

Agape Strong

“AGAPE STRONG”FOREVER MORE!

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Welcome to 2015.....and thanks for being a part of our 25 year mission of service!

It has been nearly three years since Agape began our journey of ‘a great new beginning’. Rather than reflecting on the challenges of what lead us down this road, I prefer to reflect on the Strength-Finders Based foundation we have established and promoted here at the agency.

Agape co-worker’s have come together during this journey to promote our blended strengths of **Developer, Belief, Empathy, Responsibility, and Positivity.** As many have heard me say when asked how do we handle ‘problems’ here at Agape, “we no longer perceive them as ‘problems’; we perceive them a ‘challenges’, that will be addressed and overcome through the use of our collective strengths”.

Our Leadership team here

at Agape is charged with the responsibility of driving this strength based initiative, and each of them has done an amazing job of doing just this!

Staying “**positive, professional, and progressive**” has led to some unbelievable opportunities for us. The past year we had the most successful fundraiser in our history, received financial grants at a record level, and developed new relationships which have led to continued opportunities to serve those entrusted to our care.

Geographically, we have expanded our service delivery area offering additional services to neighboring counties. Further we have been recognized by state and local governments, and other state agencies for the success we have had in serving youth and families.

As we enter this year I want to thank the

businesses and organizations who have and continue to financially support us which has allowed us expand upon our outreach to those we serve. Your generosity is sincerely appreciated, as is your trust in our being good stewards of the monies provided to us.

From our Leadership team of Rodger, Ann, Fran, and Sandie, our Board of Directors, our co-workers here at Agape, our foster families, the families of our reunification services program, and the amazing group of youth who we serve, we are and will continue to be “AGAPE STRONG”...FOREVER MORE!!

Look-out!!!!.....as we believe every day, ”*the more we serve, the more opportunities we are given to serve*”.....which means more great opportunities are on our horizon!!!!



Our Mission:

“Providing youth and families with supportive, nurturing services that encourage each other to reach their full potential.”

Dear Agape Families



"I am so excited that our first annual foster care conference is just around the corner and I look forward to spending a whole day with about 160 of you having a day of training, activities, fun, and of course.....GOOD FOOD!"

While I may be a little late let me still wish you all a very Happy New Year and thank you all for a very successful 2014. We had some great firsts at Agape in 2014 that included an agency trip to the Columbus Zoo in August, a group tutoring night, our 25th Anniversary Celebration in March, and an amazing Christmas Party/Carnival at the Miami Valley Golf Club in December. These are just a few of the events that took place for our children and families and we appreciate each and every one of you who participated.

We also had a very successful year through our service to families as we saw 4 youth emancipate successfully, 4 kids move from foster care to adoptive status in their new forever family, 11 youth finalize adoptions with their new Agape family and 23 youth reunify with a birth family member. What all that means is that you all managed to provide permanency to 42 young people who terminated from care and that does not include the great work you have done to keep another 50 or so children stable in their placement in your home.

Since my arrival two and a half years ago I continue to be amazed at the commitment and dedication that our Agape Families have shown to the youth placed in your homes. You truly are amazing and YES!!!! You are making a difference even when it does not feel like it to you.

Before I go just let me say that I am so excited that our first annual foster care conference is just around the corner and I look forward to spending a whole day with about 160 of you having a day of training, activities, fun, and of course.....GOOD FOOD!! Please check to see if any spots are still available as there is limited space. If you miss out this time for any reason, please keep your eyes open as we hope to do this again in the fall.

I appreciate you all so much and as always; please remember that I am available at any time if you have comments or concerns or if you just want to encourage me by giving me a great report about your worker. You may reach me at 439-4406 ext. 37 or email me at rstauffer@agapeforyouth.com

Rodger

On January 17th, Agape for Youth held our first Life Book Event of 2015, coordinated and hosted by Agape Youth Specialist Victoria Mueller.

At the event, Foster Parents were able to gather idea from one another and complete pages to put in their youth's life books. Ms. Savage expressed, "It was a great time to fellowship and complete pages. I was not sure what to expect, but I am glad that I attended and cannot wait for the next time." Ms. Savage was able to bounce ideas off the other foster parents who attended.

The Life Book Event's purpose is to allow foster parents to take a couple of hours to update their youths' life books and gather ideas from other foster parents. There are many supplies to choose from and many ideas on how to help make the life books. Sometimes it can be easy to focus on pictures and forget to write about the youth's feelings or favorite things.

