



## Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love

December 2017



## Thank you Volunteers! THE MAIN THING

The Agape Center is always a very busy place full of activity, but every year at Christmas, Agape is busting at the seams with love, joy and sharing the message of our Lord. Every day of the year, Agape is all about the ‘main thing’; no matter what department you volunteer in, you have opportunities to share the ‘main thing’ with our clients and with other volunteers.

Agape gives out food, clothing, household items, linens, furniture, large item pick-ups, special gifts, firewood, emergency funding, and special Getting Ahead training classes; but without the message of the birth, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, all of these things are just temporary fixes. The message of the gospel is eternal and at Agape it is the “Main Thing”.

I want to personally thank each of our volunteers for being a part of God’s team at Agape and for the love and unity that is so obvious in every single department.

In the basket and toy factory it is like a party as the volunteers work together to make amazing gifts for our clients – gifts that say, “you are unique and God has a special plan for you.”

The front desk, data, filing, receptionist, USDA, telephone and office workers have ‘way too much fun’ which is all possible because of the presence of our Lord. It is truly a miracle that our Lord has brought together a team of workers from over 35 churches and at the same time has created a place where love and unity abound.

Mentors, there are no words to express the difference

you are making in the lives of our clients. Thank you so much for allowing God to work through each of you.

The volunteers in the store and gift shop make every month feel like Christmas. What a treat for our clients to go to the store where they can meet the needs of their families and at the same time really enjoy the experience.

By the time our clients finish in the store and drive around for their food, the runner has already delivered to their food cart any item they have requested – miles of running!! One runner shared with me that she prays for every client as she delivers their item to the pantry cart!

The pantry is abuzz with volunteers that encourage each other and make the clients feel special every single month of the year. The car-loaders never miss an opportunity to share God’s love.

Then there are the furniture and furniture pick-up guys: thank you for making a difficult job look easy! And our amazing maintenance crew and cleaning ladies. . . all difficult jobs that are done with a smile!

Volunteers, did you know that you are being prayed for every time you are at Agape by the Prayer Team? Yes, you are part of an amazing team – a team that our Lord has brought together.

Merry Christmas to each of you and to your families as well. God bless each of you as you continue to serve Him. It is a joy to volunteer alongside each of you.

*Sue Lipscomb*

*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6*

### PRAYER FOR AGAPE

Make a New Year’s plan to schedule time to join join as you are able in prayer for Agape ministry, clients, volunteers! Join the Agape Prayer Team in the Meeting Center at

**8:45 to 9:45 am**

**Thursday — January 10**

**Thursday — January 25**

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS! HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**Agape closed December 26 and December 28, 2017**

**January Prayer for Agape — Join the Prayer Team in the Meeting Center to pray for the day at Agape.**

**May 19, 2018—Agape Center’s 14th Annual Open—Westlake Country Club.**

## Getting Ahead. . .With Horses?!!!

*Special to the Agape Newsletter by Jan Hogle*

In November, the Getting Ahead Program (GAP) participants experienced a totally unique learning experience that involved the Healing Strides Barn arena and five of their horses. To reinforce a key GAP principle, ten members of the class were "let loose" in a large arena with the horses and several professional facilitators to ensure safety and provide observations on what happened.

The key principle being reinforced involved what we call the Circle of Concern, which is a metaphor for all those things we are concerned about (debt, housing, kids' education and well-being, utility bills, etc) and the Circle of Control or Influence, located inside the Circle of Concern, a metaphor for those things we have control or influence over. For example, if we get a utility shut-off notice, we can fret and fume and look for short-term solutions and stay in our Circle of Concern or we can go to our Circle of Influence by figuring out a long-term solution to this recurring problem. To

do that, we ask ourselves the question: "what do we have control over in this situation? (ie being more conscientious about where we set the thermostat, getting additional insulation for the home, more careful budgeting, etc).

So what does all this have to do with an arena and horses? This experience helped people apply their GAP learning to real life situations. During the debriefing with the GAP participants, Nadine Womble said, "I never thought I would feel this kind of release with this session. I learned that horses are so connected to us, and that there are more available treatments for mental illness

than I thought." Others noticed that "the horses very gentle and loving – expecting nothing from me – giving unconditional love"; and "I felt as if God was in the wind talking with us in the arena".



GAP participant Sara Etzler.

