



Finding permanency for vulnerable and orphaned children

AGAPE

ENHANCED FOSTER CARE: KEEPING SIBLINGS TOGETHER

Page 2



**SOMEONE
FORGOT TO
TELL JOEY**

Page 5

**COMMUNITY
+ FAITH
PARTNERSHIP**

Page 3

**HONORING
BIRTH
CULTURE**

Page 5



ENHANCED FOSTER CARE: KEEPING SIBLINGS TOGETHER

By Jimmy Dobbs, Executive Director

Imagine that you are 5 years old and a social worker has just picked you up from your home. And as you drive away she tells you that you're gonna have to live with strangers until mom can make it safe for you at home again. You are in shock and overwhelmed with emotions: anger, fear, powerlessness, hopelessness. But do you know what would make it worse . . . a LOT worse? Also being separated from your brothers and sisters, ages 1, 4, 7 and 11, who are going to **different** foster homes. Just imagine.

A special focus for Agape is keeping large sibling groups together in a foster home through Enhanced Foster Care (EFC). About half a dozen families have committed to partnering with Agape to

NOTE from Jimmy:

You hear lots of folks talking about being “partners in ministry”, but never sure exactly what that means. This issue will highlight some of the many and varied partnerships with Agape and how the Father is at work in them. You'll see many ways to get involved and be a blessing to our children!

keep siblings together.

- Vanessa Colley became a teacher years ago because she wanted to make a difference in children's lives but retired when diagnosed with MS. She decided foster care was the open door to still making a difference in their lives. That was 16 years ago.

As she cared for children in her home, God revealed that her calling was to keep large sibling groups together. So she has. And she says, “The children keep **me** going.”

- Jeremy and Leslie Faulkner have traveled a different path from Vanessa. A young couple, no children, thinking about adopting, but beginning to feel God calling them to be foster parents. So they became traditional foster parents, serving children and small sibling groups. Over time, God equipped them to serve children of all ages and large sibling groups. They are **so glad** they've opened their home and hearts to the children He sent them.

Leslie says foster care has led them to an amazing place she never imagined. “Wouldn't change a thing.”

Permanency for the children is

always the priority for foster care, whether through returning to the birth family or adoption. The Faulkners are adopting the four siblings in their home; and Vanessa is in the process to adopt the six in her home, ages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 years old.

Enhanced Foster Care does not typically lead to an adoption plan, but it always has a major impact on the children's lives as it gives them security and emotional safety when they have lost all that is known or familiar.

Agape is looking for other families who will consider opening their homes and hearts. We offer training and support, which is vital for families to be successful, but the starting point is the family being led by the Spirit to say, “Tell me more.”

Montgomery

Buddy Renahan ■ 334-272-9466
brenahan@agapeforchildren.org

Birmingham

Natalie Chambers ■ 205-733-9755
nchambers@agapeforchildren.org

Wiregrass

Linda Sanders ■ 334-393-1990
lsanders@agapeforchildren.org

THE SHEPPARD FAMILY



Andre and Jody Sheppard's path to adoption had many challenging twists and unexpected turns, ending in what Jody describes as a "wonderful experience." The Sheppards had previous personal and professional experience with foster care and adoption, but they learned a lot, especially about birth moms and birth families, during their own adoption process.

On placement day, Jody remembers feeling nervous driving to Agape, but all that disappeared on seeing, holding, and getting home with tiny Aubrey and sharing their joy with friends and family, especially their many relatives in Florida. Aubrey's parents describe her as a "perfect baby" with a smiling disposition that draws attention everywhere she goes.

The Sheppards, Aubrey's grandparents, and other relatives all gathered on December 22, 2015 to witness and celebrate the finalization of Aubrey's adoption!

COMMUNITY + FAITH = PARTNERSHIP

By Jimmy Dobbs, Executive Director

Agape's current staffing is limited in how many families and children can be served. As Bri Hedgpeth, Agape foster mom, realized this she knew what God wanted her to do. She started "Helping Hands of Agape", a group dedicated to supporting Agape and expanding the ministry in southeast Alabama. "I've been so blessed by each experience that I've had speaking, sharing, and telling our family's testimony of foster care and of having Agape in our corner as we experienced the ups and downs that foster care brings."

