



# Agape Today

## THE LIGHT OF A *Loving* FOSTER FAMILY



*"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."*

**Genesis 28:15**

Maintaining a daily belief in this verse is sometimes a challenge, even if you grew up hearing it often from reliable sources. Will you be a prayer warrior for our Agape children? That each child comes to understand, no matter where they lay their head, they have a loving Father who will never forsake them? Thank you for your prayers! 🌻



Do you feel that? Do you see it? Something is changing. The dark cloud of this pandemic is gradually lessening. The numbers are decreasing. Hope is rising. The world is opening up more and more. Less masks, more opportunities to fellowship, light at the end of this tunnel.

Our experience over these last two years can give us a small glimpse into what our foster children experience. Imagine your whole world flipped upside down in a moment. Connections and contact with loved ones severed and broken with no idea of when they may resume. Uncertainty and fear is your new normal. Nothing is the same.

Then enters in the light of a loving foster family to bring stability. In time, a new normal is created. Some fears and concerns are lessened. Life appears bright once again.

And our birth mothers are so grateful. Just listen to what they say about our staff and services at Georgia Agape:

*"I want to thank you for always being there and listening to me when I needed someone the most. When it seemed like everyone I knew turned against me, you did not! I really want to thank you for that! God bless you."* (birth mother, age 20)

*"Thank you for being there when I was all alone. Thank you for giving a baby girl a wonderful home. Thank you for helping when I was in need. Thank you for helping break the chain of destruction, planting a brand-new seed."* (birth mother, age 22)

*"Thank you for helping me make a good decision for my family. I didn't realize that I could parent until you helped me look at my options."* (birth mother, age 26)

Your support helps to make testimonies like this possible. As we experience the increasing light of a hopeful future, let us continue to make that reality possible for others. There are still so many in need. Please consider how you can partner with us to make a bright future a reality for all. 🌻

**Racquelle Grant**, Executive Director



# Impacting True Change



Every May, we celebrate National Foster Care Month. This event, celebrated since 1988, has come to be known as a time to show appreciation for those involved in the foster care and child welfare systems. It is not lost on us that this month is but a fraction of the time affecting over 400,000 children in foster care. And when you add the family members attached to these children, the number balloons to a near-intangible amount of people who are touched by the system in some way. This one month is but a vapor for children who spend weeks, months, even years in foster care.

So this month, take time to contemplate what National Foster Care month is truly about:

## The Children

There are over 400,000 children in the foster care system in the country at this moment. There are over 11,000 children in the foster care system in the state of Georgia. 11,000 children who are not living with their families of origin. Although these are families dealing with significant struggles, they offer familiarity for children who find it difficult to understand why they must leave their parents, extended family members, homes, schools, friends, and more, to live with a foster family. These children and youth, who have already experienced trauma, must now deal with the trauma that could be associated with entering foster care. It is our hope to somehow diminish this amount of trauma and offer safe spaces for children and youth entering care and to offer hope where there was little before.

## The Birth Families

Many often think of the birth families as “the bad guys” of the foster care cycle. But, we must realize that many of these families are struggling with hardships and circumstances that are beyond their means to control. Early intervention and family preservation services often provide these families with the tools they need to be successful. Even when the birth family consists of those who abuse and neglect, success is often possible when stressors are temporarily removed and support is provided. The goal for children who come into care is often reunification and Agape works to support this, when it is safe to do so. The greatest joy is witnessing the reunification of a child with an environment that is safe and healthy.

## The Foster Families

Foster parents have unique challenges in that they are not only opening their homes to children and youth in care, but also to their trauma, family connections, and circumstances that contributed to them entering care in the first place. Foster families must have blind faith whenever a child comes into their home. They must be selfless, understanding, patient, supportive, and flexible among other qualities. The list of foster parent qualifications is endless. With the right amount of support, these families can provide the safety and stability needed for successful permanency for children in care.

## The Child Welfare System And Agencies

The Child Welfare System is not without its faults. But, ultimately, it is a system put in place to care for children experiencing abuse and neglect. It is a system that puts the safety of children above all else. There are thousands of moving parts in this system and permanency is the ultimate goal. In addition to working with the system, agencies like Georgia Agape must work to support our children in care and the families who serve them.

This month, take the time to ask yourself where you fit into this system. Do you have the heart to be a foster parent, donor, or volunteer? By opening yourself up to the possibility, you have the ability to impact true change in the life of a child for this month and all the months to come. 🌟

**LaQuisha White**, Director of Social Services



If your heart is pulling you towards foster parenting, please contact LaQuisha White, our Director of Social Services, at [LaQuisha@georgiaagape.org](mailto:LaQuisha@georgiaagape.org) or via phone at 770-452-9995.



