

WINTER 2024, ISSUE 8



THE AGAPE MONETA NEWSLETTER

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



“GOD IS NOT UNJUST; HE WILL NOT FORGET YOUR WORK AND THE LOVE YOU HAVE SHOWN HIM AS YOU HAVE HELPED HIS PEOPLE AND CONTINUE TO HELP THEM.”

HEBREWS 6:10

Welcome to the Agape Moneta newsletter!
We're glad you're here.

Thanks for subscribing to our newsletter, where you can stay up-to-date on everything happening at Agape Center Moneta!

The Agape Center provides mentoring, food, clothing, household goods and more to those in our community who need help through difficult times. Over 300 volunteers serve an average of 600 families per month from Bedford & Franklin counties.

REFLECTING GOD'S LOVE IN 2023

Looking back at 2023, it is amazing to see what the Lord has done through His ministry at the Agape Center. Reduced government support and spiraling inflation have affected many families in our community, and your generous donations and countless volunteer hours have made a difference.

129

People accepted Christ through Agape mentor discussions. That is more than one each day we are open, and speaks to the heart of our mission: To reflect God's love by the giving of ourselves and our resources as we submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit to mentor and help individuals turn or return to a Christ-centered life.

7058

Total client visits in the year, representing 24,617 household members. In addition to mentoring, client visits offer food, clothing, household and furniture items at no cost.

84

Clients received emergency financial assistance. Many clients find themselves in challenging situations, often including utility cutoffs, and we allocated approximately \$18,000 in this area last year.

760

Clients received Thanksgiving gift cards. The holidays should be a time for families to bond, and for renewal of spirit. Our Thanksgiving card program allows clients to enjoy the season without the burden of paying for an expensive meal. The \$19,000 cost was fully funded through the "Feeding a Family" fundraiser.

1316

Children in Agape family households received new Christmas gifts. For many, these may be the only gifts under the tree. Donations of gifts and cash from our Angel Tree program funded all these gifts. In addition, 840 family gifts and 450 gently used children's gifts were also provided through our amazing Gifts Team.

100+

Loads of firewood provided. Many families depend on wood as their sole source of heat through the winter. The Agape Woodchuckers see that those families receive enough wood to meet most of their heating needs.

300+

Active volunteers. Due to the dedication of so many, Agape functions without paid staff.

415,000

Pounds of food distributed to families in need in our community. Thanks to the many donations from our partners at Feeding SW Virginia, Kroger, Walmart, and several food drives, actual spend was limited to handling fees of \$15,200.

Annual Linen Shower



Our annual linen shower is now in full swing and will continue through March. Our towel shelves were completely bare until, one day in January, a local linen company donor arrived with a truckload of over 75 bags of towels, filling our shelves and providing a supply for weeks to come. We are still in urgent need of sheets, blankets and comforters of all sizes!!



**SAVE THE DATE – MARCH 13, 2024
SML GIVES - A 24-HOUR FUNDRAISER**

Watch your email for more info!

To donate early and by check, send check (with "SML Gives" in the notes line) to the Agape Center, PO Box 573, Moneta, VA 24121. More details coming soon on how to donate online and our goal for 2024. See smlgives.org for more information.

Cleaning for the World Donates Pet Food

FOR SO MANY OF US, PETS ARE
BELOVED MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILIES

Pet food is not something we have been able to provide very often, but that has now changed!!! Cleaning for the World,

together with their pet partners, recently supplied the Agape Center with 2000 lbs. of dog and cat food. We are so excited to be able to reduce our clients' financial burden associated with their four-legged friends.



Years Later, God's Light Still Shines Bright

SCRIPTURE TEACHES US THAT GOD'S BLESSINGS ARE LIMITLESS IF ONLY WE WILL HAVE FAITH AND TRUST IN HIS LOVE FOR US. THE STORY OF SUSANNE CONNORS, WHO IS BOTH A CLIENT AND A VOLUNTEER AT AGAPE, TRULY DEMONSTRATES THAT GOD STANDS READY AND WILLING TO BLESS US OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



(Susanne, right, with Grace, her mentor, on left)

In 2017 we published a story about Susanne, and God's plan for her new home through Habitat for Humanity in Bedford. At the time she moved into the home, her three grandchildren were 10, 9, and 7 years old. She cites many blessings the move brought: having a yard of their own; living in a walkable community; friends and neighbors nearby; easy access to kids' sports and activities, as well as medical facilities; and the freedom to have their very own dog (Fritz) and cats (Jasmine and Oreo).

Fast forward 7 years, and now Susanne is caring for 3 teenagers, all with special needs and/or learning disabilities. With rising inflation and utility costs, Susanne fell behind on her mortgage as other bills also piled up. Her trust in God never wavered.

