



## Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love

April 2017

### BY THE NUMBERS SERVED

**March 2017**  
**792 Families**  
**2574 Individuals**

**March 2016**  
**798 Families**  
**2594 Individuals**

### WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

Dana Kirkwood—Data  
Michael Matrangola—Furniture Pick-up/  
electronics  
Jim Mays—Runner  
Kathy Mays—Clerk

### PRAYER FOR AGAPE

Please join as you are able in prayer for Agape ministry, clients, volunteers! Join the Agape Prayer Team in the Conference room at **8:45 to 9:45 am on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Thursday** of each month.

**Thursday — April 27**

**Tuesday — May 9**

**Thursday — May 25**

## Getting Ahead Graduates Eight Clients

Maggie Perkey was the master of ceremonies for the graduation of the second Getting Ahead class in March held at EastLake Community Church. Eight women were cheered by their family members as they received their diplomas, shared how much the class meant to them, and the goals they have set. A common theme was the bonding that occurred within the group, as well as the tools and concepts provided to help them get ahead.

Pastor Troy Keaton encouraged each graduate, calling them victors and describing what we can do to be “More than Conquerors in Christ”. Sue Frase provided refreshments, and Ken Webber was the photographer. (See GAP stories starting on page 2)



**Maggie Perkey,**  
GAP participant, was the MC for  
the GAP Graduation.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**April 21 and 22—8:30 am-4 pm — Moving Day to the new building;** we need anyone 14 years and older, to sort, organize, lift or move.

**April 27, May 9, 25—Join the Prayer Team** in the Conference Room to pray for the day at Agape.

**May 20—Agape Annual Golf Tournament** at Mariners Landing.

**September 16 — “Running for the Children”** Agape’s second annual run/walk for Children’s Christmas gifts.

## GAP Grads “like family”



**The 2017 spring Graduates of the GAP: Back row from left: Ron Cordell, Dorothy Harper, Susanne Connors, Veda Alexandria, Cheryl Bass, Maggie Perkey, Jan Hogle, Mark Plumb. Front row from left: Pam Sinex, Carol Cook, Helen Witherspoon, Shannon Wright. Pam and Jan co-facilitated this class. Ron and Mark attended all of the classes and Mark will co-facilitate the next GAP class, which starts in October, 2017. Ron is facilitating a follow-up budget class for GA grads and, with Dick At Lee, is building a community resource database for mentors and clients.**

The Getting Ahead Program (GAP) held the second graduation in March, with eight participants graduating. The common theme that ran through the remarks each participant gave at their graduation was how they had bonded to the others, feeling like it was their family. Some of the group will continue their investigation into community resources for parents and guardians of special needs children dealing with ADHD and Autism, as well as other learning disorders. (See GAP Story on page 3)

### Responding to God's Voice

The Getting Ahead Program (GAP) continues to provide necessary life skills for Agape clients, and the most recent class, which graduated March 31, got an unexpected blessing. When Agape Mentor Bill Horvath learned that laptops would help with several of the participants' projects, he got to thinking: "My employer, TMEIC in Roanoke, routinely upgrades their computers, and the used computers are made available to employees at bargain-basement prices." Through Bill's efforts, Agape was able to secure working laptops so that each GAP participant in the class could enter data from their assignments directly into the computer. This enabled the students to learn computer skills, and it makes the data accessible to the leaders in a meaningful format. Dick At Lee, Agape volunteer who is Director of the Furniture Department, has been working closely with the GAP and has developed the software for this purpose. By collecting data from the students during the course, improvements can be quantified and then used in securing funding for future Getting Ahead Programs. Jan Hogle, GAP Co-Facilitator says: "This is a huge step forward for us in being able to get meaningful data on the progress of our GAP grads. There is a psychological phenomena called the "mere measurement effect" which means that by forming and measuring an intention, we're more likely to take action. So our now computerized assessment strategy will serve in and of itself as a motivator for our GAP participants to accomplish their goals of building resources and getting ahead. As part of our GAP graduate support, we will have them assess themselves again, using the software and the PCs to measure progress. This is what I call Godly teamwork!"

## Getting Ahead Program Continues!

Dorothy Harper graduated with the Spring 2017 Getting Ahead Program (GAP) She is very excited about the future direction of her life as she described what the GAP has meant to her. She said, "The Getting Ahead Program (GAP) really opened my eyes to the issues of poverty, everything from financial stress, special needs children and the desire for positive influences in my life. It allowed me to be more open, and open-minded in talking with others about issues and the need for resources in the community. I felt I was given great ideas, even very simple things that will help me get ahead, things like gardening, working together, and volunteering.

"Sitting with classmates and doing research, we saw many needs that are in the community, such as vision health, dental health, groceries vs meds, and transportation. Even those who have vehicles have the constant stress of keeping up the vehicle, because when it breaks down, there are no resources to turn to. We end up in a poverty barrel and it is hard to get out of that barrel. It is so stressful to see someone who worked their whole life and then something catastrophic happens and they don't have the resources to deal with it."

