



Expressing God's unconditional love to Georgia's children in need by providing Christian foster and adoptive homes.

# Agape Today

Fostering HOPE / Changing LIVES

## May is National Foster Care Month

May 2017  
VOL. 47 NO. 2



### Your Opportunity to Say "Yes"

By Erica Williams, BSW

You've read about the numerous calls that we receive from the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) asking for our help. They call us because they need good homes to provide care for children who have to be removed from their biological families. Resources tend to be limited and they're hoping and praying that we don't say that dreaded phrase: "I'm sorry but we don't have a family that can help these children." With that response, we are essentially saying, "No. We can't help you this time, maybe next time."

Well, "next time" came around and Agape was able to contact one of our foster families. This family was new to fostering and had only been certified for about 2 weeks. They were eager to start and immediately said "yes" to helping a family in need. They said "yes" to helping a 2-year-old child who had biological parents with illegal substance abuse issues; a family that couldn't provide adequate care for their child; and had no extended family members that were able to help.

These foster parents welcomed that child into their home and involved the birth family in the child's care (medical visits, weekly phone calls and providing moral support). Unfortunately, the time came when it was decided that the birth parents would not be able to take care of this child. Although it had come this point, the birth mother was encouraged and hopeful about this family taking care of her son. This foster family decided that they had already said "yes" once to helping the family and would say "yes" again to make that child a permanent member of their family.

We know that all cases don't end in adoption. Some foster parents make significant impacts on the lives of children in their home, and then these children are able to be reunited with their birth families. Some children are adopted by other families. However, we need more families like this who are willing to say "yes" when Georgia Agape receives that call. Won't you consider taking the first step and saying "yes" to partnering with Georgia Agape and helping struggling families today?

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# In The Shadow of Your Gift

By Ken Dowdy, Director of Development

While reminiscing over a few old photos recently on Sibling's Day,

I thought, my, how time is marked by change. If you were to compare a photo of me from last week to this week, very little change is noticeable. But, place a few years in between the photos and the changes are more readily apparent. Some of those changes are to be celebrated, while others may be characterized best by words other than celebrated.

In one of the old photos, I noticed a small tree that today stands tall, casting a long shadow. I do not remember consciously thinking long ago how big the tree would eventually become or the impact on the yard. I did not then visualize the beauty that now stands as

a testimony to its development over time.

When you give in support of Georgia Agape, it is an act similar to planting and nurturing a small tree. The young children we serve are so small and in need of vigilant attention. Receiving them into care means addressing their needs for healthy development. For most, it goes well beyond better clothes, a bed to call their own, and nutritious meals. Agape families provide for the spiritual, social, and psychological wellness needed for their best development. Children grow knowing they are loved, wanted, and are an important part of the family landscape.

When you support the work of Agape you can know these children, removed from a chaotic life full of instability,

are brought into the active care of a Christian family. They grow up knowing they are loved, and as a result they learn to give love in healthy relationships. They can grow to become healthy productive adults, casting a long shadow of hope, a testimony to the community.

Your gifts, and the gifts of others, empower the growth and health of Agape. Over time your gift affects the maturing of each of our children and the development they experience. In this way, your gifts cast a long shadow. Explore ways to give online at <http://www.georgiaagape.org/ways-to-give>, or feel free to give me a call here at the office, 770-452-9995. And thank you for partnering directly with us in the growth and development of our Agape children and their families.



# Guilt

By John McLain, Director of Counseling

We have all experienced that feeling that we are responsible for hurting or offending someone. The 'guilt' we feel is in direct relation to our behavior. The closer we are to another person, the more likely we are to hurt them. We are all human and we say or do things that hurt one another. Sometimes by accident, other times by intention. 'Guilt' can be defined as: a cognitive realization and/or feeling of responsibility for some offense or wrong against another individual. We can even imagine that we are guilty even when we are not. What we do with the guilt we feel will have a lasting affect

on our lives.

There are many examples in scripture that illustrate one's response to guilt. Guilt can be good if we acknowledge our wrongs and seek to do better. It is not good if we respond negatively. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God when their guilt was apparent. King David, when confronted by Nathan the Prophet, showed remorse and repented. These examples, and others, show guilt is a powerful emotion that can influence how we behave after offending or hurting someone. We may be compelled to attempt to make things right with the other individual. If we turn inward, the guilt might grow into resentment and/or depression. There are even times that the guilt itself is unfounded, meaning we really do not have any responsibility for the offense or pain of another. This can also lead to inappropriate behavior.

