



Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love

January, 2019

HELP AGAPE PURCHASE A FORKLIFT!

AGAPE MEMBER CHURCHES

Bedrock Church—Franklin County
Bedrock Community Church
Covenant Fellowship
CrossPointe/Franklin Heights Baptist Church
Dwelling Place Christian Fellowship
EastLake Community Church
Flint Hill 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

PRAYER FOR AGAPE

Please 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 24
Tuesday—February 12
Thursday—February 28

Last year, Agape raised over \$20,000 in one day! This money purchased the new walk-in refrigerator and walk-in freezer to keep food and produce fresh for our clients. It was Agape's first year of participation in the Roanoke Valley Gives campaign, and we raised the most for the 'small non-profit' category, as well as received an additional bonus for being the 'rookie of the year'.

This year, the Roanoke Valley Gives campaign will be held on Wednesday, March 13, 2019. Agape is hoping to top last year's contributions in order to purchase an inside forklift. This is a special type of forklift to be used inside, fueled by batteries, rather than gasoline, as outdoor forklifts are fueled. This is a much safer and more sanitary method of moving large items. It will be used in the warehouse for Furniture and Pantry, as well as being available to all departments.

On this **one day**, the entire Roanoke Valley has the opportunity to give to local charities. Agape will be listed among the options, and all volunteers and friends of Agape are encouraged to mark your calendar and then on Wednesday, March 13, go to the RVG website and make your contribution. Watch for more details!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

January Prayer for Agape — Drop-in at the Meeting Center for as long as you can and lift Agape to the Father with the Prayer Team in the Meeting Center. (Schedule at left)

January through February — Third Annual Linen Shower—See Linen Shower, 7 January 18, 19—Mentor Training - 9-11 am, Meeting Room (Contact Jan Hogle to register for one of the training sessions)

March 13—Roanoke Valley Gives — See above.

March 16 — Agape Volunteer Banquet - Halesford Baptist Church — See Volunteer Banquet, 2

May 18 — Agape Golf Tournament

Agape Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

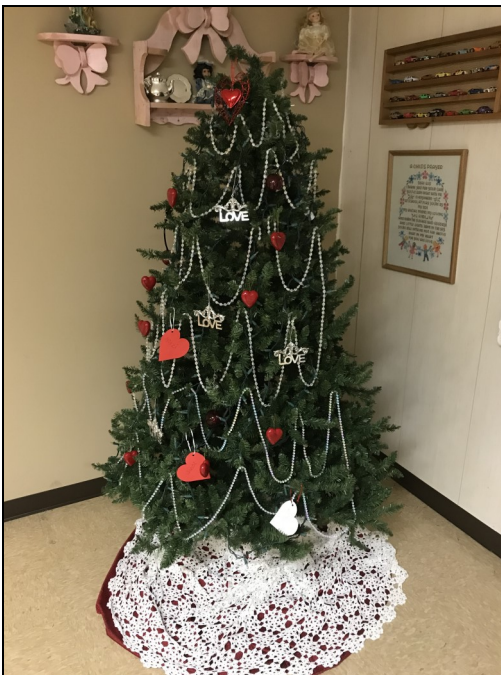
YOU ARE INVITED
 Agape Volunteer Appreciation Banquet
 5 pm
 March 16, 2016
 Halesford Baptist Church

Agape Volunteers and a guest are invited to come and be appreciated at the Banquet.
 Please let us know you are coming by contacting:

Karen Jones at agapecentersml@aol.com or at the office at 540/296-0609

Karen Jones, Assistant Director of Agape, is leading the event planning committee. More help is always welcome! If you like planning events, getting involved with Agape in a different way, and meeting and collaborating with new people, please join this team effort. The first meeting will be on January 21st. Please contact Karen Jones to indicate your interest and get details on the meeting time and place.

Agape delivered over 1325 Angel Gifts during the Christmas Season!



The Gift Shop and Gift and Toy Factories were overflowing with donated items for the Christmas season. Over 1325 Angel Gifts, donated by Member Churches and the community, were given to children of Agape Clients. In addition, over 800 Christmas baskets for adults were distributed. The community groups were a great asset in keeping the store stocked, and plans are already underway for the 2019 Christmas Season.

No, the Christmas tree is not a mistake! It is now an all-season tree, which has become part of the Gift Shop décor to make it a bit more festive. The Gift Shop continues to provide birthday gifts for clients on their birthday month. In addition, the Baby Room (formerly the tea room) is now totally dedicated to gifts for babies of clients.