### Welcome New Volunteers

Rick Cole —Transportation  
 Pam Howerton—Reception  
 Josh Nickerson—Gift Factory  
 Doris Smith —Reception  
 Rhonnie Smith —Pantry  
 Jim Stanley — Transportation,  
 Furniture  
 Penny Witt—Reception

### By the Numbers Served. . .

**November 2017**  
 Families 961  
 Individuals 3233

**November, 2016**  
 Families 950  
 Individuals 3160



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## My Agape Visits Lift Me Spiritually



Shannon Galleria was independent, self-sufficient. . .until 2013. Then her life began to spiral downward as she lost three people close to her: her mother, father and grandmother. Twice divorced and not close to her two grown daughters, she grew very depressed, attempting suicide twice in two years. She further isolated herself as she was mad at God and discouraged.

Shannon had accepted Christ into her life as a child, and had been

in many churches over the years, but never seemed to fit in. After nearly dying, she resorted to alcohol for the first time in her life. Over time, she increased her reliance on antidepressant medications. Shannon lost her job as a die cutter for a label printing company in Bedford, and developed PTSD, anxiety, panic attacks and other mental health issues. She said, "I'm always the first to reach out to help others, but I couldn't ask for help. I was too embarrassed to admit I was the one who needed help."

All of that changed in 2017 when she found a church in Roanoke, was baptized in the Roanoke River, and returned her life to God. I began learning to pray, desiring to study God's word, and as I turned my life over to God, I experienced peace; the worry and anxiety began to disappear. I understood He had a good plan for my life, and if my health was restored, I could return to work; if He didn't chose to heal me, God would make a way for disability to be approved.

God did start answering her prayers for specific needs. The

greatest blessing was when her 21 year old daughter called and wanted to develop a relationship with Shannon.

In 2017, a friend told her about Agape. She continued, "I resisted, due to my pride and my embarrassment of needing help, but after my first visit I cried all the way home; I couldn't believe how nice everyone was and how uplifted I felt. The best thing about Agape is the mentoring. If I didn't get anything else, it would still be worth coming just to spend time with one of the wonderful mentors. You have the greatest people that will listen and share about anything. Some people might not want or be able to go to counseling, but to have you guys to pray and listen to us, that is the best part. It feels like going to church. My family is thankful for you too, because there have been times when I couldn't go to church, and my time at Agape always lifts me spiritually until I can return to church. When I leave the building, I am so thankful. I love the name "Agape" and it is the best name, because I feel unconditional love every time I enter the building."

## NO LONGER A CLIENT

Michaelynn Hanson had her last client visit at Agape in November, 2017. She was thrilled to announce she had gotten a job at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in the Payroll Department. She says, "This is my last visit as a client! It has been a blessing to come to Agape in my time of need. Clients are always treated with such respect and dignity, and this makes a hard and sometimes embarrassing situation much easier to handle.

"My mentors have taught me a lot about God, and He has taught me a lot about humility. I have always prided myself on being able to take care of myself, and God has used this situation in my life for His glory. I plan to be back as a volunteer!"



Michaelynn Hanson

## God Continues to Provide for Agape

Kristy Kraft has been vacationing at Smith Mountain Lake since her boys were very small, and during these visits, she always told them stories, especially one about a treasure box found by a young boy. Her sons have now grown, and her story is now published as *True Treasure* with illustrations by her son, Adam.

She decided to give three hundred copies of the book to Agape, for Christmas gifts for clients' children, even though she lives in North Carolina. She heard about Agape through her SML neighbor, Sue Lipscomb, and recently toured the facility. "I was blown away by all the different ways Agape serves the community. I was so touched by the Christmas gifts for children, that I wanted to share in the giving."

Adam is now in college; he completed



Kristy Kraft, author of *True Treasure*.

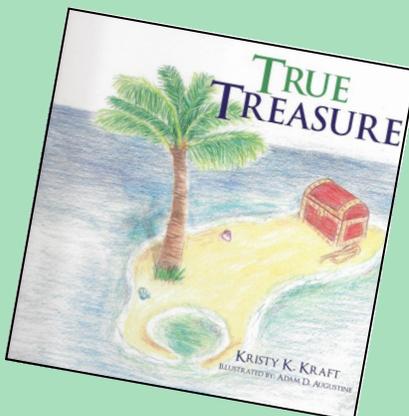
the illustrations when he was eighteen, just as he entered his first year. He has received awards in high school for his artistic efforts and now does art work as a volunteer for organizations he's involved in. He has also illustrated another book that is in the publishing process.

*True Treasure* has been translated into Spanish, and will be printed shortly. Kristy has another book in the works, a story she learned at from her mother. Her mother passed away in 2005 and the story was found among her belongings. Kristy has edited it and Adam will do illustrations for that book. The theme is a thought-provoking question: how would you use your last few days before going permanently blind?



Above: Over 1500 blankets with crocheted borders were made for children's Christmas gifts by the Agape community.

