



Agape Villages
Foster Family Agency

The Love Letter

"Continuing at Agape Villages the work we began at Sierra Children's Home."

April, 2014

Healing Hearts and Building Families

Volume 56, No. 2

"Agape Villages Always has the Best Homes"

In February, our placement coordinator, Dave W. Roach, received a call from Contra Costa County's placement unit asking us if we had a home for four children ranging in age from newborn to 6 years. They were a sibling group and the county wanted the children to be placed together. The children were living from hotel room to hotel room. Their mother had just been arrested for drug use. There were no relatives to care for the children.

Dave immediately began looking to see if we had an available foster home. He made a call to one of our families. Within a few minutes of receiving the referral call, we found a family! Our foster mother, who has been serving with our agency for 14 years, said, *"We would love to take the children!"* They were placed in this home the next day. Our foster parents had already adopted two children, but were hoping for more. In fact, they had hoped for a large sibling group! What a blessing!

One aspect of what made this placement such a good fit is that the foster mother is a stay-at-home mother and had the time to support the four children. The placement worker from Contra

County made the following statement after completing the placement: *"Agape Villages always has the best homes and I know the children are in great care because of the history of the positive feedback that I received from the county's social workers."* Dave Roach felt so relieved and excited that he had this home on our availability list and could say "yes" to these children.



Since being placed, all the children are making progress. The little ones are gaining weight and the older ones are feeling safe for the first time in their lives. The oldest boy told social worker Roach during one of his weekly home visits that *"It is nice to have my own bed that I can say it is my bed."*

We will meet these children's needs and try to work with their mother so that she can make the necessary improvements in her life.



Stanley and Debra Winters

Investing in Children is Worth it!

By Stanley Winters, Elder and Minister, Parkway Church of Christ, Sacramento

"Religion that God the Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" James 1:27

When Ms. Kleyn asked me to write an article regarding children, foster care, etc., I first was inclined to decline saying I was too busy and/or had too many important things to do. Now, I am very glad I accepted.

When you look at the word orphan, we see "a child whose parents are dead or has been abandoned." If we broaden the definition, we will see neglected or abused children. What are the reasons orphans, adoptions and foster care are not on many people's radar? I believe, like me, many are too busy to

think of helping someone else. We may think of our own children and the investment, time and energy we have put into them. Are we happy with the return? We may remember church members and youth groups, the time, money, energies spent, and looking back we may be wondering, was it worth it?

I would like you to look at these disenfranchised children differently. To see ourselves in these often poor, neglected, lost, abused children. Was there a time when we were without God, lost, poor (economically, spiritually, emotionally, etc.) and someone loved us, showed genuine care for us, spent time with us, picked us up, directed us until we were able to get up on our feet? Looking back, we see God's hand every step of the way. Let's all remember today that someone helped us so we can help others. The question at the table for the ones that have been helped is, was it worth it for you?

Children are Important and Worth our Investment!

First-time Experience Very Touching

By Bangon Badial, Office Manager, San Ramon office

One evening as I was getting ready to head home for the day, I received a call from a foster mother asking if she could come by and pick up some clothes for her foster children. Without hesitation, I said, "Of course!"



As all 4 children walked in the office and proceeded to the donation room, one of the boys caught my eye. He was so well-mannered and well-behaved. He was 8 years old. He came to me and said, "Can

I pick out anything I want from here? I really need some new shoes."

After a few minutes, he found a pair of shoes. He was so excited and took off the old shoes he had on and wore the new ones right away! He said to me, "Thank you so much, I never had new shoes before!" The look on his face was priceless! He was very happy and excited! The shoes were donated by Sleep Train.

Update on Little Boy in Body Cast

In our April 2013 newsletter one year ago, we wrote about a story of a 3 year old boy who had come to us with injuries requiring him to be in a body cast from his ankles to his chest. This is a situation in which this boy was initially placed with one of our foster homes when he was just one year old and stayed in that home for two years. Then, a family member surfaced and, due to California law, he had to go live with

them. However, this is where he received his injuries.

Agape Social Worker Corey Borgen reports he has now been back with our foster family for the past year. He's been out of his body cast for six months and is doing great! He loves giving hugs and running around the house...yes, running after having a broken femur and multiple fractures! He is getting more movement in his legs.

When he first came to us, he was pretty much non-verbal. He can now count numbers in both English and Spanish. He is getting back to normal in his development. Our foster family has begun the process of adopting him and we hope that will occur soon!

Corey and all of us are greatly encouraged by stories that include such positive outcomes when the beginnings are so difficult. We hope you are too!

"As we express gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." John F. Kennedy



Volunteer Spotlight

Volunteers are Priceless!

