

FALL 2021

AGAPE
of North Carolina

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ONE CHILD AT A TIME

OUR MISSION AGAPE of NC exists to provide professional social services as a compassionate Christian outreach to strengthen children and families.

OUR VALUES Children deserve Christian families, care and compassion, excellence in the provision of services, best interest of clients, financial integrity, responsible stewardship and ethical Christian standards.

THE NUMBERS AS OF AUGUST 2021

20 Foster Children
in Care



24 Licensed
Foster Homes

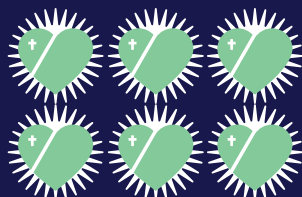


10 Foster Families
in Training

2 Anticipated Adoptions



6 Completed 2021 Adoptions



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Foster. Adopt. Support. LOVE.

WHY & HOW THEY SERVE

Jessica Hildebrand,
Summer Intern from Campbell University



“Serving with AGAPE of North Carolina has been the biggest blessing I’ve ever been given,” says Karen Blakeslee.



Karen embodies AGAPE of NC’s mission with a passion to better the lives of children in need. She has worked on AGAPE’s Board of Directors for a few years now, currently serving as Board Chair. Karen has also recently trained and been sworn into the Guardian ad Litem program.

Karen’s previous career as a teacher opened her eyes to the heart-breaking number of kids having problems at home. She sought out ways within the classroom to provide stability in these kid’s lives. Foster parents, as she saw, were not limited to a single school year though – they were present as long as

the child needed them.

As a mother of six children and working a full-time job, Karen knew she didn’t have the time to be a foster parent. She instead found other ways to serve. Her position on AGAPE’s Board of Directors allows her to collaborate with others striving to reach more and more children through faith and love.

Volunteering in the Guardian ad Litem program has opened yet another door for Karen’s desire to help. Karen expressed what a powerful role GALs have and looks forward to being that figure in a child’s life.

Joe Hall has served on AGAPE’s Board of Directors for many years (including previous stints in the role of Board Chair) and has been a foster parent himself. Joe and his wife adopted four siblings, all of whom they fostered, and have two biological children as well. After seeing what love and guidance can do for his own adopted children, Joe puts a lot of effort into making that possible for as many children as he can.

The Guardian ad Litem program has been one outlet for Joe to do just that. He continues to love working directly with children and finding the homes that they deserve. Volunteering as a GAL has given Joe the opportunity to continue that personal involvement

while also spending time with his family and being as a JROTC instructor.

Joe extends his service further through AGAPE of NC. As a Board member, he works hard to make sure the agency’s goals are always being met and adapted. On top of his Board duties, Joe travels to churches and presents AGAPE’s mission in hopes of growing the organization even more.



Joe has gone above and beyond in his activities on behalf of AGAPE of NC and expresses not only his love for the organization, but his appreciation for every single person that is a part of it!

TOGETHER FACING THE CHALLENGE

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



Tina Gill,
AGAPE of NC Social Worker II

“Due to the unpredictable nature of foster care, I find it extremely beneficial to fill my toolbox with tools way ahead of the game instead of waiting until I’m treading water, trying to keep myself and everybody else in the house afloat.”

For more information about fostering and/or trauma informed care, contact

Kia Carter, AGAPE of NC’s
Director of Foster Parent
Recruitment & Retention

kcarter@agapeofnc.org
919-673-7816

I don’t know about you, but I’m a self-proclaimed box-checker, a planner. I like to know what’s coming, when it’s coming, and how long it’s going to last. Enter foster care . . . where absolutely none of those things are prevalent.

Due to the unpredictable nature of foster care, I find it extremely beneficial to fill my toolbox with tools way ahead of the game instead of waiting until I’m treading water, trying to keep myself and everybody else in the house afloat.

Staff at AGAPE of NC all recently went through a Duke Endowment Training program called, “Together Facing the Challenge,” a toolbox for trauma informed care. We’re now going to require all of AGAPE’s foster parents to go through this training as well. It’s our prayer that these tools will not just keep you afloat, but allow your families to thrive.