Below: Sandra Morse, SML Charity Home Tour Chair, presents a check for \$21,182.36 to Sue Lipscomb for Agape as Jan Hogle (left) and Carolyn Gordon (right) look on.



In addition to 300 pounds of sausage donated from a local farmer in November, Agape received tons of potatoes, sweet potatoes, and cabbage (above and below) and new clothes, shoes and pillows (right: Al Higgins and Jack Lipscomb, unloading) from Gleaning for the World in Concord, VA.



## Christmas Shop Works Hard to Give Clients a Great Christmas

When Angela Mitchell and Natasha Delp walked into Agape, they weren't sure what to expect. Natasha and her family recently moved to Bedford County from Salem, and one of the first things she heard about was the Agape Center. She is the caregiver for her sister, Angela Mitchell, who is autistic and has many other medical issues. Angela was born with fluid on her brain and wasn't supposed to live past one year or to walk. She is now forty years old, able to walk, but only says a few words. Their mother cared for Angela until she passed away in 2015, and Natasha stepped up to take care of her.

Natasha said, "Everyone at Agape was so helpful and made us feel so welcome." It happened to be the first day of the Christmas Shop, where clients can select Christmas gifts for themselves and their children under seventeen years old. By the time they got to the Christmas Store, Angela was getting tired because it was nap time. However, the idea of getting something from Mickey or Minnie Mouse kept her going. Eileen Hawkins, Co-manager of the Christmas Store, said, "I was hoping there was something in the back specifically for these two precious women." She looked for a gift basket with the Disney characters and found just the one. "It had Angela's name on it," beamed Eileen! And Natasha cried.

As soon as Dalton Lucas learned that two of his classmates were looking for Disney items for Angela, he jumped into action. Dalton is the Key-Club presi-

dent and a senior from Staunton River High School. The club was at Agape to volunteer for the day, working primarily in the Christmas Shop.

Natasha said she recognized Dalton immediately. She recalls, "He was working in the office at Staunton River High School when I brought my 16 year old son to register.

Dalton impressed me with his smile, helpfulness and courtesy. I remember him because he was so polite and welcoming. And now I see him at Agape!"

Meanwhile, Mandy Martin, a volunteer who creates the gift baskets, just happened to be working in the Gift Shop. "I got chosen because I do like working with people." This was her first job 'out in front', and she poured love and atten-

tion on Natasha and Angela throughout their visit in the Shop. When they were finished shopping, Dalton carried all of their gifts to their car. Natasha wouldn't let Dalton leave without a heartfelt hug. . . and a few tears.



**Above left: Amoni Logan and Juliann Hughes present Disney gifts to Natasha and Angela.**



**Mandy Martin (right), a first-time volunteer in the Christmas Shop, helped Natasha and Angela pack up their choices.**



**Left: Dalton Lucas places their gifts in the car, and then (right) receives a heart-felt hug of gratefulness from Natasha.**



## Staunton River HS Students Make A BIG Difference!

A busload of twenty-one of the thirty Key-Club members at Staunton River High School arrived at Agape to provide help 'wherever we can'. It was the first day of the Christmas Shop, and there were lines everywhere: for USDA, for Mentors, for the Store, for the Gift Shop, and for the Pantry. The students divided up into several departments, and provided a huge boost to the scheduled volunteers. Janet Sellers, Gift Shop Co-Manager, said, "We couldn't have done it without them. They provided extra touches of love and assistance to so many who needed the hug, the smile, and the kind words."

Dalton Lucas, a Staunton River High School senior who is President of the Key-Club, said that coming to Agape "is the first trip we've made during school hours. Agape was sug-

gested by one of our members and the group decided to help because the Christmas Shop offered an element of uniqueness to this project. We wanted to help people in our own community, people that we go to school with, eat lunch with, associate with on a daily basis. Many of us are fortunate to have a great Christmas every year, and our parents have been able to provide for us, so this is our way of giving back to them and to the community. We live in a small town, but we think we can produce a positive impact in our community and want to do our part to help."

The group has been busy throughout the school year, having done service projects with the Rescue Mission and Boys/Girls Club in Roanoke; gone to nursing homes to play bingo with residents; conducted many

fundraisers for a variety of organizations, including UNICEF to provide neonatal tetanus vaccines to reduce the incidence of tetanus throughout the world; raise money for "Pennies for Patients" program for the Leukemia and Lymphoma society.

The Key-Club is associated with the Kiwanis Club, a junior service club in high schools. It is the oldest and largest service program for high school students in the world.

Dalton concluded: "This is our first week-day trip, and we hope by exposing our members to volunteering in their own community they will continue to do so on their own. There is nothing more rewarding than when you look into someone's eyes whom you have helped."



