



# Agape Today

## Silver Linings during the *Pandemic*

### Georgia Agape Earns Re-Accreditation from COA

In October 2020, we received news of the best kind! Our organization earned re-accreditation from the Council of Accreditation with zero deficiencies noted! This is a rare and wonderful accomplishment.

President and CEO Jody Levinson-Johnson of COA stated in her congratulatory letter, "It is our great pleasure to inform you that the Council on Accreditation has approved the accreditation of Georgia Agape, Inc. through July 31, 2024. 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."

We are grateful to each one who helped achieve our accreditation. 🌟



It has been an entire year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A whole year with no vacations, no large gatherings, no travel. Life seemed to hit pause. Fast forward to now, May 2021, and we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. What remained constant and certain during this difficult time is that there are still children and families in need.

I truly believe in the saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining." While hard, 2020 taught us a lot. Forced to adapt, we became more creative and resourceful. At Agape, we knew we still had work to do. In this last year, we continued to place children in loving Christian homes. We successfully achieved re-accreditation

through the Council on Accreditation with zero deficiencies—a nearly unheard of feat. New families answered the call to foster children. And our amazing donors weathered the pandemic right alongside us for which we are so very grateful.

After this pandemic, Agape will be able to do our work in a new way. We now have even more efficient ways to serve because of what we have learned. Physical distance will no longer be a barrier. Technology has and will expand our footprint in ways we had not before considered or thought possible. The future is even brighter. We still have so much more to do. Together, if we do all we can, with a God who will stand in the gap, we will serve more and farther than even before. 🌟

**Racquelle Grant**, Executive Director





The 2021 New Foster Parent IMPACT Class meets via Zoom

# What have we learned?

*We need you!*

If your heart is pulling you towards serving families via foster care, there is a great need. Please contact LaQuisha White, our Director of Social Services, at [LaQuisha@georgiaagape.org](mailto:LaQuisha@georgiaagape.org) or via phone at (770) 452-9995.



For many of us, the true impact of COVID-19 was felt in March of 2020. During that month, the University System of Georgia shut down, school systems across Georgia switched to virtual learning, restaurants and business shut down. We all watched the news as the numbers crept up. Some of us wept, all of us prayed. We had no idea that the impact of the COVID-19 virus would be felt all over the world, a year later, and even longer.

During this time, there are many lessons that we have learned as we have adjusted to this “new normal.” These lessons are evident on a daily basis even as we hear more about vaccinations and get back to fellowshipping.

**1. We are resilient.** 2 Timothy 1:7—*For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* We have truly found strength and faith during this time, even when we did not see an end in sight. We found new ways to communicate with our foster parents, children in care, stakeholders, church family and more. We learned that Zoom is not only a verb, but a proper noun. We somehow became used to holding meetings and trainings virtually and seeing everyone in the small rectangles of our computer screens. We even held virtual fundraising events where our supporters were so instrumental in us meeting our goals.

**2. The need is even greater.** James 1:27—*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to*



# Calvin + Joi

keep himself unspotted from the world. This is a verse that is often used as the reason behind the work that we do. During the time of the pandemic, we saw that there was an even greater need to provide safe, loving homes for children who experienced abuse and neglect. Children were now in the home 24/7 with those adults who were unable or unwilling to care for them. Children were removed from schools where they had access to mandated reporters who were required to report any signs of abuse and neglect that they witnessed. On a daily basis, we received those referrals for children who experience this in families that were meant to keep them safe.

### 3. Our foster parents are awesome!

John 15:13—*Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Not literally, but our foster parents have made new sacrifices to serve children and families over this past year. Not only have they had to support their children through this pandemic, they have also had to fearlessly open their doors to children and youth taken into foster care. At a time when many do not wish to add stressors to their lives, our foster parents said otherwise and recognized that these children and youth still deserved to live in a home free from harm, abuse and neglect.

### 4. Our children need you.

We are still in need of foster parents. We are still in need of families who are willing to open their hearts and homes to children and youth. Every time we have to turn down a placement, it is heartbreaking. Our overall goal is growth, but this growth encompasses more than just numbers. It is touching the hearts of children and youth in foster care and making a true impact on their lives.

Please call us today to find out how you can help with increasing our impact. Whether it is through becoming a foster family, adoptive family, donor or volunteer, we need you to help us learn the lessons for the next year. 🍌

**LaQuisha White**, Director of Social Services

*Calvin Brown, Jr. and Dr. Joi Brown have been foster parents since 2019. They live in DeKalb County with their two-year-old daughter, Amari, and they attend Avondale Church of Christ. Calvin's parents, Calvin Brown, Sr. and Donna Brown, have been Agape foster parents for 17 years!*

*What first inspired you to become foster parents?*

**Calvin:** Seeing the influence my parents had on the lives of so many children that came through our home while growing up. I wanted to continue my parent's legacy of helping others in need, witnessing first-hand the power of love and care.

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

**Joi:** The fun, laughter, and joy that taking care of children will bring.

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

**Joi:** Time management and balancing time for yourself and time for the children. As a couple, we both pitch in to help where needed, so we don't get overwhelmed. We plan out our days and activities to be more productive.

*What is a funny story or highlight that you've experienced as foster parents?*

**Joi:** Upon finishing training in order to become licensed foster parents, we found out that we were pregnant! Although we would soon be adding to the size of our family, we felt that our hearts were large enough to still open our home to help children in need. God has blessed us tremendously, and we felt there was nothing that could stop us from passing that blessing along by serving others.

