

AGAPE *in* ACTION

SERVING FAMILIES THROUGH THE SEASONS OF LIFE

CHANGE BUT NO CHANGE

There are three constants in life ... change, choice and principles – Stephen Covey

The past year has certainly brought its share of change to AGAPE. With change comes new leadership, new ideas, new relationships, new challenges, a fresh look at old ways of doing things and a healthy respect for the leadership and direction forged by the past.

As AGAPE moves forward with change, we solicit your prayers that we make good choices and that we continue to hold steadfastly to the principles and values of helping children and families and all those who reach out for hope and healing. **There is much purpose and joy ahead for AGAPE** and for those who need our services. With your continued support, AGAPE will continue changing lives ... one person at a time!

"Be Strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you."

Did you know that in 1984 the average price of a home in the U.S. was \$72,400; that gas was \$1.10 a gallon and the price of a movie ticket was a mere \$2.50? Also in 1984 the CD Player was first introduced and a breakthrough in computers was the 3 1/2 inch floppy disk. Our favorite TV shows were Dynasty, Cheers and Hill Street Blues. Oh, and one more thing, in 1984, AGAPE unveiled a new logo. That's right; the current logo has served AGAPE well for 29 years.

In September of 2012, a survey of over 1000 supporters of AGAPE revealed that AGAPE needed to update its image with a new brand and logo identity. With this issue of AGAPE In ACTION we are excited to unveil the new AGAPE Logo!

What do you see when you look at the new AGAPE Logo?



AGAPE
Love Works

7 billion people on earth ... and everyone has a unique fingerprint? The fingerprint represents the uniqueness of each individual, created and formed in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Each individual is "fearfully and wonderfully" made (Psalm 139:14) and covered with the fingerprint of God who seeks a relationship with all those created in His image. The shape of the Cross represents God's unconditional love for us that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). There is no greater symbol to represent the unconditional love we have all received

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 AGAPE
Love Works

THE AGAPE MISSION

To serve the needs of
families and children in
Middle Tennessee
through adoption, foster care,
unplanned pregnancy support
services and faith-based
counseling and psychological
services with an
unconditional, agape love.

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published quarterly by
AGAPE, Inc.

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Check us out
on the web at
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AGAPE IN ACTION

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than the symbol of the Cross. Because of that love, we belong to God's family, sons and daughters and brothers and sisters and we are called, commanded, to reach out to seek and save those outside the family of God while strengthening our spiritual family to do good works of love (Eph. 2:10).

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me"

So, why Love Works?

Because it does! The love of the Cross works! Love not only begins the healing of the broken and wounded but it gives hope to those who feel their lives are hopeless. Agape is what we received from Christ when we didn't deserve it and agape is what those who need AGAPE need. Love is work! What AGAPE does every day is the "roll up your sleeves, get dirty and messy" work of unconditional love. It's helping those who are suffering from addictions, fears and pain, anger, abuse and damaged relationships. It's demonstrated by taking neglected or abused children into your home that are not your children and giving them a safe and loving place while their mom and/or dad try to put their lives back together. It is holding that mom and dad accountable for their actions. It's helping a birth mom make a courageous choice to give up her baby for adoption rather than abortion. Works of love, love works ... it's what AGAPE has done for nearly five decades and will continue to do with your prayers and your support.

Well now you know! Thanks for your support! We need it more than ever! We pledge to be good stewards of the resources God provides AGAPE, and we pledge to continue the work and ministry of AGAPE that you have so faithfully and generously supported through the years. **Yes, a lot has changed at AGAPE ... but really, nothing has changed.**

Donate to AGAPE online at www.agapenashville.org

AGAPE NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that **Chandler Means**, formerly Director of Development and Interim Executive Director, has accepted the position as Executive Director of AGAPE. Chandler has years of experience working with children and families and is the ideal person to lead AGAPE as we move toward increased levels of service.

Prior to joining AGAPE's staff, Chandler was at Greater Atlanta Christian School for five years where he served as Director of Development of Operations and was also the head girls basketball coach. Before that, he served as Healthcare Executive and Consultant for HKA & Associates, MDA & Associates, Pinnacle Healthgroup, and HCA. He is

a native Floridian and an alumni of Christian Home and Bible School in Mt. Dora, Florida and a 1982 graduate of Lipscomb University. While in Atlanta, Chandler served on the Board of Georgia AGAPE through which he and his wife Sheri became foster parents and have cared for fifteen foster children over the last nine and one-half years. They have been members of the Campus Church of Christ in Norcross, Georgia for over twenty years where he served as a Sunday school teacher, worship leader and deacon.