Photo above: This team worked hard to replenish shelves of gifts in the Christmas Shop. From left: Britany Williams, 12th grade; Luke Wyatt, 12th grade; Amoni Logan, 11th grade; Juliann Hughes 10th grade; Lauren Altman, 9th grade. Britany said, "I enjoy helping people in need." Luke agreed, saying, "I have friends who helped in another project, and they enjoyed it so I wanted to help."

Right photo—from left: Denise Li, 9th grade, and Kailey Brown, 10th grade, help restock the Christmas Shop at the end of the day. Denise says, "I like to help people, and it is especially nice to know that people will feel loved with these gifts."

Photo below—from left: Madigan Hatcher and Lydia Galindo found a carpet to meet a client's request.



"We wanted to help people in our own community, people that we go to school with, eat lunch with, associate with on a daily basis."

*Dalton Lucas, President, Key-Club Staunton River High School*

**From The Agape Book Shelf**

*Deepening Your Conversation with God*

By Ben Patterson

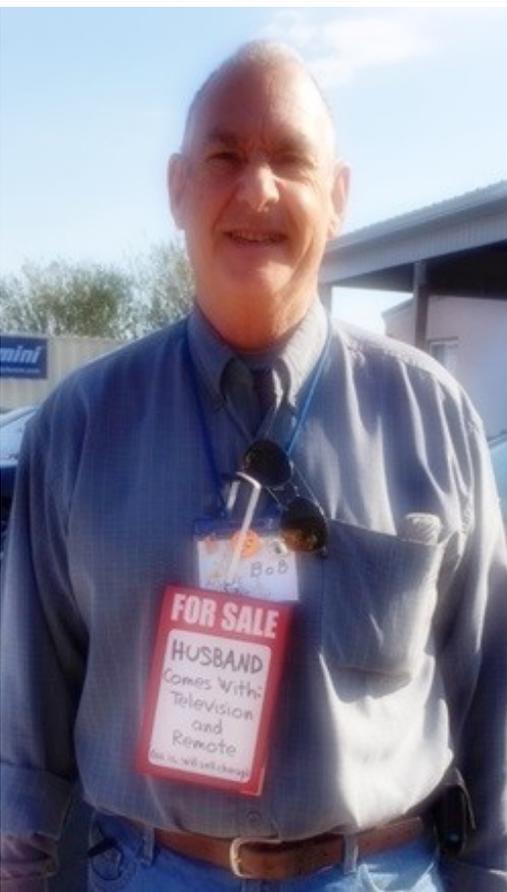
Diane Davis  
Agape Book Reviewer



A large percentage of Americans say they believe in God. However, their lifestyles and prayer life somehow tell a sad story. Once we accept God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God into our lives, we should become changed creatures.

So often we tend to pray less, read the Bible less and go to church less or not at all. We only call on God when we need help. We tend to use God for our purposes, not His.

When God created the earth and all that exists upon it, He had His plan. He created us for His pleasure. He loves us and wants a relationship with us. He wants to spend time with us. When we spend our time praying and reading God's word, we are spending time with Him.



Always a good sport, Bob Lohmeyer, Furniture, was caught with a special name tag!

**Local Groups Prepare over 1000 Adult Christmas Baskets**

During the months of October, November and December, many groups have come in to Agape to help assemble Christmas gifts so that our clients and their families would have gifts to enjoy. We have been blessed by the assistance of the following groups:

**Christian Heritage Academy** 7th Grade Girls (Rocky Mount).

**Crossing Christian Church** (Roanoke), led by Rose and Rex Goodnight.

**EastLake Community Church** Women's Group (Moneta), led by Carol Hallock.

**Living Word Baptist Church** Women's Bible Study (Forest), led by Kim Gauthier

**Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy** Girls Group (Wirtz).

**Radford Baptist Church** Women's Bible Study (Moneta), led by Carol Moyer.

**Westlake Baptist Church** Womens Group (Moneta), led by Linda Leedy.

- AGAPE MEMBER CHURCHES**
- Bedrock Community Church
  - Covenant Fellowship
  - CrossPointe/Franklin Heights Baptist Church
  - Dwelling Place Christian Fellowship
  - EastLake Community Church
  - Flint Hills Baptist Church
  - Goodview Baptist Church
  - Halesford Baptist Church
  - Inner-Faith Fellowship Ministries
  - Morgans Baptist Church
  - Palestine Baptist Church
  - Radford Baptist Church
  - Rocky Mount Baptist Church
  - Staunton Baptist Church
  - Vitalize Church
  - Westlake Baptist Church