



# Agape Today

## Weaving A TAPESTRY OF LIFE



Can I tell you a secret? This work is hard. Hearing stories daily of abuse and neglect takes a toll. The reality is that even if we help a family today, there are 10 others we are unable to serve. Added to that reality is the fact that tomorrow will surely bring 10 to 20 new referrals, more children in need of loving homes. Again, this work is hard.

James 1:27 calls us to care for widows and orphans. We stand poised and ready to do so. But we don't always share the hard side of that commitment. I looked for the scripture that said it would be easy, and none exists. There isn't a promise that the work won't be hard. Yet there is the promise that it will be good in the end.

As the year draws to a close with Thanksgiving and the approaching holiday season, we are so grateful for how God has provided for us to serve so many. Our amazing foster families, the true heroes of this world, stood in the gap for more families in need this year and they continue to do so. Our supporters and donors stayed the course alongside us even amid Covid and inflation. Our birth families did the hard work in many cases to rise out of their situations and re-create safe homes. Our adoptive families said yes again and again, becoming forever families for those who could not safely return home. I see the good.

Can I tell you something you already know? God weaves together the difficult times into tapestries of life that are good for those who trust in Him. We trusted Him together. He never lies. We saw families strengthened and children reunited. We witnessed success on every level, from a school day without a trip to the principal's office to high school graduation. We got to share the adoption of a beautiful baby boy with the entire audience at our recent Celebration Banquet. All things work together for good.

Thank you for your generosity, support, and perseverance this year. It takes grit and commitment to do the work God has called us to do. It also takes gratitude and thanksgiving and what a perfect time of the year to be reminded of that. There are still children in need and hurting families. The great news? There are still so many ready and willing to help. Please consider being a thread in the fabric of someone else's life. 🌈

**Racquelle Grant**, Executive Director



### Charlie Roberts

1949-2023

This edition is dedicated in loving memory to late Board Chairman Charlie Roberts. A committed volunteer, advocate, and supporter of Georgia Agape, Charlie had served on the board for nearly 10 years at the time of his passing in August 2023. Of his many contributions, most notable were his legal expertise and consultation in updating agency policies, securing agency contracts, and furthering the reach of Agape's services.

The saying goes that, "There are special people in our lives who never leave us, even after they are gone." So true. While we are deeply saddened by the loss of Charlie, his influence and contributions continue. May we all keep in heart and mind his wife, Kathy, their children, Wade and Emily, and all his family and friends who were touched by Charlie's amazing life and mourn his loss. 🌈



## Fernando Nasmyth Named Board of Directors Chairman

Formerly Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for Georgia Agape, Fernando Nasmyth transitioned into his new role as Chairman in August 2023.

A member of our board since 2020, Fernando brings to our organization legal expertise, previous non-profit board experience including for Abilene Christian University and Greater Atlanta Christian School, and a business acumen that has proven to be a major asset.

Retired in 2017, Fernando spent his working career in legal operations and finance with several large public and privately held businesses. He has served as an elder at North Atlanta Church of Christ for over 25 years where he worships with his wife, Donna. They have three adult children and are the proud grandparents of four. Agape is excited about the future of the agency and is so grateful for Fernando's commitment and partnership in our work. 🍌

## FOSTER PARENT SPOTLIGHT



# Michael + Tiffany

*Michael and Tiffany Desrosier are our newest foster parents! They were approved in July 2023. Since then, they have fostered two children and provided a four-day revocation period for a newborn being adopted through our Private Adoption Program. They are also currently fostering M'Bree Wright with hopes of adopting her. They live in Gordon County with their three children—Cort, Kayleigh, and Jeremy—and baby M'Bree.*

*What first inspired you to become foster parents?*

**Tiffany:** We felt like God was leading us to foster, so we started praying about it and immediately knew that this was what we were supposed to be doing!

*What do you think is the most rewarding aspect of being a foster parent?*

**Tiffany:** I would say just being a constant in a child's life, loving them, and supporting them has been the most rewarding aspect so far. The biggest highlight for us has been the smiling faces of these children when we pick them up from school in the afternoons!