- Bri and Michael Hedgpeth, and their children ages 14, 11, and 8 welcomed their first two foster children in 2013. Life got crazy, life got busy, and life had never been so good! They are now adopting their "precious foster princess." "She will be our forever daughter and we will be her forever family. God is so good!"
- Calvin and Trish Parker of Vance served as foster parents with Agape. After their last placement decided to take a break from fostering, but they still wanted to share in the ministry to children: "We really love children and Agape's ministry to these children and foster parents. We believe they deserve a safe and happy home, whether temporarily or permanently." So they decided to stay involved by supporting other foster families, working with their Sunday School at Five Points Baptist Church in Northport to make this happen.



Specific ways these families and churches are partnering to care for children:

- Bri Hedgpeth: "I have a Facebook page, a baby bottle campaign, and have put together a Facebook auction all in the hopes of bringing more support to Agape and to involve as many individuals, families, and churches as possible in this mission." You can find HELPING HANDS OF AGAPE on Facebook and find out how you can participate in the ministry and mission to children. Partnership. (brianna_hedgpeth@yahoo.com)
- The Parkers and their church are helping with back to school supplies and this year's Christmas Wish Lists.
- The Decatur Highway Church of Christ has been involved for many years in providing Christmas Wish Lists and other specific needs of children.

Get Involved

Contact Amanda Gunn
agunn@agapeforchildren.org
334-272-9466

Find HELPING HANDS OF AGAPE
on Facebook

*Pray God will continue to raise
up partners so more children
can be served in His name.*



CONNECTING HEARTS

Thank you to an amazing group of supporters, volunteers and families for making Agape's 2nd Annual Connecting Hearts an amazing event! Our guest speakers, Jay and Angie Jacobs, challenged each of us through their generous and compassionate hearts for children. We are thrilled to declare the evening a true success!

Agape's Event Committee and Staff are pictured here with Jay and Angie Jacobs. From left to right: Ben Blanchard, Marlea Johnson, Cindy Burnside, Carol Esco, Jason Isbell, Emily Thames, Amanda Gunn, Michael Hora, Jay Jacobs, Angie Jacobs, Linda Sanders, Misty Vermillion, Buddy Renahan, Megan Malinoski, Jimmy Dobbs, Ginger McDougal, Kyla Free, Amber Duke, Beverly Seeger, Kim Littlefield, and Brian Key.

Thank You To Our Wonderful Sponsors:

100X Development • Copperwing Design • Cumulus Radio

North Alabama Fabricating Company • Kiwanis Club of Montgomery

**Lamar Advertising
Montgomery Antiques & Interiors
Oriental Accents
Southern Homes & Gardens**

Alfa Insurance
Auburn University Club
Charles B. Ingram, Jr.
The Burnside's: For Birthmoms
Carr, Riggs, & Ingram
Crosby Electric Company, Inc.
Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, Inc.
Senator Jabo Waggoner
Servis 1st Bank
Stroh Communications
Welch Hornsby

A Catered Affair
Beasley, Allen, Crow, Methvin,
Portis & Miles, P.C.
Bell Media
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Alabama
Brian & Kelli Hardin
Britany Long Photography
Capital Trailways Charters & Tours
Chris' Hot Dog
Cygna
Faulkner University
Farmer's Market Cafe
Hampton Boles
Herron Family Farms
J. K. Lowder Family Foundation
Joel Sidney Kelly Fine Oil Portraits

Kasarjian Insurance & Financial Services
Long Lewis Foundation
Martin and Dansby
Millbrook Small Motors
Montgomery Surgical & Trauma Assoc.
Outback Steakhouse
Pickwick Antiques
Pintlala Cattle Co.
Progress Rail Services
Richard Mullins
River Region Living
Sa Za's Italian
Senator Clay Scofield
Senator Paul Bussman
Sterling Bank
Stifel Nicolas

HOME FROM CHINA

By Karen Pirkle, adoptive mom

We traveled with our three oldest children to China in January 2016 to pick up Maleah, spending 19 days there bonding with our new daughter. We could tell in the videos and pictures we had seen of Maleah that she was very outgoing and had a funny personality. The pictures didn't lie; she practically spoke to every person in China that she could. On the in-country plane and train rides, she would carry on full conversations with the adults, and they would laugh and tell us how smart and articulate she was, and of course, we had no idea what she was telling them. It has continued at home, saying hello (in English already!) to everyone as we arrive at church and either waving or blowing them kisses as we go to class.