We don’t know what we don’t know. Thus, shedding some light, talking together, sharing, and equipping each other to help these children -- even if it’s just being reminded that you are not alone in this struggle -- is an encouragement at the very least.

I know what you’re thinking. “One more training.” “One more thing to add to the calendar.” Believe me, I get it. Besides my work with AGAPE

families, my husband and I have been foster parents, ourselves, for six years. (We have been taking a little break this summer, after our last placement moved on May 4th, leaving our cup empty for this brief time.)


I understand how, when you’re in the thick of it, it’s hard not to take it personally.

It’s hard not to see certain behavior as anything but defiance. However, the more we understand about trauma -- and its effects on the body and brain -- we can begin to see the behavior as a language and begin to help these children heal.

AGAPE Staff are all excited to walk through this training “together” with you because your stories are not my stories; your experiences will be different from others in the group.

Yet, it’s in our community that we’ll find strength and the ability to face the challenge of loving children from hard places.





"We knew adoption was always going to be part of our family building from the beginning."

MEET THE PATTON FAMILY A/K/A TRIPLE J

Emily Ziberna, Writer & Social Media Guru for Loop Creative

Jessica Patton and her husband, Jake, are both educators in Raleigh who saw first-hand the immense need for foster and adoptive parents in their very own community.

"The fact is there are kids out there who need forever homes - and we can provide that."

When the couple first began their journey into foster care and adoption, they didn't jump in quickly. "We talked to a lot of families who had adopted before or

who had fostered. We researched - for almost a year - our different options to find the right fit for us." To them, foster care seemed ideal since they strongly believed that family reunification should be the main goal.

Once they knew what their path would be, someone at their church highly recommended reaching out to AGAPE of NC. Due to the self-paced nature of AGAPE's training and how individualized the process was, they knew right away they were in the right place. "It helped us to feel supported and as prepared as possible to enter foster parenthood."

Looking back to the beginning of their journey, Jessica shared that before they began fostering she had some concerns about fostering an older child.

"We had the misled belief that it would be more difficult to bond with an older child and that there would be more challenges." As she now knows, the challenges are not more difficult but just different.



"There are so many great things about bonding with a child who can communicate with you!"

Making the choice to welcome an older child into their home was what led them to Joseline.

After over a year in their home, Jessica and Jake are thrilled to share they added another "J" to the family! Joseline, age 8, was officially adopted by June 2021. While adopting during a



pandemic was a memorable experience, they are overjoyed that the result was becoming this kind, curious, and outgoing girl's parents. They also acknowledge that their gain was a loss for Joseline and her birth family.

“Adoption can be such a dichotomy. It is filled with both joy and sorrow, beauty and brokenness, gain and loss. It has been a very emotional journey.”

When pressed for advice for others considering fostering, Jessica's main suggestion is to stay open to all possibilities. “Having an open heart and mind can change everything. You never know what God has in store for you.” Preparation is also key. She recommends educating yourself on transracial parenting and hair care before a child enters your home, building your trauma-informed tool-kit, and always remembering to view children's behaviors with a trauma-informed lens. But, she concedes, “You are never truly ready for parenthood. Learn to be present for this moment and the joys it brings and focus a little less on what lies ahead.”

The other piece of advice she stresses is to lean on your community. “Our AGAPE of NC social worker, Kia Carter, has been the most amazing support



system! We were able to build our relationship with her as we went through training, and she really got to know us and our strengths and needs. She has helped guide us through every step of the process and is always available when we have questions or don't understand something.”

When Jessica and Jake met Joseline, Joseline shared something that always stuck with them. “She said once she was adopted, she wanted to have a pool party.” So, last month Jessica and Jake did just that and threw Joseline an adoption party where they were surrounded by all the people who had been on this journey with them. “My favorite part of fostering? Being able to love on our girl and to provide the safety and support that she needs.”

DON'T MISS A THING!

Now that you're reading about AGAPE Families, like the Pattons (a/k/a Triple J), and AGAPE Board Members in our quarterly newsletters, did you know we also share AGAPE stories & more in our blog posts -- and you can have our weekly blog posts delivered directly to your email Inbox each Friday?! Just go to AGAPE's News webpage and sign up under DON'T MISS A THING!