*What do you think is the most challenging aspect of being a foster parent?*

**Tiffany:** The most challenging aspect of being a foster parent is the lack of knowledge that most other people have about the foster system in general.

*What advice would you give to someone who is considering becoming a foster parent?*

**Tiffany:** If you are considering becoming a foster parent, my suggestion is to just do it! It can be challenging at times, but it's also very rewarding. Being able to help children in need has been such a huge blessing to us!

*What is something that surprised you about foster parenting?*

**Tiffany:** Everything! I don't think you truly understand the need for foster parents until you actually become one. You can be a positive influence in the lives of these children, and to show them love and compassion that they may not have had before. It will truly warm your heart.

*Is there anything else you want others to know about fostering?*

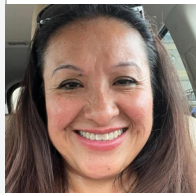


**Tiffany:** Fostering is ugly, it's beautiful, it's ups and downs, it's love, it's all of those emotions into one. It will be the hardest, most rewarding thing you will ever do! 🍌

**Standing left to right: Cort, Kayleigh, Jeremy, and Tiffany  
Seated: Michael and baby M'Bree**



# GOD'S EVERLASTING *Love*



The unselfishness of a mother's love brought much joy to an adoptive family this September. Within our Private Adoption Program, our adoption coordinator received a call from a birth mother on September 18, 2023. She explained she wanted a better life for her newborn son, a life she was unable to give him at that time. Her baby had been born that morning at 3:11 a.m. at Grady Memorial Hospital, weighing 5 pounds and measuring 18.5 inches long.

Joseph and Bronwen O'Dell were approved as adoptive parents in July 2023. They were anxiously waiting when they received a call about the newborn baby boy. Providential timing brought baby Amos to his parents on the evening of our Celebration Banquet. Bronwen accepted Amos into her arms with tears of a mother's joy.

The O'Dells congregation, the Woodstock Church of Christ, rejoiced with this growing family and played an important role in welcoming Amos to his forever home.

Like Amos, my life was transformed through adoption. In 1983, as an abandoned six-year-old, streetwise, and physically abused orphan, I was chosen to be adopted by a single mother. From that moment, God blessed me and continues to bless me because I was adopted. Adoption is so special. Most people who have never witnessed such an expression of love can never comprehend how wonderful adoption truly can be. It is different from giving birth because, as a parent, you receive the gift from God in seeing and receiving the opportunity to say yes to a particular child.

From day one, my adopted mother told me I was adopted. As a child, I would ask her, "Why did you adopt me?" She would answer me with, "I saw your picture among all the children. I chose you. You were beautiful." Her words always made me feel special. This is adoption, a true statement of God's everlasting love.

**114,000** The number of youth waiting to be adopted who are at risk of aging out of foster care without permanent family connections

November is National Adoption Month. Georgia Agape offers both foster care and private adoption programs.

- Consider becoming a foster parent to grow your family. Many children are waiting. You can make a lasting family connection for these children. To learn more, contact Suanaye Wilson at [suanaye@georgiaagape.org](mailto:suanaye@georgiaagape.org).
- Consider becoming involved in our Private Adoption Program, a fee-for-service program. You can grow your family and make a difference at the same time by choosing a child who will fit your family perfectly. For more information, contact Cayla Matthews at [cayla@georgiaagape.org](mailto:cayla@georgiaagape.org).

You, too, can make a statement of God's everlasting love. 🍌

**Sondra Colbert, MSW**, Director of Social Services

**Sondra as a teenager with her mother, Vada Kay, and brother, Stephen**



**Bronwen and Joseph O'Dell with Amos Matthew, their newborn son**

## A Mother's Love

by Helen Steiner Rice

*A Mother's love is something  
that no one can explain,  
It is made of deep devotion  
and of sacrifice and pain,  
It is endless and unselfish  
and enduring come what may  
For nothing can destroy it  
or take that love away . . .  
It is patient and forgiving  
when all others are forsaking,  
And it never fails or falters  
even though the heart is breaking . . .  
It believes beyond believing  
when the world around condemns,  
And it glows with all the beauty  
of the rarest, brightest gems . . .  
It is far beyond defining,  
it defies all explanation,  
And it still remains a secret  
like the mysteries of creation . . .  
A many splendored miracle  
man cannot understand  
And another wondrous evidence  
of God's tender guiding hand.*