She was thrilled to meet her brothers when she got home, especially since they were all born within 11 months of each other. She has only been home 2 months, but we can tell she is becoming physically stronger, she is standing up straighter, and she is growing steadier. We are excited to see what the future holds for Maleah as we see her reach her potential.





SOMEONE FORGOT TO TELL JOEY

Joey came from a hard place, born drug addicted, soon abandoned, and then into foster care. Over the years, doctors told his foster parents, who would later become his adoptive parents, that strenuous activities just were not going to be possible for Joey. But someone forgot to tell Joey.

Jerry and Michelle Riggs [featured in the Winter 2013 Newsletter] are foster parents with Agape, and have served for many years as EFC parents [see EFC article, page 2]. Of the 93 children they have cared for in their home, Joey was the first, and one of 14 they have adopted.

Joey is a senior at West Point High School, and has excelled at track. "Whenever I'm stressed I go for a run," Joey says. He has been awarded three different scholarships because of the way he has excelled both academically and athletically. He plans to attend UNA in the fall, with a business major and religious studies minor.

For the full story go to www.agapeforchildren.org/someone-forgot-tell-joey and follow the link to AL.com

THE HICKS FAMILY

Do you like surprises? When Ehren and Elizabeth Hicks got the anticipated call ABOUT THEIR BABY from Carol Esco, there was a little hitch: Elizabeth's parents were out of the country.

On placement day, only Ehren's parents met Georgia Louise, and Ehren and Elizabeth spent the next week getting to know and enjoying their daughter, while keeping her arrival a secret.

Elizabeth's parents got the surprise of a lifetime when they returned home, opening a card and a small gift announcing the arrival of their FIRST grandchild! Laughing, crying, hugging, and lots of cuddling followed! Then, the Hicks family could share their exciting news with everyone.

Georgia's adoption was finalized on December 22, 2015.



HONORING BIRTH CULTURE



Adoptive families are blessed by the children who come to call them mom and dad, but these families are also really important partners with Agape in ministering to birth mothers who are considering adoption for their child. While most of Agape's prospective adoptive families are open to adopting a child of any race, many African-American birth parents want their child placed with African-American couples or interracial couples.

For example, recently a couple choosing adoptive parents for their baby shared that if they had a son, they wanted him to have an African-American father to be a daily role model to show what it means to live as an African-American man. The birth mom said that it was important to her that someone teach her son "how to be a black man."

Honoring birth families is crucial in empowering them to make what they feel is the best decision for their unborn child. If you are interested in becoming an adoptive resource for birth parents desiring to place their child with African-American couples, please contact either Caitlin Inman in Birmingham at 205-733-9755 or cinman@agapeforchildren.org, or Carol Esco in Montgomery at 334-272-9466 or cesco@agapeforchildren.org.

In Loving Memory

Mary Irene Ayres
Harold Walls

Dr. Conrad Adair
Jon and Niva Harrison
Ferrell and Elaine Walton

Glenda Sue Bailey
LaRose & Leon Willis

Hugh Barnes
Ernest & Alliene B. McArthur

Beau Alexander Barnett
Paige Entreklin

Steve Barrow
Tommy & Edith Vaught
Amy Walker
Buddy & Stephanie Bell
Ed & Barbara Bice
Austin & Sallilu Griffin
Danny & Linda Holmberg
Bill & Sarah Meadows
Bill & Ginger Page
Kermit & Cindy Suggs
Thomas Killough
Mark & Jacque Loudermilk
Bobby & Sherry Wilkins
Don & Linda Wilson
Tommy & Blanche Champion
Keith & Gloria Spry