"My life has taught me time and again that when things are really crazy, something good will come out of it," she told us recently. "I have seen rewards over and over - I have hope and know there is a light at the end, and this is what I pray for."

She even referenced one of her favorite scriptures, Hebrews 4:16: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

That light that Susanne prayed for came in the form of an unexpected, complete payoff of her mortgage, with a balance of almost \$50,000.

Last fall, she received a letter from a local agency, saying "we are looking into relieving certain people of their loans," and indicating that they would be in touch. Her natural inclination was to doubt such an unforeseen development, and she began making calls to establish a plan to bring her balance current. Those calls all resulted in the same response - "your balance is zero, there are no payments to be made."

Although insurance and taxes still must be paid, the \$300 reduction in monthly spend was an enormous relief! Susanne could now consider new shoes and haircuts for the kids, purchase their favorite snacks on occasion, and move forward with her own physical therapy she had been postponing.

Last Christmas for the first time in many years she was able to purchase a few gifts for her own family, beyond the children.

Asked about the impact of Agape on her life today, Susanne said "I really depend on that monthly visit - even more so with the increased cost of food, and the toiletry items and pet food really make a difference as well." She added that "even more important, is the opportunity to spend time with my mentor, Grace. What a blessing it is to be able to pray with her, to share both good and bad news, and often to gain a new perspective."

Susanne volunteers regularly at Hospice of Bedford, in addition to Saturdays at Agape. "I feel it's an opportunity to contribute, and to do something for others."



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT!

On any given day in January through October, the Agape Center gift shop may seem fairly quiet. Perhaps a client or two shopping for birthday baskets or a young mom receiving an oversized basket of new clothes, diapers and toys to welcome her newborn. But what does it take to create all that plus a Christmas season featuring more than 2500 gifts for families and especially children?



Meet the Agape Gifts Department, a dedicated team of about 13 who are mostly behind the scenes every day Agape is open - sorting toys and gift items, checking for puzzle pieces, lining and filling Christmas bags, bargain shopping, and creating beautiful gifts from donated treasures. Eileen Hawkins, team leader, said “we are blessed with a group of talented and hard-working volunteers who are so excited to show Jesus’ love to every adult or child we touch through the gifts that Agape provides. We are also incredibly blessed by the generous donations that come in the door every day.”

When asked about 2024 plans and how we can best help throughout the year, Eileen said “we will be determining an estimated gift count this summer, based on our client base at the time. Our biggest needs right now are personal care items such as shampoo, body lotion, razors and shaving cream, as well as men’s gift items. For spring, flower seeds and small gardening items would be helpful.”

The Agape Center gift shop program is a vital pillar in our efforts to provide clients a measure of joy while we continue to share the story of salvation through Jesus Christ.



Getting Ahead Class Starts February 26th

Ten Agape clients began this 17-session program led by Tracy and Stephen Dunn on February 26. Together the students will investigate and identify where they are in life, how they got there, and how to get to where they want to be. This class offers support and tools, teaches principles and skills, and provides spiritual direction to help improve their lives. Students are empowered as they learn how to create a detailed plan and build resources for a better tomorrow.



Kroger Community Rewards

THANK YOU FOR LINKING YOUR KROGER ACCOUNT TO THE AGAPE CENTER MONETA! LAST YEAR WE RECEIVED \$2350 IN KROGER REWARDS - THAT AMOUNT CAN COVER OUR HANDING FEE FOR 12,000 LBS. OF FOOD, OR PURCHASE TOILETRIES FOR OUR CLIENTS FOR 6 WEEKS. TO CONFIRM THAT YOUR ACCOUNT IS STILL ENROLLED, LOG IN AT WWW.KROGER.COM, GO TO YOUR ACCOUNT PAGE, AND CHOOSE COMMUNITY REWARDS ON THE LEFT MENU. IF YOUR SELECTION SHOWS THE AGAPE CENTER - ORGANIZATION WG315 AND AN AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED LAST QUARTER, YOU ARE SET. (IN THE APP, THE MENU AT THE TOP RIGHT HAS A DIRECT LINK TO "REWARDS.") TELL YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO ADD US TO THEIR ACCOUNT TOO!

Editor for Newsletter

THANK YOU TO BOB MOORE, WHO HAS SERVED AS OUR NEWSLETTER EDITOR FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS AND CONTINUES TO SERVE AT AGAPE IN VARIOUS ROLES. REPLACING BOB IS OUR NEXT CHALLENGE.

Do you enjoy sharing Agape stories with others, and listening to how God has worked in the lives of our clients and volunteers? Do you have a talent for writing, and an interest in spreading the word about Agape in our community? If so, please contact Director Karen Jones at karen@agapecentersml.org or stop by and see her on any open day. We have great graphics support through our dedicated volunteer, Jodi Swan, so graphic layout expertise is not required.