# Celebrate!

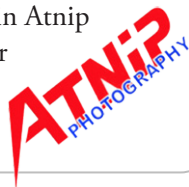


**Linda Moore (left) is presented the Foster Parent Honor Roll award by Erica Williams**



**Erica Williams (left) is presented the Dot Landers Service Award by Racquelle Grant**

Special thanks to Collin Attnip who photographed our event, capturing the evening's highlights



On September 21, the Georgia Agape community gathered at the Westin Atlanta Perimeter North to celebrate the work of foster parents, adoption families, Agape staff, board members, supporters and others who live by the message of Christ to bless children.

At the core of Agape's existence is the love, dedication, and work of foster and adoptive parents. In a touching moment, Bronwen and Joseph O'Dell attended with four-day-old Amos, the child they are adopting, whom they met for the first time right before the dinner began.

Even as we celebrated our families, the entire Georgia Agape community united in mourning the recent passing of Charlie Roberts, who served for over 10 years on our board and was serving as board chairman. His wife, Cathy, and daughter, Emily Rogers, joined us, accepting on behalf of the family the Barnabas Servant Leader award given posthumously to Charlie.

Guest speaker Dr. John Gaines inspired attendees with his life story. When he was seven years old, his mother died from an apparent drug overdose. Over the years, he found he was able to move forward in life and attain his dreams, but not without the love and guidance of teachers and others who stood in the gap for his parents. His message, affirming the need for self-care and supportive community for those serving children, left the room uplifted and challenged to continue the work.

The evening's events were brightened by our host, the beloved Duffie Dixon, a sister in Christ and an award-winning broadcast professional. A heart-warming video, created by James Hutcheson, highlighted Linda Moore as one of the many amazing Georgia Agape foster parents.

It was truly an evening to celebrate. Please join us next year on September 27th for our 2024 celebration.

**Ken Dowdy**, Director of Development

## Awards and Recognition

**Linda Moore** was added to the Foster Parent Honor Roll.

**Kenneth and Sandra White** received the Good Samaritan Award.

**Erica Williams and Ken Dowdy** both were honored with the Dot Landers Service Award.

**Charlie Roberts** was recognized posthumously by Board of Directors with the highest award given for lifetime service, The Barnabas Servant Leader Award.

## Thank You!

We appreciate so much each of our sponsors of this year's Celebration Banquet.

### **Diamond Sponsor** (\$2,000 or more)

- **Michael & Alice Hinterschied** (Cable Depot)
- **Patrick Neither**
- **James Wagner**

### **Gold Sponsor** (\$1,000 to \$1,999)

- **Fernando & Donna Nasmyth**
- **Bob McMahan**
- **Ken & Bev Dowdy**

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- **Jackie Bradford**
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### **Bronze Sponsor** (\$100 to \$499)

- **Max & Kay Reiboldt** (Coker Foundation)
- **Greg & Susie Winnett**
- **Craig & Brenda Hunter**

### **Table Sponsor** (\$400)

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- **Campus Church of Christ**
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- **Forest Park Church of Christ**
- **Northlake Church of Christ**
- **Oak Hill Church of Christ**
- **Renaissance Church of Christ**
- **Snellville Church of Christ**



## NEW STAFF



### Meet Suanaye Wilson

*Resource Development Coordinator*

I am Suanaye Wilson, and also go by the name Ms. Su. Originally from the city of New York, I have resided in the Atlanta area for 26 years.

I bring extensive career experience in the youth development field, with seven years specifically related to foster care, to my role as resource development coordinator at Georgia Agape. As the education director at The Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta and as the program specialist for Girls Inc., I coordinated treatment plans and built rapport with youth and their families. I am extremely proud of my career accomplishments as I strive to “reach one and teach one” to increase a positive ripple effect in young lives.