If you are at an Agape event in the Sacramento area, chances are you will see Gloria Robertson there. Not just there, but in the middle of things. And if you are a friend of Gloria's, you will probably be there also, because Gloria "encourages" her friends to get involved. Gloria has helped us at foster parent recruiting events and with our various fundraisers including dinners and Applebee's flapjack breakfasts and with the "Habitat" playhouses.

Gloria is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She is retired from the federal government and has been very active with various civic groups over the years. Gloria is currently serving on the Agape Board of Directors and is a member of the Antelope Church of Christ. Gloria is a fun person and very passionate about her commitment to the Lord and to disadvantaged children. Gloria, you are a blessing.



Gloria Robertson

We Need More Volunteers!

If you would like to be a volunteer, please let us know via our website: www.agapevillages.org and use the Support button or call us at 866-922-4273.

We Need Foster Parents

— Every Child Deserves a Home —

We regularly receive calls about children needing foster care. We serve children who've been abused, neglected and mistreated in ways they need to be removed from their own families for their protection. These are children who've been thrust into the foster care system, who depend on the mercy of others for their care.

We need families for children of all ages, especially children 10 years and older and sibling groups. Consider **today** how you can be used to care for children.

For more information on foster parenting, call the Agape Villages office at 800-566-2225.





Make it Personal...A Great Motivation!

By Hank Lawson, Agape Villages Board Chair

In the book of John, chapter 20, verses 18-24, we read where Jesus appeared to the apostles after his crucifixion. One can only imagine the excitement the apostles felt. However, Thomas was not present.

One might think that Thomas would be filled with joy at the news at what the other apostles saw. However, he did NOT believe them. He said, "unless I see in his hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (verse 25)

One week later, when Jesus appeared, He invited Thomas to "Reach here with your finger and see my hands." Thomas was convinced and proclaimed Jesus as HIS LORD AND HIS GOD.

Part of what this story reveals is that having a personal experience can be helpful in understanding the reality of a situation. This can relate to the work we do at Agape Villages. We can ask, "What is it that would help more people to understand

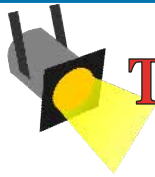
the importance of the work we do and join with us?" We would probably all agree that we become more passionate when something is personal.

This is probably one reason why Jesus gave us what we call the "Golden Rule." He said in Matthew 7:12, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." This makes things personal, doesn't it?

Applying this to the children and families we serve at Agape, consider if you were one of them. What if you were a child who was in need of a home? How would you want others to help you?

We so appreciate all of you who believe in what we are doing in caring for the children that cannot care for themselves. Your prayers, your volunteering, your financial support makes our job here at Agape Villages possible. WE NEED ALL OF YOU serving side-by-side for the GOOD that can be accomplished. May God be glorified!

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Grateful Words of Encouragement From our Donors

- I am glad we can do this little bit to help the kids.
- Enclosed is a gift to help with the very good work you are doing there.
- Blessings to all your good work.
- So touched by the story of the 4 siblings who were hungry. Here is my gift.
- I always enjoy the Love Letter.
- We appreciate all you do to improve the lives of so many children.
- I continue to pray for the children and for you and your team. Blessings always.
- Love reading the reports of the children you are helping
- Thank you for all you do to help kids. You are in our thoughts and prayers.
- It's a privilege to be a little part in your work, in God's work.
- Love and prayers.



Farewell, Friend to Children

By Janet Kleyn, President and CEO

Even months later, it is hard to believe that **Dick Blythe** is gone. Dick passed

now grown and some with families of their own, who had been in youth groups he led, came back and paid their respects at the service. My two sons made it a priority to attend the service, remembering the impact he had on their lives.

Dick was my boss at Agape Villages for 10 years. Whenever we would discuss a particular problem or issue, he would always ask, "What is best for the child?" That answer would direct what we would do, what was in the best interest of the child.

We mourn Dick, but we are happy that he is home with the Lord. And we are thankful for the impact that he had on the lives of thousands of children, children who needed someone to stand up for them

away in January of this year. Dick served as President and CEO of Agape Villages (formerly Sierra Children's Home) for 23 years before retiring in 2008 to focus on other interests and passions. Dick's legacy, however, is not in the many administrative positions he held over the years in various child-care agencies. Dick's legacy is in the lives of all the children he impacted over the years.