Chandler and Sheri are the parents of three daughters: Tori, who is a women's softball coach at York College in York, Nebraska and is married to Levi Rath; Carli, who is a recent graduate of Harding University and lives in Nashville; and Chaney, who is a Junior at Western Kentucky University and is a member of the Lady Hilltopper basketball team.

"We are truly blessed to have someone with Chandler's heart for the work of AGAPE and his experience to follow in the footsteps of past leaders such as we had in Howard Justiss and Tom Burton," said 2013 Board Chair John Robinson "We believe he is the leader we need to ensure that the legacy lives on."



AGAPE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Holly McCloud graduated from ACU with degrees in Public Relations and Spanish. She and her husband, TJ, lived and worked in the developing world for several years. They founded and directed an outreach center for street children in a fishing village in the Dominican Republic. Upon returning to Nashville in 2008, Holly began working with the Tennessee Office of Refugees as the Director of Interpreter Services. She is currently having a blast staying home with the-most-adorable-one-year-old-twins-in-the-world, Ian & Isla. TJ works in the Missions Department at Lipscomb University. TJ and Holly are greatly blessed to be a part of the Otter Creek Church of Christ family. Holly is honored to serve on the board of AGAPE, and looks forward to partnering together in ministry and service.

Kirk Davidson is a graduate of York College and Harding University and is married to Melissa Davidson. Kirk & Melissa have been married for 20 years and have 4 beautiful children: Ali (15), Ty (11), Kyle (7), and Hiatt (1). Hiatt is adopted from Ethiopia and has been home with them right at 1 year. Kirk & Melissa have a passion for children and serving God by building a strong family. The family attends Brentwood Hills Church of Christ. Kirk has a background in technology and healthcare solutions. He recently started working for Hewlett-Packard after 17 years at Microsoft Corporation.



Butch Stinson is currently retired after a 25-year career in healthcare development and management. Butch received his undergraduate degree from Lipscomb University and his graduate degree from Vanderbilt University. Butch and his wife of 39 years, Angela Smith Stinson, have two children, Melissa Joy and Jonathan Carlton. A deacon at the Hillsboro congregation, Butch has served on the AGAPE Board for several terms from 1996 to 2010 and has served as chairman three times. Butch has also served on the AGAPE Kids Classic Golf Tournament committee since its inception in 2000. Both of his children are adopted.



Beverly James is a Financial Educator and Counselor for a non-profit organization in Nashville, Tennessee. In 2009, she obtained a Master Degree of Education in Adult Education from Tennessee State University. She is a member of Schrader Lane Church of Christ since 1997. She is a mother of a wonderful eight year old boy who was adopted through AGAPE in 2005. Ms. James states that AGAPE has been a pillar in the community for strengthening individuals and families and she would be honored to be a member of the Board to continue its legacy of Christian counseling, foster care and adoption. Beverly believes that every child deserves to be loved and every family torn by divorce or life's mishaps should have an opportunity to mend through education and caring counselors by an organization like AGAPE.



HIGHLIGHTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Very Special Thanks to the Glen and Dorothy Stillwell Charitable Trust for their donation of funds that were appropriated for an AED (Automatic Electronic Defibrillator), a device that is used in conjunction with CPR that enhances the patient's chances of survival following a heart attack or cardiac arrest.



New Dates/New Location
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**AGAPE KIDS CLASSIC
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The Governor's Club

For more information visit
www.agapekidsclassic.com
or contact Chandler Means at
cmeans@agapenashville.org



HELPING OUR CHILDREN THROUGH TRAUMA

By Nathan Jernigan, M.A., LSPE, LPC/MHSP and
Diana Crawford, M.S.S.W., LCSW



Today's news headlines can be mind-boggling and surreal and when we as parents see tragedies like the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut a few months ago, we wonder how a parent could possibly help a child through this trauma. Here are some tips:

TALK WITH THEM ABOUT IT.

Often, a first choice is to simply attempt to shield our children completely from the terrible things that happen in the world. Though this idea may feel very good, it usually is not practical and often not possible. It is almost a certainty that your child will overhear a conversation, hear a news blurb on the TV or radio or have a classmate talk to them about it. It would be better coming from you. Contrary to what many people believe, talk does not perpetuate anxiety - it helps to reduce it.