By implementing self-care within my own life, I’m able to assist in enriching the lives of others. I enjoy motivating others to think outside-the-box and step out of their comfort zone. I encourage everyone I meet to start a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goal! I will continue to walk the path that God has set before me to assist youth and their families through their circle of life.

Traveling is also a passion of mine. Some years ago, I set a goal to visit each of the 50 states before turning 50 years old. To the surprise of many naysayers, I accomplished that goal way before my self-imposed age deadline. Now I have a lot of pictures and lifelong memories to treasure! 🌟



**From left: Dot Landers Service Award honoree Ken Dowdy, event host Duffie Dixon, and guest speaker Dr. John Gaines**



**Emily Rogers (center) accepts The Barnabas Servant Leader Award on behalf of her late father, Charlie Roberts, from Fernando Nasmyth and Racquelle Grant**



**Members of the Grace Chapel Church of Christ at the banquet**





GIFTS RECEIVED  
APR. 20–OCT. 16, 2023

## In Loving Memory

**Marice Allen**  
Amy Leblanc

**Susan Mercer Arnold**  
Ruth Bastin  
Phil & Cindy Bowers  
Bill & Linda Burton  
Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy  
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**Bernice "Bea" Nix Broom**  
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**Dennis Butler**  
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**William Ford Calhoun**  
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Marcus & Carole Campbell

**Herb & Jo Choate**  
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**Sandra Cofield**  
Vesta Brown

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Dwight & Edith Hood

**Louie Crouch, Jr.**  
Steve & Betty Pintur

**Patrick Crump**  
Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy

**Everett Currey**  
Linda Blan

**Mary Devane Davison**  
Susan Harper

**James & Shirley Dowdy**  
Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy

**Anne Marie Ellington**  
Avondale Church of Christ

**Shane Garner**  
Lauren Gee

## THE *Beauty* OF God



Thanksgiving and Christmas! A time of year we celebrate the joy of the season with thankful and grateful hearts in the company of family and special friends.

For many foster children, the holiday season this year is either their first time away from their own family or perhaps their first time in their current foster home. For older children, this may be the second, third, or more foster home they've been in. They feel cut off from their own family, not knowing what to

expect in their new surroundings.

While there is a significant reason they are not living with their biological family in that moment, most foster children still love and deeply miss the only family they have known. Have you ever been away from your family during the holidays with little-to-no idea what's going to happen next with people you've never met? You would have so many questions: *Where will I be each day? Who will I go visit next? Will I be expected to participate in gatherings with people I've never met? What unfamiliar traditions will I be expected to participate in?*

Children commonly struggle this time of year with anxiety and depression. That fact is only heightened among foster children who are away from their family and their personal holiday history. Also, they are with a family they do not know and have had no say in the decision that brought them there. Foster children often report feeling especially vulnerable, lonely, and sad, at a time when they are expected to feel exactly the opposite.

Beauty lives in foster parents who, through increased awareness of these and other issues, prepare the child placed in their home for maneuvering these trying waters. They also solicit input from the child in ways they celebrate or might want to celebrate this special time of year.

Fostering hope and changing lives is done through our foster families as they serve these children so faithfully. If Agape is to continue repeating this amazing process for future children, we need to remain financially strong, continuing to recruit, train, and support increasing foster care families. We currently have more families than ever preparing for training and several about to transition to active placements.

We are strong today because of your faithfulness in supporting the work of Agape's unconditional love for some of the most vulnerable children in Georgia. We need your support to finish this year stronger than ever. Agape has the best donors in the world. Thank you for your faithfulness every year to support the mission of bringing something to celebrate into the lives of the children we serve. Use the enclosed return envelope to send in your donation or go to our website at [georgiaagape.org/donate](http://georgiaagape.org/donate) to give today. 🍌