The youth that came to this event enjoyed picking out their pages and telling Victoria about their favorite things. During the event, foster parents were able to engage with their youth and make the time productive and focus on the task at hand.

The next Life Book Event will be on April 11th at 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.



Waiting on a Forever Family - Meet Laura & Dwayne

Laura is a very sweet, helpful 15 year old who loves animals. She loves drawing, coloring, and doing puzzles. She enjoys helping make dinner, crafts, singing, and reading. She is very attached to her brother.

Dwayne is very smart, and loves to help around the house. He enjoys playing his Nintendo DS. Laura and Dwayne love to camp and ride bikes, and would fit right with a very active family that loves the outdoors!

Families interested in adopting Laura will need to have a good understanding of the needs of children with cognitive delays and patience as she and Dwayne make the transition from foster care to adoption.

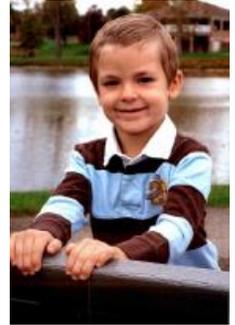
If you are interested in learning more about Laura and Dwayne please contact

Sandy Altman, Hancock County Job and Family Services

7814 County Road 140, P.O. Box 270, Findlay OH 45839

PHONE 419-429-8001

Email Sandra.Altman@jfs.ohio.gov



Recruitment Roundtable

What an exciting time it has been in the area of recruiting. We have licensed 7 new families since July of 2014 many of whom have youth already. We are running some awesome radio ads on K99.1 so if you have not heard them yet, listen to K99.1 in the mornings and you may just hear our ad. We have also kicked off our new recruiting contest that was announced at the Foster Parent Meeting. We are excited to report that Chris and Nicky Dabney were our first quarterly winners and were awarded a \$100.00 gift card to Wal-Mart. Wouldn't you like to win a \$100.00 gift card, I know I would. Nicky and Chris have been

a blessing since joining our team and when asked why they referred a potential parent to our agency they said;

"Because we love your agency because you are all truly supportive of the kids and the foster parents. Everyone is friendly and helpful and Agape provides wonderful resources."- Nicky

"You guys also include the children in all the events from the Christmas party to Santa's secret workshop to the community blessings room. That's what it's about is the children." – Chris

We are all encouraged by their kind words and we

hope that all of you will join the Dabney's in lifting our agency up to your friends, family and acquaintances and seek to refer people to Agape to be foster parents. Please remember that we also provide a \$400.00 bonus if the family you refer finishes the licensing process. That money is paid \$200 at Licensure and \$200 when the new family receives their first placement. This referral bonus does not apply to transfers but only those families who go through the licensing process with Agape for Youth.

We look forward to continued success in 2015.

Contributed by Rodger Stauffer, Foster Care Manager

"we love your agency because you are all truly supportive of the kids and the foster parents."



Contributed by Rodger Stauffer, Foster Care Manager

You are invited to attend the Agape for Youth, Inc. 2015 Foster Care Conference for Families & Youth

IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS IN THE MIDST OF STRUGGLES

Presented by: Dr. Pamela Gulley

Monday, February 16, 2015

In this innovative training you will learn how to recognize your strengths and the ways to use them to turn challenges into opportunity, especially in regards to parenting.

The afternoon session will address taking this perspective of identifying Strengths and assist you in utilizing the same process with the youth you are parenting.

There are times when everyone becomes overwhelmed by the negative behaviors in our home that we struggle to see the strengths that are present in our youth.

You will learn how to look for the strengths of each of the children in your home and ways you can nurture the development of those strengths.

Please Call Valerie Baker to register yourself and your children at **937-439-4406 ext. 13**. All attendees for the conference, Parents and Children must be registered by **Monday, February 9, 2015**

Education Updates

We are now half way through the school year. Most youth should be done with their second quarter and start receiving their grade cards. Please remember to get your youths' report cards to your Youth Specialist as soon as you can.

For first quarter, we were able to give out 31 gift cards to McDonald's for youth who had all C's and above on their report cards.

Again, if you or anyone you know may be interest in becoming a tutor through Agape for Youth, please contact me. We have been able to provide quite a number of tutoring hours so far this school year, but are limited by our resource of tutors and their areas of expertise. This would allow for youth to receive a short-term ongoing tutoring for subjects that they may be struggling with academically.