Dorothy said she and her "co-investigators discovered a huge need for parents and guardians with special needs children: ADHD, autism, learning or mental disabilities. We are working on a project that began in the GAP to present information to Bedford and Franklin Counties on the situation and the needs for parents of such children. Our goal is to get relief for parents and guardians of children in order to address the issues of poverty in these families.

"There is a huge divorce and suicide rate among parents and guardians of these children, and they need earlier testing, release from the stigma, and respite from the 24/7 care-giving obligations. The children are also subject to bullying from other kids, so the adults in their lives are acting as shields, guardians to protect the children."



Equipped with new skills, Dorothy Harper is ready to take on new challenges.

## Photographer Shares His Thoughts!

Ken Webber is often seen at Agape events as our official photographer. He quietly does his work, not necessarily needing attention or being part of the story. But the GAP (Getting Ahead Program) Graduation was the exception. He was so moved by what he saw, he asked to speak to the group. The following are his words:

"I was the Chairman of the Missions Committee at Radford Baptist Church and was very familiar with how Agape was formed. At the Getting Ahead Program graduation, I witnessed the fulfillment of the original vision.

"I was asked to come to the GA Graduation to take pictures. I was not asked to say anything, nor did I intend to say anything. However, I was so moved by the changed lives I saw!

"About thirteen years ago, two young women at Radford Baptist Church shared a vision each of them had with the church leadership. They each came separately and without knowing the other had experienced the same vision, which was that Radford should establish a local outreach to the needy in our community. That ministry, which evolved into the Agape Center, was set up in the fellowship hall at Radford with an unused semi-trailer to store food and clothing. When Radford set up this ministry, the leadership stated that there were two things that would make it different from other local services to the needy: the Gospel would be shared with all clients and we would offer clients a way to change the situation they were in. Tonight I witnessed the fulfillment of those goals and I just want to express how thankful I am to be a part of Agape, and what a tremendous blessing it is. These graduates are what Agape is all about!"



Ken Webber is often seen with his camera.

Transitions

Co-directors of the store have stepped, down, both due to health issues. Kris McKenzie has done a wonderful job organizing the store since Agape moved to the current building and will be greatly missed. Monica Bergman will continue to work in clothing on a limited schedule. Our gratitude to these two hard workers who have done so much for the clients on behalf of our Lord, and we pray for health to return.

The roles of the store co-directors has been realigned, with Laura Ahern responsible for managing the store and Brenda Biesser responsible for store scheduling. A new position of clothing stocker is being added to keep the store restocked so that fresh inventory is available throughout the day.

Laura has worked in several roles over her past three years at Agape, including Data, Runner, and Store Clerk. She feels blessed to work at Agape and enjoys helping others. Laura and her husband, Jeremiah, moved to the Lake area from New York about nine years ago. They enjoy the peaceful pace of life offered here. Laura also serves as volunteer secretary, for "Freedom's Last Chance", a charitable organization in Wirtz that attempts to reduce the euthanasia rate of cats through its spay/neuter program, pet food assistance program, and community education. Laura says, "I feel the Lord wants me to do this work at Agape at this point in my life, and I am following His lead."

Brenda Biesser was recruited to Agape in the fall, 2016, when Laura Flight encouraged Brenda's BedRock Community Church life-group to come to Agape to fill Thanksgiving boxes. Laura continued to encourage Brenda, who was approaching a new season in her life. As mom of five children, aged 20 to 6 years, ranging from a student at Virginia Tech to a kindergartener, and having homeschooled a number of years before the other children began attending school, Brenda was now facing new questions about her role and identity. She was praying about how she could serve God in a more structured way. She began at Agape as a USDA clerk as



**Kris McKenzie (top) and Monica Bergman are stepping down as co-directors of the store.**

well as a store clerk. Having time to do something meaningful outside her home, and finding an organization like Agape that served spiritual as well as physical needs, made Agape a good fit for her. She said, "I enjoy being of help to others, to be a smile, an encourager, a friendly voice; I realize I'm doing this for Jesus." When I was approached to consider the store co-director, I was honored and happy to do whatever I can do to help. I really enjoy logistics, and I enjoy motivating and encouraging others, so this is a good fit for me."

Brenda concluded by saying, "The most meaningful part of volunteering at Agape is when all the volunteers for the day, before the doors are unlocked, circle to pray over the building, the clients, and the volunteers, and our desire is to see God in our midst and the Holy spirit to move in lives. It is so special to pray as a group with everyone in this building, and then to see how God answers those prayers throughout the day."



**Brenda Biesser (left) and Laura Ahern are new co-directors of the store.**

## GAP Offers Additional Resources!



GAP graduates have additional resources from Ron Cordell (left), who is teaching the Christian Financial Management classes, and Pam Sinex (right), who is facilitating the Nutrition Classes.

Getting Ahead Program (GAP) participants have access to many resources in the community, plus two new additional classes offered through Agape. In February, a Bible study led by Jan Hogle began for GAP graduates, and they continue to meet on Fridays.

In April, a three-session Budgeting Class was offered by Ron Cordell. Ron has been teaching Christian financial principles for several years, including a current series at EastLake Community Church. He retired about a year ago after serving in the US Army for 28 years, and several more years as a consultant in budgeting and financial management.