Welcome New Volunteers

Susie Brophy — Clothing
Paul Foody — Furniture Pick-up; Maintenance
Penny Foody — USDA; Runner
Jesse Shelton — Clothing
Janet Smith — USDA

By the Numbers . . .

December 2018
 Families 889
 Individuals 3301

December 2017
 Families 938
 Individuals 3270

January 2019 Volume 11 Issue 1

The Agape Newsletter is a monthly publication produced by The Agape Center for volunteers, member churches, and other interested individuals and organizations.

Comments may be sent to:

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www.agapecentersml.org

WELCOME HOME, Jeffrey Suggs

After spending all thirty five years of his adult life in prison, where does one start to build a life where everything he left in 1984 has changed? Such was the situation facing Jeffrey Suggs, from Moneta, who was imprisoned when he was seventeen years old. He had just graduated from Staunton River High School. However, he had never had a job, and had not even gotten his drivers' license. While he was in prison, he took advantage of many classes offered, but he realized book learning is not the same as practical experience.

After his release, Jeffrey came to Agape as a volunteer, an effort to start somewhere. Working in the Pantry gave him a sense of acceptance. Jeffrey said, "One of the most significant things that happens in prison is the sense of distrust. You feel devoid of sincerity; nothing is real. There are no true friends in prison, only those who use you for their own convenience. There is a great suspicion about outsiders as well. However, when people go out of their way to visit prisoners, or send cards or letters, you begin to recognize their sincerity.

"I came to Agape in October, 2018, having heard about it for the past fifteen years from my parents. I came with my eyes open, not expecting to find that everything they told me about Agape was so vividly true. I immediately felt welcome, as if in a family.

The unity of spirit throughout Agape is incredible, where there are so many different church backgrounds and yet we are like-minded and serving together in unity for Jesus. In the (prison) system, you are always looking for authenticity, so when you find it you gravitate toward it.

"I felt acceptance and sincere friendship from Robbie (Hallock) and Dave (Wolf), who taught me what I needed to do. I have a sense of accomplishment when I work at Agape, especially when I bring the groceries to the clients' cars. I have the satisfaction of knowing that because I put those groceries in their car, someone in need now has food for their family. Serving others has given me a sense of fulfillment I did not expect to find."

Jeffrey continued, "I was fortunate, more than most prisoners. I have a phenomenal family, a lot of support from family, parents who love me, members of my church, Morgans Baptist. Even the pastor (Jason Arthur, also an Agape volunteer), who did not even know me, came to visit me in prison, and has been such an encourager to me. When people were willing to invest in me, I experienced hope, and I was able to avoid the victim mentality."



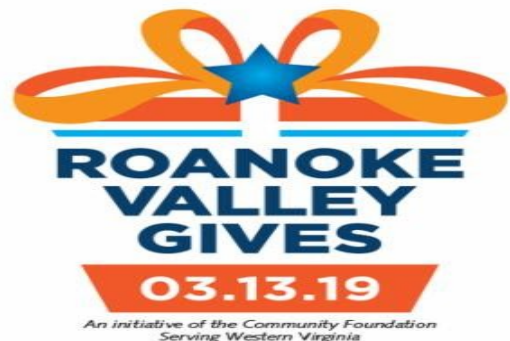
Carol Suggs never wavered in her trust that her son Jeffrey would return home from prison a new man in Christ.

See **WELCOME HOME**, 4

Give Where YOU LIVE

In 24 hours of online giving you can support nonprofit organizations servicing the Roanoke Valley through **Roanoke Valley Gives** day.

It's as easy as point-click-give, for as little as \$10
Only on March 13, 2019
rvgives.givebig.org



Tons of Apples and Potatoes Arrive at Agape!



In mid-January, when produce is traditionally low, Agape has again been blessed, just in time, with two pallets of apples and potatoes for our clients. That is, 2000 pounds of each item! Lonnie Allen shows off the perfectly ripe produce, already bagged and ready for clients.



WELCOME HOME

FROM 3

Carol and Gene Suggs, both long-time volunteers at Agape, are Jeffrey's parents. They prayed, visited, encouraged and never gave up on their son. Carol says, "It warms your heart when your son comes home from all those years in prison, and the church and Agape welcomed him with wide-open arms. I knew in my heart that he would belong to the Lord, that he would be a good man for Christ, even from the beginning of this ordeal."