**Ken Dowdy**, Director of Development

**Spencer Geerlings**

Betsy Ayers  
 Sharon Brooks  
 Vesta Brown  
 Jim & Karen Burson  
 Lynn Chavez  
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 Jeanie Choi  
 Minna Choi  
 Samuel Choi  
 Robert Feren  
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 Lauren McGuire  
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 Beth Ramsey  
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Dennis Goss

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**Scott Allen Hager**

Avondale Church of Christ

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Janet Hicks

**Robert D. Hogan**

Jim & Mary Freeman  
 Jimmy Miller  
 Butch & Hilda Nutt  
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**Judith Hogan**

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**Wilma Ingram**

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 Steve & Betty Pintur

**Ruby Gwen Jones**

Dennis Goss

**Tammy Jones**

Vesta Brown

**Irma Larkin**

Vesta Brown

**Ma NgocHong Le**

Greg & Susie Winnett

**Gerald Glenn Lindsey**

John & Glenda Liddle  
 Myra Lindsey

**Norma Miller**

Jim & Mary Freeman

**Terry Nichols**

Sally Paine

**Our Mothers**

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**Patty Pedelty**

Steven Pedelty

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Robert & Edna Southard

**Wanda Pounders**

Buford Tuesday Ladies Bible  
 Class

**Hobert Ralston**

Jack Stanley

**Jane Miller Reinhart**

Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy  
 Janet Hicks

**Margie Renahan**

Butch & Hilda Nutt

**Charlie Roberts**

Mike, Angie & Bryce Ballenger  
 Jean Barnes  
 Ruth Bastin  
 Phil & Cindy Bowers  
 Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy  
 George & Ruth Gray  
 Robin Hairston  
 Steve & Connie Hamley  
 Faye Holland  
 Fred & June Isaf  
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 Norma Sangster  
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 Neal & JoAnne Stubblefield  
 Jim Wagner  
 Greg & Susie Winnett

**Phillip Rose**

Vesta Brown

**Jim Slaughter**

Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy

**Ed & Juanita Slaughter**

Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy

**Juanita Smalley**

David & Sharon Smalley

**Richard Smith**

Jim & Mary Freeman

## Memorial or Honor Gift

**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 \_\_\_\_\_.

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

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

**Georgia Agape, Inc.**

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Lauren Gee

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Kenneth & Beverly Dowdy

**Jae Jung Yang**

Steve & Betty Pintur

## In Honor & Respect

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Bob Reinhart

**Sandra Baggett**

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**Caleb, Christy & William Michael Barker**

Dennis Goss

**Jackie Bradford**

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**Jim Combee**

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**Tim Dunn**

Bob Reinhart

**Joe Glenn**

Bob Reinhart

**Ronney Henderson**

Bob Reinhart

**Walker Kendrick**

Bob Reinhart

**Sam Mankin**

Bob Reinhart

**Brody Mong**

Daniel & Kandis Mong

**Tom Pate**

Bob Reinhart

**Jerry Porter**

Bob Reinhart

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**Jody Vickery**

Wayne & Frances Mitsch

**Dorothy Williams**

Steve & Lori Montgomery





*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

Racquelle Grant, MSW, *Executive Director*  
Sondra Colbert, MSW, *Director of Social Services*  
Karen Anthony, MAOM, *Director of Administration*  
Ken Dowdy, *Director of Development*  
Kristi Buce, *Administrative Assistant*  
Dana Stanley, *Accountant*  
Erica Williams, BSW, *Child Placement Case Manager*  
Cayla Matthews, *Maternity and Adoption Coordinator*  
Suanaye Wilson, *Resource Development Coordinator*

### Board of Directors

Fernando Nasmyth, *Chairperson*  
Renard Anthony, *Treasurer*  
Ivelisse Matos, *Secretary*  
Brenda Hunter  
Steve Murdock



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## 2023 Thanksgiving Appeal

We believe every child deserves a seat at the table of a loving, Christian family. Your gift allows the children we serve this opportunity. We pray you will continue to partner with us through our Thanksgiving Appeal. You can provide a gift starting now through December online at [georgiaagape.org/donate](https://georgiaagape.org/donate) or text to give at 1-888-364-4483. You also



may simply use this QR code on your smart phone.