# Joshua + Jennifer

*Joshua and Jennifer Williams became foster parents in 2022. Married for four years, they are the proud parents of two-year-old Neva and are excited to grow their family through foster care! They attend Northwest Christian Church in Acworth.*

*What first inspired you to become foster parents?*

**Joshua:** I have a passion for helping kids overcome difficult pasts and have wanted to do foster care for as long as I've known. My mom had thought about doing it as well at one point. Jennifer and I both have a desire to love those children who need that extra love.

**Jennifer:** Joshua inspired me, but I have always had a desire to love and help children in difficult circumstances. I worked as a missionary in Guatemala for several years and worked with children with disabilities as a speech therapist for a Christian school. The children were from a Mayan village where poverty was prevalent and so was domestic abuse in families. I learned a lot about how living a simpler life focused on God was what made me closer to Him.

Children are the same in any country. They need love, attention, and instruction to grow. They are also resilient and can have joy even through difficult circumstances. I struggled dealing with so many difficult situations, but I learned that God is ultimately sovereign and that I have to leave them all in His hands when things go beyond what I am capable of changing.

*When did you first discuss the potential to become foster parents?*

**Jennifer:** Joshua asked me before we even started dating if I wanted kids! Then later, when we were dating, we discussed how foster parenting was something he had wanted to do for a long time. I said I was definitely willing to pursue it.

*What do you think makes you unique foster parents?*

**Jennifer:** We are pretty new to the whole parenting thing. Although we are not young parents, we are new to being parents. We have had years of experience watching others be parents and being "aunt" and "uncle." I think it has helped us to be calmer parents as we navigate parenthood.

*What are you most excited about with becoming foster parents?*

**Jennifer:** We are excited about having our family grow, whether temporarily or permanently. Our long-term goal is to adopt. We know that many children in the foster care system will never be adopted, so that is why we chose to go this route and is how we want to grow our family. We are excited to see how Neva grows as a sibling, too.

**Joshua:** I am motivated and excited by what God is doing in us and what He will do through this journey.

*What are you most nervous about with becoming foster parents?*

**Jennifer:** Probably all the unknowns that come with foster care. Leaving it in God's hands can be challenging.

**Joshua:** Honestly, I am not nervous. I have wanted to do this since I was 20, so I am so glad it's finally coming to fruition. 🍌



**Jennifer and Joshua Williams with their daughter, Neva**



**Jennifer and her young students, children with disabilities, in Guatemala**

# Instilling AN Inner Compass



Mamo Woldi of Ethiopia captured the gold in the Marathon at the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico City finishing in just two hours, 20 minutes and 26 seconds. He won despite the grueling impact of the extreme high altitude, which caused 18 of the 75 starters to pull out due to excruciating leg cramps and debilitating fatigue.

The extraordinary story coming from this marathon, however, was not only of the amazing win by this strong Ethiopian runner. Another marathon runner that day had actually beaten Woldi once in a previous race. But this day, also feeling the heat and altitude, he would become the runner whose leg cramps and fatigue would be the least of his problems. He suffered a fall, injuring his knee, shoulder, and head. With a haphazard bandage on his knee, he continued the race, often walking as he covered the marathon distance of 26 miles, wounds and all.

While the gold medal belonged to Woldi, the end of the race belonged to John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania.

By the time Akhwari entered the stadium, the awards had been given out. Most fans had left. Then, word got out there was one last runner who would not abandon his quest to finish. Many fans returned to the stadium to cheer on the heart and spirit of this true Olympian.

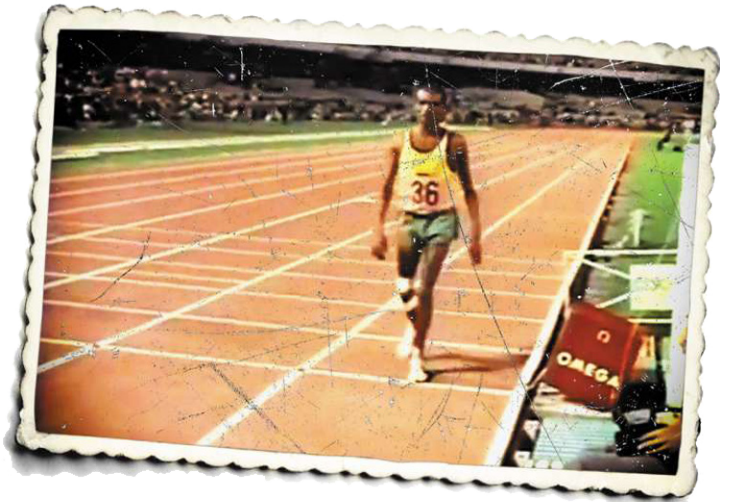
When asked why he kept running, Akhwari responded, “My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race.” And that’s exactly what he did.

Afterward he recalled, “I was just thinking about my mom and dad.” As he finished the last few steps of the race, an hour and five minutes after the winner, the words of his parents came to him. “If you start something, finish it. Otherwise, never start it.”

In these words of his parents, Akhwari found a compass to guide his life.