In December we were able to have

our first ever Tutoring Night at Agape for Youth. We had it open up to all Middle School and High School level students. We had four youth attend the event, and they were able to receive one-on-one tutoring assistance with their academics. Youth were able to be paired up with different tutors who were able to work with them based on their specific needs.

Many thanks to Nicholas Kaufman, who has made his National Honor Society students available to come in a provide tutoring in a group setting.

Mark your calendars for **February 9, 2015 from 6:30pm-8:00pm**. This will be our second Tutoring Night of the school year and will be open to any school-aged youth who are able to attend. We will provide food and senior National Honor Society students will come in to provide tutoring services. If you are

interested in your youth attending this event, please inform your Youth Specialist as soon as possible. Make sure to include information about what subject area your youth may be struggling in to work on during this event. Also, have your youth bring homework and textbooks to the event to have something to reference and work on. This is so the information can be relayed to the tutors, so that they can prepare, as well as I will be providing some flashcards and other resources, as needed. We will also be providing food for youth who are able to attend.

Please feel free to contact me with any education questions or concerns at nclark@agapeforyouth.com or 937-439-4406 ext. 18.

Contributed by Nicole Clark, Youth Specialist/Education Coordinator

Please Remember

- Register Early
- Arrive between 8:00AM - 8:15AM to check-in, have breakfast as a family and get your children settled in their classrooms.
- Bring diapers, formula, bottles and baby food if appropriate for your child.
- Please make sure to pick-up your children and any items they brought with them at the close of the conference.

"Many thanks to Nicholas Kaufman, who has made his National Honor Society students available to come in a provide tutoring in a group setting"



Mark your calendars for February 9, 2015 from 6:30pm-8:00pm for the next Tutoring Night

Upcoming Training Opportunities

We are off and running in a new year! Here we are in the blink of an eye and it's the end of January! Wow! There was a great turnout for training on Thursday, January 22, 2015 and we want to thank all of the Agape Foster Parents, Staff and Reunification Services families who were able to attend.

There are several great trainings coming up and you will not want to miss them.

Saturday January 31, 2015 for with Bonnie Bazill-Davis "The Power of New Shoes: Healing the Tired Feet of Runaway Youth" from 9:00am-12:00 noon and "Teen Dating Violence: Recognition & Response" from 1:00pm – 4:00pm. Join us for the morning

session and learn what drives many of our youth to run and makes it hard for them to stop and during the afternoon session discover the way to recognize if your youth was in a destructive relationship and how to respond.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the training on Friday, February 6, 2015 from 1:00pm-4:00pm "Gangs, Cliques, and Crews" with Anthony President. The gang culture is more popular than ever and youth of all socio-economic and ethnic groups are emulating the behaviors and ideology of the most notorious national street gangs. Youth in foster care may be more drawn to gangs due to socio-emotional issues that stem from

being in foster care such as low self-esteem, identity issues, feeling different, and trust issues with adults. This class explores the reasons why kids join gangs and some strategies to keep kids out of gangs. This training is for both families and Agape staff.

Anthony President will also be presenting two trainings on Saturday February 7, 2015 at 9:00am "Dynamic Discipline for Kids in Care" and at 1:00pm "Bouncing Back from Drama & Trauma: Helping Teens Build Resiliency"

Please review your training calendar for additional upcoming classes and make sure to call and register to attend.

Contributed by Carmella



Mark your calendar and plan to attend the training on Friday, February 6, 2015 from 1:00pm-4:00pm "Gangs, Cliques, and Crews" with Anthony President. This class explores the reasons why kids join gangs and some strategies to keep kids out of gangs.

The Community Blessings Room

For more than 10 years Agape has had a partnership with Good 360, a national non-profit organization that partners non-profits with local and national donor companies. Locally, we are fortunate to be partnered with four Bed, Bath and Beyond stores, resulting in more than \$211,000 in donated merchandise during the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

These donations are made available to the youth and families served through the programs at Agape, as well as individuals being served through the Office of Ex-Offender Re-entry, NOVA House, and numerous youth who have emancipated from care at Agape.

To visit the Community Blessings Room please contact your Agape Youth Specialist or Reunification Services Specialist and schedule a time to do through the donations that are available.

For Agape families who do not currently have an Agape Specialist assigned to their home, please contact the office to set an appointment.