Missy & Will Betts
Sid & Pat Bullard

Robert Biller
Paul Biller

Jaysean Boring
Gina South

Mary Brantley
Glen & Virginia Huggins

Dorothy Buck
Prattville Church of Christ

Joyce Bullard
Debbie Bullard Gwin

Jean & Wilburn Bullington
John & Joan Bullington

Sam & Mildred Canerday
David and Mary Nell Parsons

Andy Cannon
Denise Oliver

Mansel & Lucille Carpenter
Joseph T. Carpenter

Ann Castleberry
Virginia Hicks & Family

Mi Ok Chung
Landmark Church of Christ

Pete Cook
Pat Cook

Charles Cooper
Elaine Pigg

Eloise Crews
Jean McLean Boyd

Bill Cutts
Linda & Milton Slauson

Michael Daggett
Landmark Church of Christ

Eve Dodd
Virginia & Bill Aultman

Dorothy M. Dotson
John & Lynda Rogers

Roberta Edwards
Tina Singleton Foster

James & Novis Elliott
Jim Elliott

Beth Emerson
Peggy Mason

Norman Estes
Virginia Hicks & Family

Terri Finklea
Collegedale Church of Christ

Kenneth H. Ford
Wanette Ford

Charlie Foshee
Thomas Norman, Jr.

Heather Frederick
Randy & Pat Beasley

Opal Francis
Buddy & Karen Green

Mr. & Mrs. Will Gardner
Chrys Robbins

Helen Glasscock
Betty Vinsant

Myna Ruth Goldston
Dianne Gantt

Mike Green
Bobby & Patsy Owens

Jennifer Lacy Greene
Chris & Colton Greene

Daniel Guy
Landmark Church of Christ

Pete Helton
Carolyn Helton

Lavon Henley
Glen & Virginia Huggins
Patricia Mitchell

Cleveland Hicks
Virginia Hicks & Family

Paul Hubbert
Joe & Gayle Fine

Preston & Virginia Huggins
Peb Booth

Carole Hutcheson
Pemberton Incorporated

Vivian & Millard Jackson
Glen & Virginia Huggins

Harold Johnson
Derek and Leigh Johnson

Mark I. Johnston
Renford Johnston

Rex Jones
Glen & Virginia Huggins
Virginia Hicks & Family

Brad Kendrick
Landmark Church of Christ

Ethel Knight
George & Margaret Walker

Jerome Knowles
Patsy Morris
Judy F. Brown

Evelyn Lee
Landmark Church of Christ

Bobby Loftin
Jimmy & Annette Huett

Michele Manning
Landmark Church of Christ

Paul Matthews
Dr. & Mrs. David Markham

James W. "Buddy" McMillin
Mike & Cindy Williamson
Vaughn Park Church of Christ
Lillie Horton
Mr. & Mrs. David Horton, Jr.
David & Nancy Hatfield
Judy Cleghorn
Melodie Ellis
Myrtice & Knute Johnson
Mary George & Bud Smith
Mickey Weeks
Lynn & Steve Chromey
Max & Sue Ellen Miller
Kenneth & Debbie Martin
Kenneth & Mary Jo Lence
Mark & Margo Black
Nancy Clemens
Michael and Marcia Cunningham

James & Waurine McMillin
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry D. Mayes
Sam & Emily Cooper

Emma McGuire
Mr. & Mrs. R. N. Stone, Jr.
Judy F. Brown
Jack & Linda Jackson

Beatrice "Bootie" McNally
The Phillips Family
Virginia Hicks

Anna S. Missildine
Carolyn Missildine

Merle Missildine
Faye & Henry Greenhill

Opal Missildine
Steve & Gloria Hickman

Dottie Moore
Michael and Wendy Jones

Janice Myer
Denise Oliver

Rebecca Scrushy Nichols
Marie Echols

J. C. Norman
Thomas & Wilkie Norman

Sharon Norman
Bobby & Patsy Owens

William Norris
Janice McCraney
Linda & Milton Slauson
Don & JoAnn Musgrave
Joyce Moncrief
Harrell Blake
Landmark Church of Christ
Annette & Jimmy Huett
Clara & Lloyd Hickerson

Faye G. Owens
Doris Goolsby

Judy Holliman Prather
Bob & Cathy Coggin

Marc Pugh
Judy F. Brown

Wayne Rasco
Allen and Faith Ann Gunn
Anita & Jim Burton
Darlene Rasco
James and Amber Rasco
Ceal Ebert
Jeff and Janna Hicks
Cindy Rasco
Nikki McLeroy