Also in April, Pam Sinex, co-facilitator of the GAP is facilitating a six-session class on nutrition called "My Plate". Annie Clendenon, program assistant in family nutrition at Virginia Cooperative Extension will be teaching the classes, which cover meal planning, shopping, physical activity, preparing meals safely and portion control.

program assistant in family nutrition at Virginia Cooperative Extension will be teaching the classes, which cover meal planning, shopping, physical activity, preparing meals safely and portion control.



Louisa (Lou) Cardinal lives in New York City with her parents and her brother Oz. As Jack, Amanda, Lou and Oz Cardinal go on a family outing, tragedy strikes. To avoid hitting a man in the road, Jack swerved, lost control and the car went over a steep bank. Jack died instantly. Amanda was bleeding but alive. The family had to leave New York and go live with Jack's mother in Virginia.

Jack's mother, Louisa Mae, accepts her grandchildren and takes over the care of Amanda. Then Louisa Mae suffers a stroke and the courts try to take the children and her land away from her. Her friends on her mountain stand up for her. After Louisa Mae dies, her grandchildren bring their mother, Amanda, into the court room. They have been working with their mom and she has come out of her mentally depressed

state. Amanda stands in the courtroom, her children by her side. She is awarded the children and the land of Louisa Mae.

Amanda remarries, raises her children and remains on the mountain. Oz moves to New York and has a family there. Lou marries and raises her family on the land her grandmother left them. She wrote books as her father had done.

This mountain was her home and it was where she chose to live and to die. She says, "the view from here is very fine."

*I loved this book. So sad, but really good, by a SML author! DD*

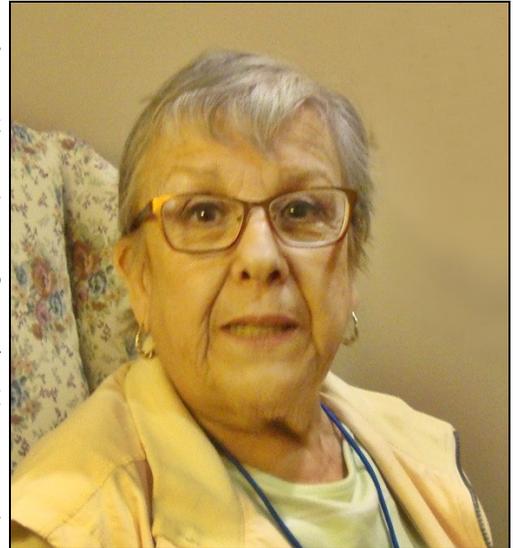
## Agape Gives Purpose to Life!

Laura Flight can be seen in many departments, as she wears several hats at Agape. She started volunteering about two years ago and is Pantry Supervisor on Saturdays. During the week, she can be seen as a USDA clerk, checking in the clients; or perhaps in the telephone office, praying with a client over the phone; and on days when Agape is closed, she is in the Pantry, unloading food and restocking shelves. A native of Puerto Rico, Laura also lends her interpreting skills whenever needed with Spanish-speaking clients.

About four months ago, she added mentoring to her duties, and feels that she has landed the best job yet! "When you enjoy your job, you never have to work a day in your life" is a phrase she has heard, but she said, "I never really understood this phrase until I began working at Agape. I love the joy of serving others at Agape because this is a Spirit-filled place. I am with people who are in love with the Lord just as I am! There are no grouchy people here!

"Since I started mentoring, I have realized that speaking about Jesus for several hours a day with clients has made me more comfortable speaking about Him elsewhere. My role as mentor has provided me confidence to give voice to my faith! And working at Agape has made me feel useful."

She continued, "I realize how much I have learned and been encouraged by our clients and the opportunity to serve them. Some are so dependent upon Jesus; it encourages me to be more dependent on Him. Others who don't yet have a relationship with Him give me great hope as I am able to share Him. I see my mission field where I am



**Laura Flight offers perspective on serving at Agape, as she has worked in many of the**

standing, and I trust God to guide my steps to be useful in His Kingdom. It is truly my joy and honor to serve Him by serving at Agape."

### Kroger and Amazon Provide Dollars to Agape

Your purchases at Kroger and Amazon provide needed income for Agape. **When you register your Kroger Card and your Amazon Smile Account, a portion of your spending will be donated to Agape at no expense to you!** You must renew your designated charity with Kroger every year. If you need information on how to register with either Amazon or Kroger, please call Sue Lipscomb. This is a painless way to help Agape with needed funds for client services.

To register with Amazon, go to Amazon Smile and sign-up on behalf of Agape in Moneta, Virginia. A portion of all your purchases will be donated to Agape at no cost or inconvenience to you.

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Comments may be sent to:

Executive Director  
Newsletter Editor

Sue Lipscomb  
Karen Baker

[agapecentersml@aol.com](mailto:agapecentersml@aol.com)  
[karenbaker015@gmail.com](mailto:karenbaker015@gmail.com)

#### Member Churches

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

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