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

**Calvin:** If you find it in your heart to become a foster parent, do it! If you don't think it is the right time then come back and revisit your situation later. God will prepare you to be ready at the right time.

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

**Joi:** The foster kids actually may call you mom and dad. Although we are not biological parents to them, the fact that they could call us mom or dad warms our hearts and solidifies the fact that we could be that positive beacon of light they need.

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



*Foster parents Dr. Joi and Calvin Brown, Jr. with their daughter, Amari*

**Calvin:** The feeling you get caring for children will be unlike any feeling you've ever had! Joi and I are both busy professionals—Joi being a Pharmacist and myself being a Cybersecurity Consultant causes us to have extremely busy schedules. However, let us serve as an example to you that God will make a way for you to have the time and ability to serve others. Moreover, he will equip you with a great support system to carry out that mission. 🍌



## VIRTUAL EVENTS, CONCRETE NEEDS

26th Annual

### Agape Children's Golf Classic

Friday, May 14, through Saturday, June 19

The Georgia Agape Children's Golf Classic supports our Agape kids and their families. Modifications have been made this year to ensure everyone's safety. We want all golfers to enjoy being on a course and playing golf without compromising safety. The Children's Classic typically has a little over 120 people involved throughout the one day of the event. Safe distancing would be a challenge in this setting.

**So, what makes this year a virtual event?** Instead of everyone playing at only one course on the same day at the same time, all players will play at their favorite course anytime over a five-week period between May 14th and June 19th and make a difference for the children and families of Georgia Agape.

The main reason we're playing golf is for the fundraising—which has not changed at all! Neither has the love and care Agape continues to have for the children in our care. Please support your golf team or the Children's Golf Classic general fund and make a difference in the life of our Agape children and their families. 🏌️



### Celebration Banquet 2021

Thursday, September 23

To ensure everyone's continuing safety during COVID-19, Georgia Agape's Celebration Banquet scheduled for September 23, 2021 **will be virtual** and promises to be an outstanding event.

Although restrictions are beginning to loosen across our community, there is an overall reluctance to totally feel good about meeting indoors for a couple of hours over a meal in a room with potentially limited ventilation. Our concern first and foremost is for the health of the many friends, families, and children of Agape who will be present, along with the Agape team.

The entire Agape team is usually at the event and each one of them has been vigilant during this unusual time of the COVID-19 risk. They have continued serving on the front lines and avoided contracting COVID. Our job daily is to manage risk! So, that's what we're doing. And we appreciate your understanding.

Watch for announcements sharing ways you can join in the celebration of our families, staff and volunteers of Agape, on Thursday night, September 23rd. 🏆

# Fighting for Every Child



Just over a year ago, the Governor of Georgia instructed businesses throughout the state to close and take actions against the potential hazard of life's newest threat, COVID-19.

Those were the days we thought we were going to be working from our homes for a few weeks! Now, over a year later, I still work from my home office.

Many still have not returned full-time to their offices and the ones who have returned follow strict guidelines to avoid a personal encounter with the dreaded virus. Watching the growing number of COVID cases, searching to discover a new normal, we gradually grew in our awareness there would be nothing typical in-store as we sought a way forward.

I have often said we have the best donor-partners in the world. I believe that now more than ever! You have been faithful throughout this season. While many of my fundraising contemporaries in other nonprofit organizations struggle to survive, we have remained strong. We have challenges that face us during these times. But we are not alone. We feel your partnership in our daily work. And the demand for our services remains high.

I am particularly thankful that our donors graciously continued supporting the work of rescue and redemption we are a part of every day. We keep seeing the dramatic need to care for children who have been trapped in mistreatment. We are honored to be a part of their rescue and partnership in moving each one toward healthy family life. Thank you for your amazing support.

Continuing to rescue these children from crisis will require our full attention to detail. One inescapable detail is the actual cost of what it takes to accomplish the work of rescue. The state evaluates all caseworkers statewide to measure the quality of their delivery of care. For every evaluation, our caseworkers consistently receive the highest rating. Your continued financial support ensures each of our families will experience the best quality of care while working with Agape.

*"I have no idea what's going to happen,  
but I know what I'm going to fight for."*

– Antony Bugg-Levine, CEO, Nonprofit Finance Fund

These are unusual and uncertain times. No matter what happens next we will fight for every child in our care. Will you stand with us? Your continued financial support makes sure we are ready to fight for our Agape children and their families. You can go online to our Donation page to give, send in a check using the return envelope found in this newsletter, or text "GiveAgape" to 1 (888) 364-4483. 🍌

**Ken Dowdy**, Director of Development

GIFTS RECEIVED OCTOBER 1, 2020–APRIL 30, 2021

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

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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*  
LaQuisha White, MS, LPC, CPCS, *Director of Social Services*  
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# The *Light* at the End of the Tunnel

With mask mandates being lifted for those who are fully vaccinated, and restaurants and stores returning to normal operations, it seems that we can finally see light at the end of the dark COVID-19 tunnel.

At Georgia Agape, this is what we strive to be for the children in our care—a light that offers them hope of a better future. A future where they feel safe, appreciated and loved.

Of course, we cannot do this work on our own. We need you as foster parents, donors and volunteers. We are so grateful for each of you who partner with us in offering a light to children and teens. Thank you! 