TELL THEM THE TRUTH.

This part is even more difficult for parents. In an age appropriate way, avoiding the gory details when possible, tell them the whole story. Consider what each child needs to know in order to understand what happened. With so much inaccurate information dispersed by media at the onset of a story, it's important not to speculate. However, withholding key information only decreases a child's sense of safety and trust in you. Children know factually or instinctively when they don't get the whole story from you. To this point, I (Nathan) want to tell you a brief story of a family I worked with (these people were never actually clients which allows me to tell this story). The family had experienced a murder/suicide. Three grandchildren, age's preschool to grade school, had been told the absolute minimum about how grandma and grandpa died suddenly. At my suggestion, each set of parents went to their children and, as delicately as they could, gave them the details (that grandpa killed grandma and then himself). To the surprise of the parents, all three children felt relieved. Though these cousins had not communicated, all three had concluded that their grandparents had been murdered and also had wrongly concluded that the killer(s) were still out there and now targeting them and the rest of their family.

BE OPEN TO CONTINUING DIALOG.

Like telling our pre-teens about sex, lots of parents prefer a talk that happens once and is never to be brought up again. This will not work well. Children digest this information gradually and will have random thoughts, questions and concerns. Let them know you are available to talk and especially to listen. Remember it is okay for parents not to have all the answers.

LET THEM KNOW THEY ARE LOVED AND VALUABLE BY BEING AVAILABLE TO THEM.

Your presence is huge during a time like this. Meaningful touch helps to dispel fear. So, hold a hand, stroke their hair, let them sit in your lap, kiss them, wrap your arms around them. Be present emotionally. Listen. Tell them you love them and that their Creator loves them even more.

TALK ABOUT AND EXHIBIT GOD'S LOVE.

Pray for and with your children. Pray together about the people who were directly affected by the tragedy. While prayer is certainly effective and important, if your children are prompted to do something else for the victims, explore how that might work. Even if we cannot help those particular people, we might be able to honor them by helping others who need us. Remind them that while some people do evil things, God loves us and is always close to us. While you cannot promise them that nothing bad will ever happen to them, reassure them that they are as safe today as they were before the incident. Model your own belief in God's love. Perhaps you need to be reminded of this yourself because your moods, thoughts and actions directly influence theirs. Kids tend to absorb us. The truth of God's love flows through you to them.

KEEP YOUR FAMILY ROUTINE.

Routine provides stability and security for children. While it might be tempting to allow your child to sleep with you or stay home from school due to anxiety (yours and theirs), it's better help them acknowledge and face their fears. Limit exposure of all family members to news stories about the tragedy. Young children do not need to see this on television at all; so be very diligent to prevent this from happening. Other restrictions on exposure to the news should be based on the child's maturity and sensitivity.

BOTTOM LINE.

Be present and involved with your kids especially in moments like these.

NEW COUNSELORS ADDED TO AGAPE STAFF



Kim Anderson, M.A., joined AGAPE in the fall of 2012 after a move from south Texas. She earned her Master's degree in Professional Counseling from Liberty University in 2012 and is currently pursuing licensure as a professional counselor with a designation as a mental health service provider. Kim works with a variety of clients, including couples, women, adolescents, and children. Kim is

also a certified life coach, working with women and couples toward their life goals.



Karen Brown, M.A., began with AGAPE as an intern in March 2012 and joined the counseling staff in December 2012. She earned her master's degree in Professional Counseling from Trevecca Nazarene University in December 2012. She is currently pursuing licensure as a professional counselor with mental health service provider designation (LPC/MHSP). Karen enjoys working with adult individuals and couples

struggling with life issues and transitions. Karen is trained in EMDR, Level I & II, EFT, and Prepare and Enrich.



Rosa Chavez, M.A., LPC/MHSP joined AGAPE in February of 2013. She earned her Master's degree in Professional Counseling from Central Michigan University in 2005 and worked as a Licensed Professional Counselor in Michigan before moving to Nashville. She holds a License as a Professional Counselor with a Mental Health Services Provider designation from the State of Tennessee. Rosa enjoys working with adults, teens, and children.

Her clinical interests include depression, anxiety disorders, stress management, marital/relationship issues, grief and loss issues, and adjustment issues. Additionally, she is a bilingual, Spanish-speaking counselor and has experience working with multicultural issues.