At Agape, we often receive children in care who, instead of being taught to be a champion, have spent their young lives simply surviving. When you support Agape, you are working with us to instill an inner compass and provide a Christian community to cheer on each child. We may only have one chance. Will you join us? Your donation supports these children when they most need us as they enter the stadium of life, wounds and all. 🍌

**Ken Dowdy**, Director of Development



*Wounds and all, John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania completes the marathon at the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico City*

## SOME WAYS TO GIVE

### Leave a Legacy for Georgia Agape

Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or benefit us after your lifetime, you can find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and support Agape. A few options are: Wills and Living Trusts; Beneficiary Designations; and Charitable Remainder Trust.

Contact your legal or financial advisor to prepare the proper documents and learn which kinds of gifts will have the best tax benefit for you.





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### Shop with AmazonSmile

AmazonSmile is a simple way to support Agape, at no additional cost to you. When you shop on AmazonSmile, their foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice.

All inventory on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) is also available on [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) at the same price. Simply select Georgia Agape as your charitable organization get started!

### Donate Your Used Vehicle

You can donate your car, truck, boat, RV, or motor home to Georgia Agape. By using the donation services of CARS, you will receive a tax deduction for the gross proceeds. All donations require a clear title to the vehicle.

Navigate to the donation page on the Georgia Agape website. Just below “Donate Your Vehicle to Charity,” you’ll find the blue **DONATE** button to begin your vehicle donation.

You can also contact CARS by phone at 855-500-7433. Be sure to tell our agent you want the proceeds to go to Agape.

Thanks to so many of you who have donated your used vehicle!



# 11,000 CHILDREN



My name is Jessica P. Johnson, and I am the new Resource Development Coordinator for Georgia Agape. This role means that I am responsible for recruiting, training, and approving new foster parents. I come with an educational background in Criminal Justice from Valdosta State University (Go, Blazers!).

For as long as I can remember, I have been a teacher, coach, mentor, or trainer in some capacity—from being a captain on my basketball teams, serving as a team lead/supervisor for several organizations for which I have worked, coaching and mentoring young athletes and new employees, and training some of DFCS Metro District’s fabulous foster care workers for the State of Georgia.

It took me some time to realize that I am passionate about training others, whether it’s in basketball or on policy and procedure as it relates to foster care. I have years of experience working with at-risk youth in the foster care system in Tennessee and Georgia.

I look forward to serving you in this capacity as the Resource Development Coordinator for Georgia Agape.

So, here’s why we need *you!*

Now more than ever, children in Georgia are being displaced due to life circumstances. There are more than 11,000 children in the foster care system in Georgia needing someone like you. We connect children and teens who are in the foster care system to the right family, and that could be you. We make the process very simple. All you need to do is contact Georgia Agape today and we will walk you through the process.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent with Georgia Agape, please contact me at 770-241-9407 or [jessica@georgiaagape.org](mailto:jessica@georgiaagape.org).

**Jessica P. Johnson**, Resource Development Coordinator

## *in Loving Memory*

**Mike Anglin**

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**Carlynn Anguish**

*David Anguish*

**Mattie Pearl Babble**

*Bernard & Bobbie Bable*

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**Judy Baker**

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**Scott Bastin**

*Jerry & Rita Porter*

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*Roger Dennington*

**Sue Birchmore**

*Roger Dennington*

*Ron L. Horn*

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*Elizabeth Ray*

*Thomas & Pam Trueb*

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*Louise Blackburn*

**Ken Bogs**

*Bob & Vesta Brown*

*Dennis Goss*

*Holbert & Julia Hale*

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**Justin Boyd**

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*Brent & Melissa Branch*

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*Avondale Church of Christ*

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*Joann Warlick*

*Joy Watkins*

*Geraldine Welch*

*Buddy & Brenda White*

*Joy Williams*

*Robin Windom*

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*Jerry & Rita Porter*

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*Millie Corder*

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*Carole DeMonbreun*

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*Ken & Bev Dowdy*

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*Ralph & Evelene Malone*

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**Bob Demonbreun**

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**Mary Edna East**

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**Lee Long**

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**Rocky Long**

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*Ruby Long*

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*Daoud & Shannon Shakkour*  
*Ken & Amy Wilber*

**Ron Porter**  
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**1) Give online!** Visit [www.GeorgiaAgape.org/donate](http://www.GeorgiaAgape.org/donate), and use the dropdown box for Memorial and Honors.

**2) Give by mail!** The enclosed gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is given in  
 Memory of or  Honor of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Please notify:

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City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

For memorials, relationship to the deceased \_\_\_\_\_

For honor gifts, occasion \_\_\_\_\_

**Georgia Agape, Inc.**

**3094 Mercer University Dr., Suite 200, Atlanta, Ga. 30341**

*Our Mission* is to provide professional social services as a compassionate Christian outreach to children, families and individuals in order to enhance their prospects for a better and brighter future.

### Georgia Agape Staff

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