AYC – Agape Youth Council

AYC Schedule

January 20th
February 17th
March 17th
April – Community Service Project
May – 19th
June 16th – (3:30pm)
June 24th – Pottery Painting
July 21st – (3:30pm)
August 18th
September 15th
September Community Service
October 20th
November 17th
December Community Service –
Santa’s Secret Workshop
December 15th
**All meetings are from 6:30pm – 8:30pm
unless noted otherwise**

We’re looking forward to another great year with AYC!

Our schedule has been set for the year, and we are looking forward to all the opportunities 2015 has in store for us.

Our first meeting was a fun Game Night, where we had a nice meal and played “Game of Things”. If you’ve never played, it is definitely a game that will bond you with your friends & family.

For our February 17, 2015 meeting, we plan on doing a movie night. Along with spending fun times together, we also incorporate Life

Skills & Community Service into our curriculum.

This March, we’ll be talking about Nutrition & Health and in April we’ll be doing a community service project!

If you have a youth age 13 years of age and older who is interested in participating in AYC and being a part of a community of lively teens, please contact Tiffani at 937-439-4406 ext. 10 for more information.

Contributed by Tiffani Stuart, AYC Facilitator

Focus on the Rules

Let’s review child care rules because we are all busy there are times when we cannot supervise foster children, but we must insure that the youth in care are properly supervised.

Alternative Care Arrangements

- (A) A foster caregiver shall be responsible for the full-time care of foster child. This does not prohibit both foster caregivers in the case of a couple, co-parents or a single foster caregiver from working outside the home.
- (B) Alternative arrangements, by someone other than the foster caregiver, shall be approved by the recommending agency.
- (C) A foster caregiver shall have prior written approval by the recommending agency of a plan for the care of a foster child in emergency situations.
- (D) A foster caregiver shall have prior written approval by the recommending agency of a statement for each foster child specifying whether or not the foster child may be left unattended and, if so, for what period of time.
- (E) When a foster caregiver arranges for a foster child to be cared for in a child care center or by a type A or type B provider that is required to be certified according to Chapter 5101:2-12, 5101:2-13, or 5101:2-14. The foster caregiver shall provide documentation to the recommending agency that the child care center or type A or type B child care provider is currently licensed. If a foster caregiver arranges for a foster child to be cared for in a child care center or by a type A or type B child care provider, the foster care giver shall:
- (1) Ensure the child care center, type A or type B child care provider is licensed or certified according to ODJFS rules
 - (2) Provide documentation to the recommending agency that the child care center, type A or type B child care provider is currently licensed or certified.
- (F) When a foster caregiver of a specialized foster home requests respite care, it shall be provided in accordance with paragraph (A)(16 11) of rule 5101:2-5-13 .

We encourage your adherence to Agape for Youth Policy and the ODJFS rules as they are in place for the protection of our youth in care as well as our foster families. If you need guidance on any of the above rules just call 937-439-4406 ext. 12 or email bbridges@agapeforyouth.com

Thanks for all you do to help keep everyone safe.

Contributed by Bruce Bridges, Licensing & Compliance/Intake Supervisor



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Find us online at:
www.agapeforyouth.com

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Thank You!



Thank you to Brandon McKinney and the BJ Kids91 Foundations for the evening of Christmas shopping for families served through the Reunification Services program. Your generosity and dedication to the families and children in our local community are greatly appreciated.

We want to thank everyone who participated in the 2014 Giving Trees program. As a result of your generosity, more than 160 children served through the Foster Care and Reunification Services programs were able to experience a memorable Christmas.



New Feature Article

This year we are introducing a new feature to our quarterly newsletter, "Meet our Board of Directors". Each newsletter will spotlight a member of the Board. We hope you enjoy getting to know our Board of Directors.

Meet Our Board of Directors

We would like to introduce you to the Agape for Youth, Inc. Board of Directors President, Randy Pavlak, Fire Chief of Sugarcreek Township and President of Air System Division of PRD Corp.

Randy has been a member of the Agape Board since March 2001 and has been dedicated to the mission and vision of the agency and our serving of families and children throughout our community.

Through his leadership as President of the Board, we have seen the Board of Directors grow in number and experienced an increase of participation in agency events and activities.

In his spare time Randy plays baseball with the Miami Valley 48's in the Roy Hobbs Baseball League and travels throughout the country competing in tournaments with his father and his sons. Randy also enjoys coaching youth sports in baseball, basketball and football.

Randy, his wife Christina and their children are actively involved in the outreach programs and activities at Agape and we greatly appreciate their support of the agency and they are dedicated to our "Serving Families, Youth and Each Other with Excellence."