Often there is the need to seek advice from a therapist. The first part of this discussion will center around the question, 'Is the guilt appropriate?' 'Do I hold responsibility for the offense or pain that was caused?' After that, the discussion will be to determine the appropriate response to the guilt you hold. The Counseling Program is here to help you deal with and handle your guilt appropriately. Give us a call to discuss your needs and how counseling will be helpful for you. Reach out to me if you'd like to discuss this at 770-452-9995 or [John@GeorgiaAgape.org](mailto:John@GeorgiaAgape.org).

## Ladies class of Snellville Church of Christ



Thank you for donating duffel bags and backpacks for our foster kids.

## Supporting New Families



Congratulations to Frazier and Tammy Black on the adoption of Grayson. Special Thank You to the Latner family who took great care of Grayson prior to the transition to his forever home.



To **Traci and Butch Wallace** from Grace Chapel for the donation of backpacks.

**Special Shout Out!**



To **Veronica Read** and Buford Church of Christ! Thank you for the infant/toddler start up kits and knitted blankets!

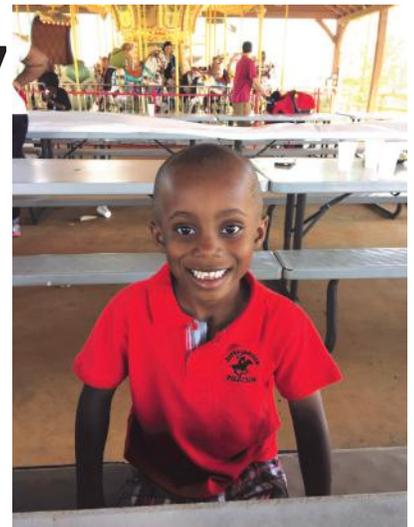
# WELCOME! New Agape Foster Parents

**James and Anita Marie Hutcheson** come to us from Campus Church of Christ.



## Foster Care Picnic 2017

We recently held our annual Foster Parent Appreciation Picnic on Saturday, April 22, 2017 at Rock Ranch. We had 12 foster families and over 35 children attend the event! We had an amazing time and enjoyed great fellowship, great fun and great food. Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate and show appreciation to our amazing foster families. Thanks to all that helped to make this year's event a great success.





# A Single Person's Role As Parent

By LaQuisha White, Director of Social Services

When individuals reach out to Agape to become foster or adoptive parents, they often come with a barrage of questions. After all, this is a new process for many and they wish to know the ins and outs, ups and downs, the good and the bad.

But, the question that we have received more often lately is, "Can I be a foster parent or adoptive parent if I'm single?"

The answer to this is very simply: Yes. Many of our current and former foster and adoptive parents are single and have done wonderful jobs caring for the children in their homes. In fact, the vast majority of our current, potential foster parents (foster homes "under study") are single women. And some of our greatest success stories of adoption from foster care included a single parent.

Agape works with the local Churches of Christ to recruit new foster and adoptive parents. Many times, I am in awe of the individuals who reach out to us saying that they "just want to help" or "want to have an impact". These are individuals who have found some room in their hearts and homes and are actually taking steps to care for children in need. And it's a wonderful thing to know that there are Christians out there who look past the potentially scary and

intimidating to make a difference in the life of a child. Ideally, anyone who becomes a foster parent has an established support system including their family, friends and church members, but many times we see friendships established in our training classes. We have been witnesses to several relationships developed between our potential foster and adoptive parents based on the common ground of being Christians who care for children. It doesn't matter if they are able to parent biologically, through foster care or through adoption. They just want to *parent*.

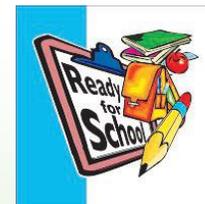
Georgia Agape needs more foster and adoptive parents. We need more Christians to reach out and ask questions. We need more singles and couples who are willing to dedicate their lives to parenting with the support of Agape. A child needs a system, a village, to ensure that he or she has the best possible chance of success in life. And all too often, many children never get that chance. We are using this article and the articles contained in this newsletter to reach out to those who may have been thinking about getting started, but have never taken the first step. Isn't it time you stepped out on faith? Reach out to us at 770-452-9995 or via our website at [www.GeorgiaAgape.org](http://www.GeorgiaAgape.org).

## Quality and Affordable Counseling Services Available

Georgia Agape is offering quality professional counseling services to extend our outreach to help those struggling with life's issues in our supporting churches and our community at large. We offer a sliding scale fee for those who need help paying for the counseling. Our fees range from \$30 to \$125 per session. John McLain, LMFT is our Director of Counseling offering **Marriage, Family, Individual and Pre-marital counseling**. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and an Approved Supervisor through AAMFT. Call our offices for more information, 770-452-9995.

## Fulltime and Respite Foster Parents Needed!

We need families who can serve as fulltime and "respite" foster parents. Fulltime foster parents are the primary care givers of the children. Respite foster parents are those who help out our fulltime foster parents by serving children for short periods of time when there is a need for a break. For information, call LaQuisha White at Agape, 770-452-9995.