Ann Rickard
Bill & Margaret Poage

Savannah Grace Rodopoulos
Ronnie & Debbie Mills

Cheryl Lynn Cauthen Rogers
Margie Poole
Paul F. Owens, Sr.
Judy F. Brown
Jack & Linda Jackson
C. W. Rogers, Jr.
Joe & Sharon McGuire
Betty Decker

William A. Sanders
J. Marie Sanders

Helen Sargent
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Cheatham

Chuck Shaffer
Virginia Hicks & Family

Ronnie Shaver
Mamie Hartley

Rodney Shephard
Al & Connie Millergren

Ben & Kate Slauson
Linda & Milton Slauson

Bart Skelton
Martha Skelton

Dianna Smith
Prattville Church of Christ

Betty June Smith
Steve & Pam Edwards

Madeline Smith
Sid & Pat Bullard

Bill Springer
Genie Springer

Alex Stovall
Derek and Leigh Johnson

Ray Suggs
Landmark Church of Christ

Lillie F. Taylor
Betty R. Taylor

Ellen L. Taylor
Glenda Akins
George and Genye Jones

Betty Traywick
George & Margaret Walker

Sherri Tucker
Glenn Bailey

E. J. Turner
Mary Ann Bradford

Anna Walker
Brenda & Sam Ezell

Jim Wamack
John & Diana Kelley

Dorothy M. Watson
John and Lynda Rogers

Leslie E. Williams
Pamela Helton

MEMORIALS November 2015–March 2016

Christopher Leon Willis

Versona

Mikayla Wright

Michael and Wendy Jones
Kelly and Arlene Morris

Carolyn Wood

Ebbin & Lucy Register

In Honor Of

Ryan Adair, Rusty & Tracy Adair

Billy & Doris Adair

Etta Allen

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Wallace

All Foster & Adoptive Parents

Virginia Mack

Jay and Erika Beeson

Teresa Messick

Randy Bowman Family

Brooke Hundley

Katie and Nick Burbage

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Marcia Brinsfield

Denise Oliver

Jack & Sharron Cates

Albert & Jackie Sharpe

Inez Carter

Jurlean Brown

Christine Carroll

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Gail Clements

Kathy Cheshire

Dr. Robert Coggin

Dr. David & Rebecca Drennen

Bettye Hall Crosby

Kenneth Crosby

Joseph & Chanie Davis

Carrie Barnes

Drs. Timothy & Karen Doles

Dr. & Mrs. Robert Coggin
Dr. David & Rebecca Drennen

Dr. & Mrs. David Drennen

Dr. & Mrs. Robert Coggin

Caden Donaldson (5th birthday)

Adam Donaldson
Ben & Katie Lassiter
Won Chan Lee
Rob & Anita McFarland

Eaven & Nevaeh

Jerry & Gaylon Gwin

Charles and Becky Elliott

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Travis and Lindsey Gamble

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Elliott & Avis Glasgow

Sarah Cain

Sarah Goad

Melinda Goad

Great Grand Children

Marcia Brinsfield

Clinton & Barbara Hardin

Mitch & Cindy Henry

Jake Hardin

Clinton & Barbara Hardin (Papa & Gran)