Although he had been raised with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Jeff said, "I had fallen away from my faith during my teen years, and hit rock bottom when I was twenty-five. I had no relationship with God when I went into prison, but I got to a point where I didn't like who I was and didn't like taking advantage of my family, who was trusting and believing in me. The Lord started working on my heart and I realized that I had to face the fear of losing all the support I had from them by admitting my mistakes to them and by asking for their forgiveness. The biggest influence was from my mother, as she constantly reminded me of God's love and encouraged me to trust Him. Mom never gave up on me, but there was a certain skepticism. She told me, 'I can't trust you until I see your behavior change.' I had come to a place where I detested the dishonest part of my life and was indeed remorseful, truly sorry, for the pain I had caused others. When I acknowledged my remorse, I also recognized that I was incapable of making the changes necessary. I didn't have

the personal strength until I truly trusted God. As I turned back to God, I immersed myself in God's Word, took advantage of Bible classes and other spiritual and educational opportunities within the prison.

Jeffrey's life dream of becoming a counselor or social worker may yet have a chance of being fulfilled. He is concentrating on gaining work skills, working in landscaping, home improvement and handyman duties; learning life in the twenty-first century (computers, phones, technology in every aspect of life); developing trusted friendships and social skills; and looking forward to obtaining educational credentials to serve others in the transition from incarceration to life outside 'the system'.

Jeffrey concludes, "One of the most difficult aspects of getting out of prison is the adjustment. I received a huge 'welcome home' but it is still quite a culture shock, and if I didn't have the resources available to me through my family, my church, and Agape, I would probably be back in prison because I wouldn't have the ability to cope on the outside. Dealing with the fear of not fitting in and recognizing how much the world has changed, and doesn't wait for me to catch up, is huge. My strength comes from the Lord telling me to take my time! If I can help others who are making this transition, perhaps without the resources I have, I would find that very satisfying."



Stephen O'Malley is a paramedic. He has reached a place in his life where he can't take the pain of his job any more. Too many senseless accidents; too many bad things that he has had to live with.

Meghan had been left blind by a very bad car accident. Having been trained by her father, she was still an RN, which was unusual, but doable.

Stephen and Meghan were friends, but both wanted more. The main thing that separated the two was that Meghan was a Christian, Stephen was not. Meghan refused to have a relationship with Stephen because he was not a believer in Jesus. She had talked to him about Jesus, but he refused to accept Christ as his Savior.

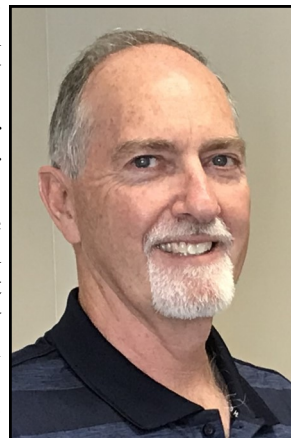
Due to his love for Meghan, Stephen began going to church and finally let go of the old baggage he had carried all these years. Through prayers and Christian friends, especially Meghan, Stephen found not only the love of a wonderful Christian lady, but the love of his Savior, Jesus Christ, who had always been there even when Stephen didn't know it.

Stephen asked Meghan to marry him and she accepted; a wonderful celebration was to follow.

15th Annual Agape Golf Tournament Set

The 15th Annual Agape Golf Tournament is set for Saturday, May 18, 2019. The team, is led by Bob Winters and includes Bob Stouffer, Phyllis Johnson, Teresa McCain, Lynn Winters, Carol Moyer, Kelly Wisotzkey, and Betty Ann Allen. It is the top fund-raising event for Agape, having raised over \$23,000 in 2018.

The event will be held at The Westlake and registration and more details are available at www.agapecentersml.org. Enjoy a complete program of special events, 18 holes of golf (w/cart), an opportunity to win great prizes, and an awards dinner at Halesford Baptist Church immediately after the tournament catered by Sue Frase. Volunteer to help or register to play and participate in this event.



Bob Winters is leading Agape's 15th Annual Golf Open.

God's Mysterious Ways!

Even before the public announcement of the January-February Linen Shower for Agape, Sue Lipscomb received a call from Sheila Copenhaver, owner of J & J Fashions. For several weeks, her store had been collecting towels for Agape and she was ready for someone to pick them up! So, Agape got a head-start by God placing it in Sheila's mind to begin collecting a much needed item for Agape! See page 7 for how you can help!

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An initiative of the Community Foundation
Serving Western Virginia

Staffing Changes



Sue Williams is the Director of Reception, a newly created position combining scheduling and cross-training between telephone receptionists and scheduling receptionists.



Doreen Balzarini is the stepping down from Data leadership but will remain a volunteer in the Department.

