

SUMMER 2024



AgapeToday

Embracing THE Inner Life



It's easier to reflect on failures than on accomplishments. One can easily obsess over mistakes, minimizing any positive outcome at the end of the day. Consider how Michael Jordan characterized his amazing career, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Think about Babe Ruth. He played 22 seasons for the Yankees, Red Sox, and Braves; had a .342 batting average with 2,873 hits, 714 home runs, 2,214 RBIs and 2,174 runs scored; won 7 World Series; and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1936. Guess what? He was struck out 1,330 times in his career.

In a recent article about Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple, he reflected on what he plans to have on his mind when facing the end of his life. He won't measure his happiness by the size of Apple's market share or even his personal worth. Instead, he says he will think about the jokes he told and the laughter he shared with family and friends. "These are the moments I want to remember, ... (and) they don't involve co-founding Apple."

People often struggle to find happiness because they see it as a destination. According to Harvard University professor Arthur C. Brooks, "Happiness isn't a destination; it's a direction, ... it has more to do with our inner lives."

I have been blessed to visit with several adults who shared the common experience of being fostered in families working with Georgia Agape. The positive influence of the home where they were placed, the benefit of the training, and the deep love they received helped them see what matters most.

While it's important to develop talents, the inner being is what matters most. Being kind, loving, caring, patient, thoughtful of others matters. It's exciting to learn of significant worldly accomplishments; however, life stories about a person's inner qualities contain lasting impact and can move us to tears.

Sometimes the path is littered with what we consider failures. High anxiety mixes with fear we are not accomplishing our goals. At times like these, we must remember the stories of Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan. Remember how big their failures looked within the context of their sport. Remember how easy it is to misapply failure vs. success on any given day.

Remember we have the power of Creation and the Resurrection filling us and directing us as we strive to live each day. Our foster homes constantly hold up this reality to the children in their care so that one day the children will embrace this power in their inner lives.

Let's reflect daily on the knowledge we can succeed together, at the most important things, one child at a time, fostering hope and changing lives. 🍌

Ken Dowdy, Director of Development

Being kind, loving, caring,
patient, thoughtful of
others matters.



A Full and Fulfilling Season!



Whew! This has been a busy season for Georgia Agape. We had a million things coming at us at once. Yet with sheer determination and grit, lots of planning, and, of course, God, we pushed through it all. I am so excited to share with you.

Completed the Council on Accreditation Audit

First was our audit by the Council on Accreditation (COA). Our 18-month journey of evidence submission of best practices, countless meetings, engagements with families and stakeholders, and policy review and updates all culminated in a two-day site visit with COA reviewers in late March. The result: successful reaccreditation, findings of zero deficiencies identified, and fast-tracked directly to accreditation. Not only a rarity, but this outcome marks the very highest stamp communicating an agency's consistent performance of field best practice. No words exist to express my deepest felt gratitude for Agape's dedicated staff and Board of Directors, amazing foster and adoptive families, valued community and state partners, and generous donors and supporters who all made this major accomplishment possible. However, I would like to share a few words directly from Jody Levison-Johnson, the president and chief executive officer of COA:

"COA's program of quality improvement is designed to identify providers that have met high performance standards and have made a commitment to their stakeholders to deliver the very best quality services. COA is proud to recognize Georgia Agape, Inc. as one of these outstanding providers, and we wish you the very best in your continuing work with the individuals you serve."

"It is our great pleasure to inform you that the Council on Accreditation (COA) has approved the accreditation of Georgia Agape, Inc. through July 31, 2028. Let me again say how significant this achievement is! It represents the fulfillment of countless hours of hard work and the dedication of many people—most notably your staff and the members of your board and/or leadership. Please extend my congratulations to them."

Jody Levison-Johnson

President and Chief Executive Officer, Council on Accreditation

Racquelle Grant, at left, talks with attendees at the Network 1:27 conference in April



Attendees from Church of Christ agencies around the nation join together in prayer and praise at the Network 1:27 conference hosted by Georgia Agape in April





Hosted the 70th Annual Network 1:27 Conference

In April, Agape hosted the 70th annual Network 1:27 conference for Church of Christ agencies nationwide. True to this year's theme of "I Have a Dream," the association both recognized the fulfillment of its mission and imagined the impact continued service to children and families across the world could accomplish over the next 70 years. Dynamic presentations ranging from serving diverse populations to navigating current society threats to faith-based organizations were given. Jedd Medefind, president of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, spoke to us on "Soul Care" and continuing to maintain the soul while serving others. Our souls were fed by other presenters such as Dr. Harold Shank, national spokesperson for Network 1:27, and Don McLaughlin, senior minister at North Atlanta Church of Christ, just to name a couple. We practiced Thessalonians 5:11 by encouraging and building up one another. We departed our time together "recharged and on fire to do even more in our respective communities," as one attendee said.