## Wish List

Help send our foster kids back to school prepared. We are now collecting school supplies for the 2017-2018 school year!

- Notebooks
- Pens/pencils
- Glue sticks
- Pencil cases
- Notebook paper
- Crayons/markers
- Bookbags

Call us at 770-452-9995 to arrange delivery or pickup.

# Memorial & Honor Gifts

January 2, 2017 - April 15, 2017

## In Loving Memory

### ELIZABETH ARTHUR

Benita Brown

### CALEY MICHELLE ASHBY

Todd & Christy Ashby

### DON BAILEY

Michael & Alice Hinterschied

### CECILE PARTEN BALL

Paul Parten

### DAVID HALL BARTIK

Marjorie Sumner

### VIRGINIA BEHEL

Charlotte W. Falkner

Ray White

Scott White

### LANGLEY BLANZ

Charles & Janis Ruhl

### ELMER & WILLENE

### CHASTAIN

Jerry & Sandra Spiceland

### DOROTHY "DOT"

### CHURCHWELL

Anthony Armstrong

George & Martha Atkins

Phil & Cindy Bowers

Finis Herron

Virginia McKay

Shane & Crystal O'Neal

Jim Tucker

### PAT COX

Dennis Goss

### DON DAVIS

Aaron & Melodee Trenary

Jason & Amy Trenary

Jerry & Glenna Trenary

### BARBARA DILBECK

Don Dilbeck

### FRITZ & TERRY EHRHART

Charles Ehrhart

### JIMMY V ELLERS

Finis Herron

### R.J. "BUDDY" ELROD, JR.

Paul Allen

John & Jenny Burnette

Greg Colpo

Jody Davison

Thomas Dickens

Frank Hall

Teresa Hansen

Tom & Nancy Martin

Henry & Ann Price

Sophie Robinson

Charles & Janis Ruhl

David & Patricia Whitaker

Sue Wrather

### BETTY EVANS

Patricia Hawes

### MYRTLE ROSE GOSS

Dennis Goss

### DOROTHY "DOT" GLOVER

Betty Lamberth

James Penn

### LYNN GRAY

Jack & Betty Colston

### EULA C. GREENE

Ruth Bastin

Ed & Vickie Burns

De Queen Church of Christ

Finis Herron

North Tampa Church of

Christ

Shane & Crystal O'Neal

Jim Tucker

### GARY GREENWALD

Horace & Joyce Shelton

### OCIE HILL

Richard & Marylee

Drummond

Betty Lamberth

### MARGIE HORN

Ron & Shelby Horn

### JOYCE HUGHES

Melinda Flock

### MARY ELLA INGRAM

Betty Lamberth

### LOUISE "LOU" IRBY

John & Glenda Liddle

Tom & Nancy Martin

Virginia McKay

Charles & Janis Ruhl

Marjorie Sumner

### ANNICE HARRIS JOHNSON

Wilma Gibson

### JESSE LONG

David & Nancy Heffington

### JOHNNY MACKKEY

Bob & Vesta Brown

David & Minnie Chapman

Paul Ellison

David & Nancy Heffington

Mark & Calie Jackson

Jane M. Law

North Atlanta Church of

Christ

### CATHERINE McBRIDE

Tom & Carol McCoy

### BETTY McCLAIN

Jerrie Moon

### JANET McDOWELL

Ron & Shelby Horn

### LOFTON PHILLIPS

David & Nancy Heffington

### PEGGY PORTER

Friends of the Porter Family

Daoud & Shannon Shakkour

### DAVID RAINES

Irvin & Cassie Burnett

### PATRICIA "PAT" RAINES

Irvin & Cassie Burnett

Carlyle & Darlene Cain

Church of Christ at Chestnut

Mountain

Charles & Addie Cooley

Ron & Janet Hicks

Kirby & Brenda Spain

Pete & Tammie Sutter

### ANDI AMELIA REGISTER

Thomas & Rebecca

Stephens

### JOSEPH LEO ROBERTS, SR.

Hazel Roberts

### SHELLY ROBERTS

Bob & Vesta Brown

Randy & Mia Medlin

### JACK RUSH

Edward & Lynne O'Brien

Mary "Mac" Rush

### REAMER SHERWOOD

Dick & Bess Sumner

### SHERRY SHORTER

Marvin Pigg

### CODY SINGLETON

Doug & Terry Singleton

### BEVERLY "BEV" SKEEL

A. C. & Madelyne Watson

### F.H. SPICELAND, JR.

Jerry & Sandra Spiceland

### ERNEST L. SUMNER

Marjorie Sumner

### VIRGINIA THOMAS

Finis Herron

### RUTH ANNE TINO

Edward & Lynne O'Brien

### BEXLEY ANNE TOWNSON

Cory & Elizabeth Pritchard

### MADISON JOE TOWNSON

Cory & Elizabeth Pritchard

### MARY ALICE TOWNSON

Cory & Elizabeth Pritchard

### NINA TUCKER

Jim Tucker

### ELMER CALVIN UTLEY, JR.

Paul Ellison

Patricia Hawes

David & Nancy Heffington

Hazel Roberts

### LEO F. WELLS, JR.

Dick & Bess Sumner

### EVELYN WICKA

Edward & Lynne O'Brien

### THOMAS "BUD" WICKA

Edward & Lynne O'Brien

### BOBBY WRIGHT

Marvin & Barby Cox

## In Honor And Respect

*In Honor*

### Kevin & Teena Donnell

Linda Paganic

*In Honor*

### Eric Evans

David McCurley

*In Honor*

### Jeff & Sherriann Hicks

Randall Jackson

*In Honor & Appreciation*

### Tom & Donna Johnson

Julie Altenbach

*In Honor*

### Brody Mong

Daniel and Kandis Mong

*In Honor*

### John McLain

Julie Onstott