At Dick's memorial service, his daughters talked of his influence on their lives. The priority he gave to their needs and interests, even if it was inconvenient for him. Many children,



Pictured above are left to right: San Ramon Councilman Scott Perkins, Janet Kleyn, San Ramon Mayor Bill Clarkson and Bangon Badial (Agape San Ramon Office Manager). San Ramon is a city of 75,000 residents and is where the Agape Villages headquarters is located. Janet and Bangon had an opportunity to visit with the Mayor and Councilman about the work of Agape at a recent event.

Renewing Hope

Aristotle once said, "Hope is a waking dream." We can relate this thought to the hope we provide to children and youth served at Agape Villages. Just think of some of the situations from which children come to us. Many have come from dysfunctional homes where they have endured abuse, neglect and other forms of mistreatment which has required them to be removed from their homes for their protection.

Restoring
hope



The hope for a better life and a better future for these children awakens for them. When we take children into our foster care program, our foster families wrap their loving arms around them. Children are now in a safe place where their needs will be met as we work diligently to secure a stable permanent future home for them. Our work often includes efforts to help their families who have struggled, but need our compassion and help. We encourage everyone to be hope givers!

Our Professional Service Statistics

Current Year Statistics (From 1/1/14 to 4/4/14)

- 92 – Foster Children Served Year-to-Date
- 18 – New Children in Care this Year
- 76 – Foster Children Currently in Care
- 70 – Certified Foster Families

Since We Began in 1958

- 5,840 – Foster Children Served
 - ◆ 4,000 – Through Sierra Children's Home
 - ◆ 1,840 – Through Agape Villages
- 435 – Foster Families who have Partnered with us in Foster Care



Donate a Vehicle Today!

Our car donation program provides vital support to our work. To donate your car (or trucks, trailers, boats and RVs) call **Car Program** toll-free, seven days a week at **1-800-513-6560**. Or go to our website:

www.AgapeVillages.org

Grocery Shopping for Agape

The following grocery stores have a donation program which will send a percentage of the total receipt to Agape: **SaveMart, Lucky, Food Maxx, Food 4 Less, Ralph's and Food Co.** Call us at 866-922-4273 and we will send the special card to use.

We received \$1,444 in first quarter of 2014.

Agape's Support Makes All the Difference!

By Allison Rangel, Agape Foster Parent

In January of 2013 Dave Roach, our Agape Social Worker, called me about a placement for a 13-month-old little girl. At that time, we had already had a 3 month old and 20 month old in our home. We said "yes!"

When we received this little girl, she was scared, terrified, and screamed most of the time. She came with nothing. Agape was on the ball and the next day dropped off a load of supplies. During the next five months, with prayer, Agape's help, and our amazing Agape social worker, we watched this little girl turn from fear, panic, and anger to loving, nurturing, joyful, and funny.

We were on the path to adopt her when her family members stepped up to the plate to adopt her. After the due diligence was done, this little girl was removed from our home and

placed with her relatives. However, this lasted only for three months. Unexpectedly, we received another call that they would like to place this little girl back in our home with the intention of adoption. Once again, Agape was amazingly on the ball. They helped make the transition of her back into our home go very smoothly by outfitting her, providing age appropriate toys, and most important to her – a blanket.

We could not be the foster parents we are for these children without Agape. We could not provide for these children like we need to without the love and support from Agape. The foster children that have come into our home have all felt the love of their Agape workers and they have returned that love back to them. From our experience, Agape continues to go above and beyond to support their foster families. Thank you, Agape!

We are Thankful...

Board Service

Rick Nappier has recently resigned from his service on our Board of Directors due to other personal commitments at this time. We appreciate his caring heart and service to the children and families we serve!

Applebee's Fundraiser

Applebee's Flapjack fundraising breakfast in Gold River (Sacramento area) on March 8 raised \$1400! Thank you, **Sacramento Advisory Council** for leading this event. Pictured at right are happy customers, Barbara and Ezra Curry.



San Pablo Avenue Church of Christ

Agape thanks the saints at the San Pablo Avenue Church of Christ for their help with a recent mailing. Volunteers are such a help, and mean that more dollars can go to support the children and their families.

Another Playhouse

Another playhouse donated by Habitat for Humanity raised \$300 for Agape Villages. The happy winners were Mr. and Mrs. Johnson of Sacramento. Pictured are Gloria Robertson (board member) and Mr. Johnson. The impact of these ongoing gifts continues to grow!



Pie Auction

What is a pie worth? Well, to someone, at a recent pie auction,

since the pie was dedicated to Agape, it was worth \$100! That's a very valuable pie and we are thankful!

Corporate and Grant Gifts

We received gifts from the following businesses: **BTS Consulting Group Ltd**, and **Headsets.com**. We also received a grant from the **Heffernan Group Foundation** for \$2,500. We are thankful for these gifts.