Sue Williams, Director of Reception, started at Agape in the fall, 2018. She said, "I liked all of the opportunities, so I decided to work in Data, Reception, USDA and Telephones, and even helped making baskets! I feel it was a good orientation to the client flow. I still want to try some of the other jobs to continue to become familiar with the total operation of Agape." Sue heard about Agape through her Sunday School class at Halesford Baptist, when they were collecting linens for the Christmas baskets. "I quickly thought this sounded like something I would like to do, so I came to get a tour and sign up."

Sue had retired as a legal assistant to take care of her grandchildren, a responsibility that lasted for ten years until their family moved out of state. "That left a huge void in my schedule and in my purpose. I took some time out to be depressed, and then decided that I needed to volunteer. I feel that God has led me to a place that not only is meeting my spiritual desire to serve but also my personal need for a purpose. The Reception Director is a new role, combining two areas to create greater synergy and focus on serving our clients. I am really excited to be able to be a part of shaping these roles to serve our clients better."

Linda Pyle has been appointed the new Director of Data, replacing Doreen Balzarini, who is stepping down from leadership. She started volunteering at Agape in August, 2018, working in Telephones, Reception, USDA and Data. She says, "I had recently retired and was very unsure what direction my life needed to go. I didn't even know where to start, but I had prayed to God to show me, direct me, and in particular, to fulfill my loss of interaction with people after retirement. I have lived here over 29 years and I never knew about Agape. When I discovered Agape through a suggestion from a friend, my feelings of depression, anxiety were lifted and I felt that I had a home with open arms and a place to help. I definitely felt that now I had a purpose and a role in helping others in the community through Agape. I feel blessed that I can interact with both clients and volunteers, and to be able to help clients get the resources they need from Agape and from the community."



Linda Pyle is replacing Doreen Balzarini as Director of Data.

Doreen Balzarini, has been the Director of Data since 2014. She is retiring from leadership to spend more time in other avenues of service; however, she will continue to work regularly in the Data Department.

Third Annual Linen Shower



**The Agape Center needs your help
with linens for our clients.**

Gently used or New Linens

Towels—Wash cloths—Sheets

Dates: Jan – Feb'19

DROP OFF at Agape Center

Tues-Thurs 10-4

Sat. 9-12

**Agape Center, Inc.
1159 Promised Land Road
Moneta, VA 24121
540-296-0609**

Agapecentersml.org



**OR DROP OFF AT
Smith Mountain Building Supply
13080 Booker T Washington Hwy
Hardy, VA**

FOR THE AGAPE BOON

Sheila Saunders is a person committed to getting the job done, whatever it takes. She is the Director of Housewares/Intake at Agape, but outside of Agape, Sheila has been getting things done in the community for most of her life. She says, "Being an EMT was the first thing that I felt God specifically calling me to do, to serve others in His name."

She recently celebrated 25 years with the Chamblissburg Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Sheila began as an EMT in 1993, soon serving as sergeant, a role she played for over 12 years. In that role she was involved in fund-raising; taught CPR classes; oversaw credentialing and training for the EMT crew members; drove the ambulance; was credentialed for extrication; and coordinated the maintenance and cleaning of the building. Along the line, she responded to God's voice, as He directed her to add the responsibility of Chaplain, serving both the volunteers and the victims of accidents, house fires, or other traumatic events. "I may be called in to comfort, pray, give God's encouragement and hope that the situation will be ok, and to just put their trust in God." While she still takes calls for Chaplaincy services and is part of the Chamblissburg Volunteer Rescue Squad, she says, "Agape is now my primary mission field."



Free Tax Preparation Assistance

Free Income Tax assistance is available through the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). TaxAide is a free income tax preparation and electronic filing service provided to older and low-income taxpayers. The service is provided in Bedford, Westlake, Rocky Mount, and Boones Mill as follows:

February 1 – April 14 in Rocky Mount - at the Essig Recreation Center at 295 Technology Drive near the YMCA. Call (540) 483-9238, Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 pm to schedule Thursday and Friday appointments.

February 4 - April 11 at the Bedford Public Library, North Bridge Street. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30am - 12:30pm.

February 5 – April 16 at the Westlake Library at Westlake Towne Center. Tuesdays only, at the Westlake Library, Westlake Towne Center. No appointment required, but you can schedule an appointment in person at the library on Tuesdays during the tax season from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm.

February 20, March 13, and April 10 at Boones Mill Baptist Church, 10 Whispering Creek Road. Beginning Jan 21, call (540) 334-5404, Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm to schedule Wednesday appointments.

WHY I SERVE..

Lucia Willis began volunteering in July and is "amazed at the work done here at Agape. I love helping people, and being a runner allows me to serve the clients in a special way, as I select just the right item to meet their needs."

She lives in Goodview and is part of Goodview Baptist Church.