*In Honor*

### Cody & Nic Singleton

Doug & Terry Singleton

*In Honor & Appreciation*

### Todd & Theresa Tamer

Julie Altenbach

*In Honor & Appreciation*

### Doug & Mary Thomas

Julie Altenbach

*In Honor & Appreciation*

### Karel & Laura Van der

Mandle

Julie Altenbach

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Assistant to Executive Director

**LaQuisha A. White, LPC**  
Director of Social Services

**Ken Dowdy**  
Director of Development

**John M. McLain, LMFT**  
Director of Counseling

**Karen Anthony, MAOM**  
Director of Administration

**Kehli Higdon, LMSW**  
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**Kimberly Hardy-Johns**  
Social Services Secretary

**Cheri Raines**  
Executive Assistant for Advancement

**Dana Stanley**  
Accountant

**Sharon Stubbs**  
Social Services Secretary

**Kim Tang, LCSW**  
Maternity and Adoption Counselor

**Erica Williams, BSW**  
Child Placement Case Manager

### **Board of Directors:**

Allen Read, *Chair*, Greg Winnett, *Vice Chair*, Frank Allen, *Treasurer*, Rick McMaster, *Secretary*, Members: Jeff Bethel, Michelle Brechbuhl, Lisa Jamison, Will Melson, Steve Murdock, Julie Onstott Charlie Roberts and Larry H. Simmons.

### **Our Mission**

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.



3094 Mercer University Drive, Suite 200  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341



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## *From the Executive Director*

### **First 100 Days**



Racquelle Grant, MSW

#### **Matthew 6:19-20:**

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”*

**Remember, Online Giving is Available on our Website**  
[www.GeorgiaAgape.org](http://www.GeorgiaAgape.org)

I have just recently hit my first 100 days at Agape. It has been a busy few weeks. In just 4 months, I have had some amazing experiences. I have met many memorable Christians on my journey, met dozens of elders, been blessed by God's word at numerous congregations, and participated in ladies Bible studies and Retreats. I have attended events at all 3 professional organizations we hold memberships with and met staff from Church of Christ organizations across the country. I've visited the homes of many of our foster parents and had play-time and conversations with many of our foster children. Yet I am still just getting started.

One of the most memorable and standout experiences of my short time here happened just recently. I had the amazing opportunity to be a part of the creation of a family. Just a few weeks back, a birth mother contacted our agency after making the decision to make an adoption plan for her child. She was in the midst of labor and was asking us to come to the hospital. Within hours of delivery, there I stood in the hospital room with the birth mom, this precious newborn and two of my staff. I can't put into words the feeling of that moment. It was a solemn and serious, yet beautiful moment in

time. Fast forward just a few short weeks and there I stood again about to witness one of those moments that will always remain with me. In the Agape office, I was blessed and honored to watch as adoptive mom and dad laid eyes on their beautiful son for the very first time. Again, no words to describe the moment. To see the baby lock eyes with his parents for the very first time made my eyes water and my heart flutter. God answers prayers.

It has been a very busy yet rewarding first few months. So many of you have been overwhelmingly supportive and encouraging. I thank every one of you. Still, I have many more of you to meet and visit. During the next few months, I will be spending my time doing just that.

The very first month of our third quarter is National Foster Care Month. This is the time to take in the gravity of foster care in our country. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation, there are nearly 428,000 children in care in the United States on any given day. In Georgia alone, there are nearly 14,000 children in care today. The situation is grave to say the least. Will you consider becoming a foster parent? Call us at 770-452-9995.