SLEEP TRAIN[®] Foster Kids

Agape youth attended the Sacramento Kings game on March 1 at the Sleep Train Arena, as guests of Sleep Train. All the shouting, cheering and laughs made for a great memory. The fact that the Kings lost did not make any difference at all! Thank you, Sleep Train, for all that you do for our children and youth. You are the best!

Mother's Day



Mother's Day is May 11th. Make a gift in honor of your mother for Mother's Day and Agape will send a touching letter to her with very special thoughts of love and appreciation.

Memorial & Honor Gifts

January 4, 2014 through April 9, 2014

In Loving Memory

ERLINDA ACOSTA

Gene & Mary Copeland
Hank Lawson

BERNICE ALLEN

Karen Hickox

ROY BARTLETT

Gene & Mary Copeland
Loyce Foster
Janet Kleyn
Hank Lawson
Christopher Nunes
Daniel & Desirae Núñez
Gregg & Stephanie Pino
Barbara Whitesell

DICK BLYTHE

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Norman & Becky Cole
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Lloyd & Rhonda Fisher
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Gregg & Stephanie Pino
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BETTY HAGER

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Jason Russell

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HAZEL HICKMAN

Monte & Sharon Corley
Betty McGoldrick

KATHLEEN HOUSE-SHARP

John & Nadine Greff
The Children of Kathleen
House-Sharp

Janet Kleyn

Hank Lawson

Daniel & Desirae Núñez

Gregg & Stephanie Pino

CHRIS HUNTER

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Janice Arnett

FRED KLEYN

Duane Canby
Beverly Kleyn
Janet Kleyn

HERB KLEYN

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Hank Lawson
Jo Lawson
Ray & Celia Lawson

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Jeff & Donna Hannon

OLETA SIPES

Co-Workers of Desi Sipes
John & Nadine Greff
Janet Kleyn
Hank Lawson

DR. JIMMIE SMITH

Doris Smith

MILDRED TUCKER

Orval & Diane Welch

LINDA ELIZABETH TREAT VAUGHAN

Karen Treat

BEN WILLIAMS

Orval & Diane Welch

Some memories are so precious that they are wrapped in love and stored safely in our hearts forever.

Memorial and Honor Gifts – Very Meaningful to Those Honored

It is good to be reminded that memorial and honor gifts touch the hearts of those honored. This makes these gifts doubly meaningful as they not only pay tribute to loved ones, they also bless the lives of the children and families we serve. We send out a nice letter of encouragement for each gift we receive. Everyone is grateful!

PLEASE REMEMBER
AGAPE VILLAGES
IN YOUR
**WILL OR
ESTATE PLAN.**



For more information:
jkleyn@AgapeVillages.org

MEMORIAL OR HONOR GIFT

The enclosed gift of \$_____ is given in Memory of, For Mother's Day or in Honor of:

PLEASE NOTIFY:

Name _____

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City/State/Zip _____

Relationship to deceased/honoree: _____

Email address: _____

Children are Worth our Investment!

Agape Villages • 3160 Crow Canyon Place, Suite 120 • San Ramon, CA 94583

In Honor And Respect

Happy Birthday, Mom and Dad!
KERRY & AL AVEDIKIAN
Michael & Rena Avedikian

With Thankfulness for Your
Service to Agape Villages

JOANN BEATTIE
John & Nadine Greff
Janet Kleyn
Hank Lawson
Daniel & Desirae Núñez
Gregg & Stephanie Pino

Happy Birthday, Daughter
KARI CARPER
Jim & Mona Carper

Congratulations on Your
Marriage

JIM & BONNIE GREFF
John & Nadine Greff
Janet Kleyn

In Honor of Many Faithful Years
of Christian Service

PEGGY HENRY
Beverly Kleyn
Janet Kleyn

With Love and Respect
HERMAN HOUSE
Wyba Nienstadt

A Great Dad!
HANK LAWSON
Jo Lawson
Ray & Celia Lawson

With Honor and Respect
ELVINA LUI
Louis Dagen & Grace Chen

With Honor and Respect
WAYNE MEISSNER
Wyba Nienstadt

With Honor and Respect
MEGAN TUGGLE
Wyba Nienstadt

Love You, Sister!
ALMA WILLIAMSON
Wyba Nienstadt

Special Project Helps Agape

Last winter, Krisly Jensen, an 8-year-old Taekwondo student was challenged to provide community service as part of her Leadership class. Agape Villages Social Worker Virginia Jensen, who is also Krisly's mother, proposed a project of gathering winter gear for the foster youth of Agape Villages.



Krisly Jensen with some of the items.