Dr. Benjamin Harris

Jeremy Walker

Katie G. Hicks

Mrs. Janice McCraney

Ayden Harris Hoggle

Jeremy & Jasmine Hoggle

Drs. Jade & Malissa Hoy

Dr. & Mrs. Robert Coggin
Dr. David & Rebecca Drennen

Laura Jinright

Andrew & Alice Doran

Derek & Leigh Johnson

Tommy & Taci Johnson
Julie and Mike Turner

Douglas and Kathy Johnson

Tommy & Taci Johnson
Derek and Leigh Johnson

Keith and Missy Johnson

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Norma Johnson

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Tommy and Taci Johnson

Derek and Leigh Johnson

April Kendrick

Mr. & Mrs. Mitch Grubb

Mr. & Mrs. Kris Lowry

Jeanette Palmer

Sable Marzella

Andrew & Alice Doran

Ouida McCarthy

Dr. David & Rebecca Drennen

John & Norma McGee

Deb Carson

Ted & Martha Morrison

George & Margaret Walker

Mr. & Mrs. Greg Newton

Jeanette Palmer

Chip Payne

Derek and Leigh Johnson

JoAnne Payne

Sharon Sutton
Alex, Will and Anna
Derek and Leigh Johnson

Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Parrish

Jeanette Palmer

David & Mary Nell Parsons

Don & Norman Canerday

Shane Leigh & Lillie Grace Pene

Geraldine Pene

Steve & Teresa Pittman

Andrew & Alice Doran

Cole Portis

Sloan Downes

Dr. Elsa C. Price

Terry & Bonnie Price

Chris and Mary Pritchett and Family

Derek and Leigh Johnson

John and Ginger Pritchett

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Leigh Ann, Mike & Elizabeth Richards

Sally P. Bolling

Skye Rodney-Phillips

Kanini Rodney-Phillips

Derek and Kate Ruud

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Jesse & Patricia Russell

Dent & Patti Turner

Charlie and Lindsey Sabens

Madeline and Natahlie
Derek and Leigh Johnson

Debby Scott

Donna McClinton

Mr. & Mrs. Darell Shaffer

Jeanette Palmer

Elaine Simons

Alicia Phillips

Morgan Simpson

Richard M. Kennamer

David and Roberta Skelton

Joe and Mary Ann Cunningham

Paul Spivey

Andrew & Alice Doran

The Staff of Agape

Mark and Mary Mike Sullivan

David & Jennie Stoves

The David Breedlove Family

Michael and Julie Turner

Derek and Leigh Johnson

Vaughn Park Church of Christ

For letting us use the facilities for down syndrome
group meetings
Timothy and Christy Haire

Dr. & Mrs. C. Allen White

Dr. & Mrs. Robert Coggin
Dr. David & Rebecca Drennen

Mrs. Willouise Williams

Ms. Edith Bryant

AGAPE Staff By Office

Montgomery Office (Main Office)

P.O. Box 230472 | Montgomery, Ala., 36123 | 334.272.9466 | Fax 334.272.0378
Jimmy Dobbs, Executive Director | Amber Duke, Maternity Services Coordinator
Carol Esco, Adoption Specialist | Amanda Gunn, Executive Assistant
Marlea Johnson, Business Manager | Buddy Renahan, Foster Care Supervisor
Emily Thames, Director of Operations | Megan Tyus, Secretary

Birmingham Office

P.O. Box 36533 | Birmingham, Ala., 35236 | 205.733.9755 | Fax 205.733.9408
Natalie Chambers, Social Worker | Caitlin Inman, Social Worker
Megan Malinoski, Director of Permanency Planning

Enterprise Office

P.O. Box 311541 | Enterprise, Ala., 36331 | 334.393.1990 | Fax 334.393.0224
Linda Sanders, Social Worker

Alliance: Continuum Staff

Nancy Guilford, Social Worker, Montgomery

BOARD of Directors

Ben Blanchard, Chair

Hal Craig

Cathy Gerachis

Charles Ingram, Vice Chair

Jason Isbell, Secretary

Shana Phillips

Mark Sullivan, Treasurer

Jean-Noel Thompson

AGAPE

Agape of Central Alabama
P.O. Box 230472
Montgomery, AL 36123
334.272.9466
800.239.1020
www.agapeforchildren.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Montgomery, AL
Permit #282

As a ministry of Jesus Christ, Agape's mission is that vulnerable and orphaned children find permanency in safe, nurturing families.

CONTACT US IF YOU WOULD LIKE A STACK OF AGAPE NEWSLETTERS OR BROCHURES FOR YOUR OFFICE. INFO@AGAPEFORCHILDREN.ORG • 334-272-9466

Agape's 6th Annual Run for a Mom 5k and Fun Run

Honor a special mom in your life by running or walking in her honor this Mother's Day weekend! Phantom Runner registration is a great way for out-of-town friends and family to support the ministry and honor a mom through this event!

Save \$5

by registering before April 26!

(This is the last day to guarantee a t-shirt)

Online registration closes May 5.

Registration also available at event on race day.

May 7, 2016

www.runforamom.org