Raised Funds at 5K For Kids and Children's Golf Classic

We also hosted our annual Georgia Agape 5K For Kids with our largest turnout ever! Monies were raised to provide additional services for children in our care who have higher needs. At the event, we connected with community partners who are inspired to partner with us in this work in even more ways.

As if this blessing was not enough, we moved right into our annual Children's Golf Classic event immediately after Mother's Day where golfers braved the rain and raised funds to support the mission of Agape. I may be biased, but our partners, donors, and supporters are the absolute BEST.

Launched "55 in 55" Initiative

Many great things are brewing at Georgia Agape. We are excited and thankful to God for the many ways He is providing for our success and continued service. We are approaching our 55th anniversary of serving children and families in 2025. In honor of this milestone, Agape is launching a new initiative we are fondly calling "55 in 55." We have set goals that will increase our reach in serving communities.

Here's how you can help. Between now and the end of the year, visit Agape's website (www.georgiaagape.org) to see the list of goals and our progress towards each one. Identify at least one goal that you can assist with. I promise, there is something for everyone. Lastly, reach out to us so we can partner together. This initiative is not only requests but also offerings of how we may be of assistance in your congregations and communities.

As we honor our 55 years of service in this way, we desire to increase our ability to assist families through collaboration. We can do so much more together. Will you help us to care for an expectant mom, a child in need, or a family in crisis? 🍌

Racquelle Grant, Executive Director

Our heartfelt thanks to all the golfers and churches who supported this year's Children's Golf Classic



A record number of 175 participants ran in this year's 5K For Kids!

Celebrate!

Please make your plans to join us at the beautiful Westin Atlanta Perimeter North on Thursday, Sept. 26, at 7:00 p.m. for our 2024 Celebration Banquet. Come celebrate the great work of Georgia Agape with us. See you there!



Understanding Trauma

State of Georgia Improves Parent Training



The state of Georgia recently introduced new curriculum for foster and adoptive parent training called the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC). This new curriculum focuses more on trauma-based initiatives that a potential family caregiver can follow to best help the children in their care.

At Georgia Agape, we applaud the state for recognizing that family caregivers would benefit from more intensive training that aligns with the trauma children in foster care have experienced in addition to basic parenting skills. NTDC requires 30 hours of training and replaces the former foster parent training known as IMPACT.

Per the participant handbook, “The National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) is a curriculum based on research and input from experts, families who have experience with fostering or adopting children, and former foster and adoptive youth. It provides potential foster or adoptive parents with the information and tools needed to parent a child who has experienced trauma, separation, and loss. It is a state-of-the-art classroom and online program that helps to prepare prospective foster and adoptive parents to be successful parents. In addition, the NTDC gives caregivers access to information and resources needed to continue building skills once they have a child in their home.”

At Agape, we completed our first NTDC training session this spring. We will continue to offer NTDC classes each quarter. The next two sessions will be held July 2-30, 2024, and October 1-31, 2024.

If you are interested in joining Agape’s NTDC classes or would like more details, please email me at Sondra@georgiaagape.org.

Sondra Colbert, Director of Social Services

Will you?

Foster parents are greatly needed. If your heart is pulling you towards serving families via foster care, please contact Sondra Colbert, our Director of Social Services, at Sondra@georgiaagape.org or via phone at (770) 452-9995.



National Training and Development Curriculum
FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Running Ahead!

Georgia Agape 5K For Kids Raises Funds

The beautiful campus and excellent track and field facilities of Greater Atlanta Christian School made a great venue for the Georgia Agape 5K for Kids held Sunday, April 14th. The course is recognized by the USA Track & Field and the Road Runners Club of America as a certified course. This year, 175 individuals participated in the event which included a one-mile Fun Run and a 5K Run. Representing tremendous growth, this is an increase of 85 more than last year's total of 90 participants.

This fun day was made possible through the dedicated leadership and work of the best volunteers ever. Thanks to Lea Long, Brad Kinser, Cliff Sharp, Ted Thames, and Bev Dowdy along with the Agape staff for their roles in making this a great day.

We are grateful for our sponsors who help make our events fun and successful for the children we serve. Our sponsors included Cable Depot, Greater Atlanta Christian School, Strickland Chiropractic, and T.E.M. Promotions. Our deepest thanks to them and to many of you who gave through your donations. 🌟

Ken Dowdy, Director of Development



MORE WAYS TO GIVE

Leave a Legacy

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 benefit for you as you support Georgia Agape.

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 donation.

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

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

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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

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*
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At the Annual Family Picnic our BBQ kings, Tristan Rogers and Anthony Grant (pictured at left), manned the grill and face-painted Sondra Colbert (below) served delicious cake.

Perfect Family Picnic

What a wonderful time of year! Flowers blooming, sun rays warming the skin, children laughing and enjoying sweet fellowship with each other. Foster and adoptive parents, foster and adoptive children, as well as staff and their families enjoyed each other at our Annual Family Picnic. 🌟