Krisly accepted the challenge! The goal was set at 100 gloves and a donation box was

placed at Yee's ATA Black Belt Academy. Each day that Krisly attended a class, she saw the donation box filling with gloves, hats, scarves, and socks. In total 225 pairs of gloves, 79 hats, 13 scarves, and 144 pairs of socks were collected. Thanks Krisly and all who participated!

So Long...We Wish Her the Best!

Joann Beattie, our Director of Resources and Development, has recently accepted the position of Executive Director at the Manteca Chamber of Commerce. We are so thankful to Joann for her 7 years of faithful service to Agape. Joann has worked tirelessly in recruiting foster families, securing grants and leading our fundraising efforts in Manteca. We will miss her, but we are happy for Joann and wish her the very best in this new and challenging endeavor. It's always good to have a friend at the chamber!



Cheryl's Corner

Activities and Programs Help Agape and our Youth

It's already getting to be that time of the year for Agape's annual picnic/training! The date is June 7th. This is a great opportunity for the families and staff to have a fun-filled afternoon, listening to live music, having a burger, and learning more about our Enrichment Program and what Agape has to offer our families and children.



Cheryl Youngblood, LCSW

Agape Villages'
Program Director

Our Girls' Group is making and selling decorative, body mist fragrances and air fresheners for \$5.00. They have a variety of wonderful scents, such as: wild orange, lemon, passion fruit, peppermint and many more. If you are interested in purchasing one of our handmade, organic, scented delights please let us know.

Our social workers just finished an informative training on self care and next month will be attending another training. Our social workers receive 36 hours of mental health training a year. We go above and beyond the State requirements as we believe our kids and families deserve the best!

Our Living Skills Program (LSP) is an inventive program geared for assisting youth ages 15-21 with transitional living skills. This quarter the LSP group will be doing a workshop on Youth Employment Opportunity Program (YEOP). This educational course will assist the youth with resume writing, interviewing for employment, information about dress code, and office etiquette. The workshop will be essential in assisting youth with interacting on a professional basis with one another, but more importantly they will be taught office skills, writing skills, conversational skills and work ethics.

If you would like to volunteer your time or make a donation, just let us know!

New Face of Agape in Manteca!

Nina Payne has recently been appointed as our **Outreach Coordinator** and will be responsible for recruiting foster parents and fundraising in the Central Valley. Nina began with Agape as a volunteer and most recently has been our Certification Coordinator where she worked with foster families in the certification process. Welcome to this new position, Nina! You have a big heart for kids and Agape and we know you will be great!



Nina Payne

Agape Villages

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925-866-3020

866-922-4273

www.AgapeVillages.org

Admin. Staff:

Janet Kleyn
President

Cheryl Youngblood, LCSW
Program Director

Nina Payne
Outreach Coordinator

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Gloria Robertson
Don Thomas

Our Mission

“Agape Villages mobilizes community resources to provide quality homes, innovative solutions and the highest of professional services to disadvantaged children and their families to meet their needs, maximize their potential and lead toward a better and brighter future.”

55 Years of Caring Through Sierra Children's Home/Agape Villages

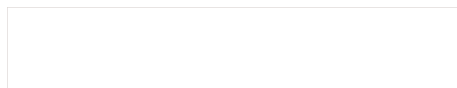


Agape Villages Foster Family Agency

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Janet Kleyn, President

Matthew 5:14, 16

“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven..”

**Remember, Online
Giving is Available on
our Website**

www.AgapeVillages.org

From the President

Each One Counts...We Need You!

Recently I saw one of our former Agape foster children. Zakaria is now a beautiful young woman, poised, self-confident, accomplished. I am thankful for Patrick and Janet Mitchell who so lovingly invited her into their family and their hearts.

People sometimes ask me, “Why do you need to raise money?” Agape relies on fundraising to provide the quality of program our youth need and deserve. This includes Master’s level social workers to work with the children. We have enrichment programs such as music, dance and sports, which are fun but also therapeutic. We recruit, train and then support the best possible foster parents.

Our social workers are in the foster home every week to be sure the child and family are supported with what they need. We provide intensive training which goes above and beyond minimum requirements. We want our children to have the best!

You can be assured that every dollar contributed will be put to good use. Each child, like Zakaria, is important and each donation – large or small – is important. We can’t do our work with abused and neglected children and youth without generous, compassionate donors.

We have each been given so much from God, both in this life and in the promise we have in store for us after this life. We need to give back...God calls us all to serve others.

There are many ways to serve at Agape – as a much-needed loving foster parent, as a volunteer, as a donor. Join with us in this outreach as we respond to a great need right here in our communities, in our own back yards. **We need you! At Agape, Each One Counts!**