Trina Winters, M.S. earned her master's degree in Professional Counseling from Lipscomb University in 2012 and is currently pursuing licensure as a Professional Counselor with the mental health service provider designation. Her passion for sharing counseling knowledge with parents stems from the wealth of personal experience she has earned through her 20 years of marriage to her husband, John, and the many blessings brought to her by her 3

children, Jordyn, Alexis, and Daniel. She enjoys working with individuals across the lifespan.

**SAVE
THE DATE!**
MAY 9 & 10, 2013

Caring Connections

Equipping Professional Counselors and Pastoral Care Providers

Professional counselors and pastoral care providers, the 2013 Caring Connections conference will be held May 9 and 10 on the Lipscomb University campus. This unique conference is designed to bring together in one place both those who work in pastoral care roles and those who work in professional counseling. As in 2012, there will be a wide variety of programs and presenters. Continuing education credits will be available. For more details and to register go to www.caringconnectionsconference.com.





THIRTY-SEVEN?

What does it mean to you? A Google search brings up: a Fashion Line Based in Dubai; a restaurant in The Hague; a Christian Pop Punk Band; *Thirty Seven Qualities Conducive to Enlightenment*; and a book, *37 Days of Peril, Lost in the Yellowstone* by Truman Evert. Thirty-seven in AGAPE terms represents thirty-seven souls – thirty-seven children who found safety, security, caring, sharing, and needs met in Christian foster homes. Thirty-seven children came to AGAPE in 2012 when their parents were in crisis and they had nowhere else to go. Those thirty-seven children came with parents who also needed caring, sharing, guidance, and mentoring as they decided how they could best care for their children. Of those Thirty-seven, twenty-five returned home to their parents, found permanency through adoption, or went on to college. Twelve ended 2012 still in AGAPE's care, working toward goals of reunification or adoption.

Although it does not seem like a large number, each of those souls matter and each would have faced homelessness and worse if they had not connected with AGAPE. Partnerships forged between AGAPE, Christian foster parents who open their homes

and hearts to welcome the children, birth parents who love their children and want them to be safe, and local churches determine the outcome for each of those precious children, souls in need of protection.

Seven couples and one single mom are currently investing in PATH training and in the home study process in order to be approved as foster or adoptive parents for older children, sibling groups, and special needs children. Their faith and desire to make a difference in lives brought them to the conclusion that they have much to give to children and that they are willing to take the steps necessary to connect with children at risk. If you share their conviction that each soul matters and are ready to take steps

necessary put into action the call to serve found in James 1:27, contact Jeff Fox, Mary Corwin, or Judy Rister. If you are not ready to become a foster or adoptive parent, you can be involved through financial contributions enabling AGAPE to take care of all of the children for whom funds can be raised. Either way you decide to give, your participation will be a blessing to the children and will bring blessings on you as well.

LEARNING TO LOVE "TO CARE FOR KIDS WOULD BE A GREAT PRIVILEGE!"

In March, eight families completed their PATH training and will begin the home study process. When asked what prompted their interest in fostering, Melissa and Thomas Wells offered this explanation: "Before we were married, we agreed that our family would consist of both biological and adopted children. When we ran into trouble on the biological side, we decided that we would begin the adoption process. Our research and prayers led us to (the) foster/adoption (approach) and a chance encounter with a former AGAPE foster mom led us to AGAPE."

Kelly and Timothy Cox added: "To care for kids would be a great privilege! Whatever we can do to help is what we want to do!" Todd and Adrian said: "AGAPE has provided us a path to providing a loving and nurturing home to a child who really needs one – temporary or permanent."

PATH (Parents as Tender Healers) is a curriculum designed for prospective resource parents who wish to provide foster care for



children, relative or non-relative, or who wish to adopt children who are in the foster care system.

Seven informative sessions are lead by our case managers who utilize a variety of media to encourage self assessment of strengths and suitability to the task. One of the sessions includes a panel of young people who were in the foster care system at some point in their lives and a panel of active foster and adoptive parents. Participants are able to understand

foster care from the perspective of children who had to adjust to the changes in their lives brought on by their removal from their families. The expert panel also provides an opportunity to learn from the experiences and points of view of those who have cared for the children.

If you are interested in learning more about our PATH trainings, you can find information on our website: www.agapenashville.org or you can call one of our case managers at 615.781.3000.



AGAPE

Love Works

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