and see four scrub tops, in her size, right on the end of the rack – waiting for her! Now she will start her final semester, just counting down until graduation.

Kathy Richards with her scrub tops – just in time for her internship.



### I Found Jesus at Agape!

The first time Sheri Saul came to Agape, about 1 year ago, she was mentored by Marion Reed. “Marion brought a joyfulness to the conversation, and showed me a Jesus I never knew. I had been brought to church by my parents, and attended Sunday School. However, I never understood that I could have a personal relationship with Jesus.

“Marion showed me step by step how I could know Jesus, and she prayed with me, allowing me to accept Jesus as my Savior.

At that meeting, she also gave me a book, *Jesus Calling*. She wrote a note to me in the front of it. Every day, I read the daily devotional with my eight year old daughter. She and I attend Blue Ridge Bible Church in Forest with my neighbor.”

Sheri works as an in-home caregiver and hopes to be able to purchase a car soon. Then she will have transportation of her own for herself and her daughter.



Sheri Saul

## Responding to God's Voice



Client Christina Brickey

## Gatorade from God's Pit Crew

When the Transportation Team from Agape returns from the warehouse at God's Pit Crew, they are loaded up with water and Gatorade for our clients. God's Pit Crew collects items needed for emergencies, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, etc, where they deploy trailer-loads of goods to help people in catastrophic situations. Whenever they have a surplus, they provide their 'overstock' to organizations like The Agape Center, to help with their client needs. Gatorade is a God-send for many clients, especially those with diabetes in their homes.

Christina Brickey was so thankful to learn that we had plenty of Gatorade in December because both she and her Grandmother rely on this drink. Christina takes medications which make her thirsty all the time, and her grandmother is diabetic, so they especially need it, but there are 8 people in the family, so everyone benefits from a healthier beverage!

Sue Hood, who has ten people in her home, also appreciates having a beverage, which is not full of sugar, especially for the children.



Client Sue Hood (right) with daughter Cindy and granddaughter Layla-Ann.



A recent load of Gatorade helps people in our community.



Ed Young from the Transportation Team, which goes to Danville twice a month to make a pick-up from God's Pit Crew.

# RESPONDING TO GOD'S VOICE

## Agape Strategic Planning Committee Seeking God's Future

### Blessed to Bless Others

Former Agape client, Brian Childress, has not stopped serving since he landed his job with the Salvation Army of Roanoke last summer. His official position is Bookkeeper but he seeks out ministry opportunities as well. His recent



**Brian Childress**

projects included the Salvation Army's Christmas Kettles and their Angel Tree program.

In addition to a busy work schedule, Brian is excited about his church's efforts to reach out to the community. Inner Faith Fellowship Ministries in Rocky Mount provides children's winter outer clothing as they collect new or gently used jackets and coats. The church also contributes financially, in order to bring a supply of jackets for children to protect against the cold winter weather to The Agape Center. He and his wife, LeShonika, are very involved in their church and Brian says, "we feel blessed that God has provided for us so that we can help others."

How does an organization relying on the Holy Spirit's direction plan for the future? In truth, how can any organization actually plan for the future!

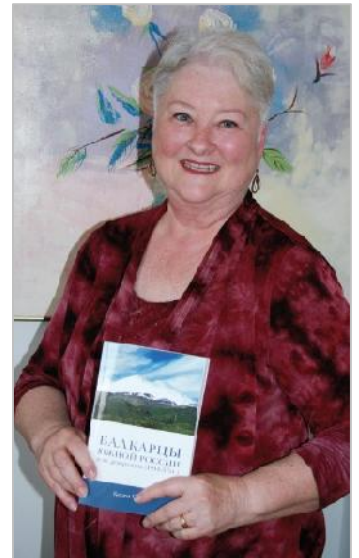
However, as stewards of the resources God has placed before The Agape Center, and in order to more effectively serve those who come to our doors, that is exactly what the recently formed Strategic Planning Committee is attempting to do. Having only been in the present location since 2013, the building is taxed with growing pains as client numbers continue to grow.

The Committee is Chaired by Don Frase, long-time Board Member and Treasurer. Other Committee members are: Sue Lipscomb, Executive Director; Jack Lipscomb, Facilities Manager; Carl Grove, Board President; Marti Anderson and Jan Hogle, Board Members; Glenn Preston, Agape Mentor and retired fundraising professional. The Committee will receive input from the Client Focus Group, which will be held on January 29 and led by Jan Hogle, and from volunteers at their Spring Training held on Saturday, February 20, 2016. Individuals who have input may contact Sue Lipscomb directly. The Committee will present its recommendations to the Agape Board in April, 2016.

### Agape Volunteer publishes Russian language version of her book

*Editor's Note: Karen Baker volunteers at Agape as Communications Manager, Mentor, and Floor Supervisor.*

Karen Baker, local author of *The Balkars of Southern Russia and Their Deportation (1944-1957)* has just released the Russian-language version of this book. Getting this published in another language and in another country took a great deal of collaboration with people from several countries. "It would have been ideal to publish in Nalchik, the capital city of the Balkar nation in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. However, with the violence, corruption, terrorism and general unrest in this area, all of the bookstores had been closed and local publishers had no method of distribution," she said. "It took the miracles of modern technology to process this entire project electronically, given that Karen Baker does not live in Russia, nor does she speak the Russian language. However, it is the language



**Karen Baker with the Russian version of her book.**

*(Balkar Book continued on page 7)*

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S VOICE

*(Balkar Book continued)*

of the marketplace for the Balkars, so getting it to them in a language they could read, was very important. The translator for the project was a Russian woman from Kazakhstan who now lives in Southeast Asia. The editor was in Kazakhstan, and the publisher was in Belarus. Thus, the electronic methods of document transfers, money transfers, and communication were critical. The original book itself was the product of many people, particularly a local man named Mustafa who had connections throughout his nation, and introduced Baker to people who had either personally gone through the deportation, or whose parents had.