SIGN UP FOR BLOG POSTS

Even though you're already receiving AGAPE's newsletters, announcements, donor thank you notes, and other communications via email, you'll need to sign up under DON'T MISS A THING! to have blogs automatically sent to you from our website.

And you DON'T want to MISS A THING because we'll soon be posting an interview with AGAPE Foster Parents, Coleman & Taylor Dove! The Doves, who've been fostering since 2018, chose to foster with AGAPE of NC out of their desire to work with an agency with spiritual focus and guidance. They also want new foster parents to know two things . . . So DON'T MISS A THING! to find out what those two things are!

Summer of 2021

BACKPACK BLESSINGS!

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF AGAPE OF NC SUPPORTERS, OUR BACKPACK MINISTRY HAS BEEN ABLE TO SHARE SOME ESSENTIAL ITEMS WITH KIDS AND FAMILIES IN NEED OVER THE SUMMER.

In June, Volunteer Backpack Coordinator, Tatum Fitzgerald, informed AGAPE that: “We stuffed Tween/Teen backpacks today and delivered them to Mt. Vernon Middle School! We also stuffed some of AGAPE’s yellow bags with toothpaste, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, loofahs, shampoos, lotions, and deodorants for Raleigh Church of Christ’s ministry at a Women’s Shelter. We packed a little over 60 bags! Here’s a picture of the kiddos who volunteered!” Some toothbrushes & toothpaste were also given to Raleigh Church of Christ’s food pantry, as well!



Last May, AGAPE delivered 45 “First Night” bags to InterAct and they were grateful for the assist. They wrote, “InterAct’s mission for over 40 years has been dedicated to ending the cycle of domestic and sexual violence in Wake County. Often when survivors and their children are fleeing violence, they arrive with just the clothes on their backs. Many times, they have truly left everything behind. InterAct is so grateful to AGAPE of NC for the donation of ‘First Night’ backpacks which will provide some much-needed comfort on a child’s first night in our shelter and in the days that follow.”



Then in August, AGAPE was again blessed to be able to contribute the remaining backpack donations:

- School supplies to Mt. Vernon Middle School;
- Blankets, hair care products & toiletries to Raleigh Church of Christ for their Women’s Shelter ministry; and
- Stuffed animals & small blankets to **Isabelle’s Stuffed Animal Drive**, a collection & delivery service begun by Isabelle Murphy five years ago. This year Isabelle expanded her service to include other volunteers from **Franklin Academy** for their Senior Service Project. The objective is to provide comfort items to kids in foster care and also to first responders (e.g. police officers, firefighters, EMT’s, shelters & safe houses, etc.) to give to youngsters who’ve experienced traumatic events.



TRIBUTE GIFTS

June through August 2021



In Honor of the 100th Birthday of

Ms. Sally Turner

Given Anonymously

In Memory of

Mr. Walter "Jack" Hester

Given Anonymously

In Memory of

Mr. Otto Conley

Given By Mr. and Mrs. Kent Massey
and an Anonymous Donor

In Memory of

Mr. Freddie Holland

Given Anonymously

In Memory of

Mr. Alton Howard

Given By Mrs. Clarice Holland

WAYS TO GIVE

- + You can donate by TEXT to: (919) 335-4685
Just type in: GIVE or PLEDGE
- + You can give online! You can set up a one-time or monthly donation.
- + You can mail us a check! Made out to AGAPE of NC, and mailed to P.O. Box 985 Wake Forest, NC 27588
- + Set up your AmazonSmile account! Search for "AGAPE of NC" and select "AGAPE of NC / Association for Guidance Aid Placement and Empathy of NC Inc."
- + Please consider becoming an AGAPE of NC Volunteer.
- + Follow, like and share our posts on Social Media (Facebook and Instagram)

See our website at www.agapeofnc.org
for more information!

Thank you

BREAKING NEWS!!!

Our annual Change for Life fundraising campaign will have a new name and a whole new look! Stay tuned for more details and be sure to follow us on social media to keep up-to-date on our new "Worth It" campaign.



CHANGE FOR LIFE



Foster , Adopt , Support . LOVE



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