“The people I interviewed were very anxious to tell their stories, and seemed to have a keen recollection of their experiences, even though the event occurred over seventy years ago. I also received great encouragement to even tackle this project, particularly from a man named Boris, who had taught high school English in his village. He had learned to read and write English, but had never encountered an American English speaker until I met him.

He was overjoyed to have achieved his life dream of meeting a native (American) English speaker. He actually speaks very good English, and we were able to communicate very well,” Baker continued.

As a result of the book now being available to the Balkars, Baker has been invited to speak at the Pedagogical University of Nalchik in March, 2016, marking the 72nd anniversary of the deportation. Her presentation will be attended by faculty, students,

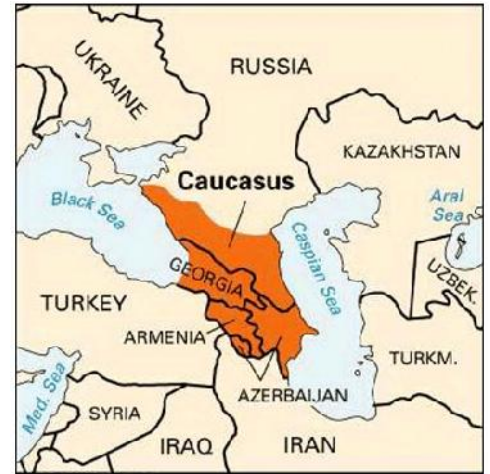
academia, government officials, historians and intelligentsia of the Balkar community. The sale of the English version and individual contributions provided the funds for the Russian version. All proceeds from the sale of both versions will continue to be used to serve the Balkar people in various projects.

The author receives no remuneration from this book.

Baker is often asked the purpose of writing this book. She says, “It was, first of all, to document what had happened and why it had happened. The Balkars I met felt that they had suffered in secret – they wanted the world to know what had happened to them. Secondly, I felt if I could introduce this small nation of people who lived in the majestic Caucasus Mountains, and if I could communicate the human side of this suffering along-side their proud history, their cultural accomplishments, and their magnificent hospitality, it would be a service to others who might travel to this part of the world, either as tourists or as missionaries”.

One of the most rewarding things that happened as a result of the book was expressed to Baker earlier this year. A pastor to college students from Alabama was leading a group on a mountain-climbing trip to the Caucasus Mountains, the location of the Balkars. As he was preparing for the trip, the tour host suggested that the participants read the book, to become acquainted with the Balkars, whom they would undoubtedly encounter.

*(Balkar Book continued on p. 8)*



**The Balkars are a tribe that lives in the North Caucasus region of southern Russia, just north of the country of Georgia.**

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### Walkie-Talkies Soon to be a Thing of the Past

By the time you read this newsletter, the front desk and the pantry will be speaking electronically, no longer using the walkie-talkies that have been standard communication for the past several years. *(Walkie-Talkies continued page 8)*



**Will McCullers trained floor supervisors and pantry team leaders before beginning practice.**

# RESPONDING TO GOD'S VOICE

*(Balkar Book continued)*

The following are his comments:

“Karen Baker’s book, *The Balkars of Southern Russia* was suggested reading for the group of university students I was preparing to lead to the North Caucasus Mountains. This invaluable resource gave great insight into the culture of this resilient people group tucked away in the mountains of southern Russia. It painted a remarkable picture of a deportation that was both horrific and devastating, specifically the events that unfolded in the village of Upper Balkaria. Once our team landed on the ground and made our way to Upper Balkaria for our first night, I felt we had an incredible grasp of the mindset of the people there which allowed us to quickly build relationships with them. This continued as we went from village to village and often opened the door for us to share the eternal hope that can be found in Jesus Christ. I strongly recommend this book to any group or team traveling to this region, seeking to bring hope and joy to those who once faced nothing but death and desperation.”

These comments made Baker realize that her efforts were being realized and the book was serving the purposes for which it had been written.

*Photo by Rebecca Jackson.  
Reprinted by permission  
Smith Mountain Eagle January 13, 2016*

*(Walkie-Talkies continued)*

Will McCullers has been working with the Floor Supervisors and Pantry Team Leaders to determine the information needed to more efficiently and effectively communicate client information. Training on the new computer program was held in January, 2016. (About twelve staff members were able to attend the training, and others will be trained on-the-job.)



**Pantry Manager Judy Harper (left) and Pantry Team Leader Betty Ann Allen practice messaging to the Front Desk.**

**Floor Supervisors Marcia Miedema (left), Debbie Griggs (center) and Jan Hogle (right) are thrilled with the new system.**



**January, 2016**

**Volume 7 Issue 1**

*The Agape Newsletter* is a monthly publication produced by The Agape Center for volunteers, sponsoring churches, and other interested individuals and organizations. Comments may be sent to:

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## **Sponsoring Churches**

Bedrock Community Church	Covenant Fellowship
Dwelling Place	EastLake Community Church
Flint Hill Baptist Church	Franklin Heights Baptist/CrossPointe
Goodview Baptist Church	Morgans Baptist Church
Palestine Baptist Church	Radford Baptist Church
Rocky Mount Baptist Church	Staunton Baptist Church