

AGAPE CENTER NRV

SEPTEMBER 2021



SCRIPTURE FOCUS

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. John 15:9.

DIRECTOR'S MINUTE – THE NATURE OF GOD

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1John 4:8

1John 4:8 describes one of God's primary attributes as love. God created us to live in community with Himself and others. He gave us free will so that we could choose to reciprocate His love. God showed us His great love through the perfect world He made for us with all of its provision and beauty. But, His most powerful display of love was offering His only son, Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. (John 3:16)

Agape Center volunteers are givers. They are a direct reflection of God's love. They freely give their time, money, prayers, and hearts to our clients, many whom have lived life with very little love. For some, God's unconditional love, known as Agape love, is not even a concept.

Then they meet the Love Team, the Agape Center volunteers, and they see love in action. They witness Christ in the eyes of our volunteers. They hear Christ as they speak with our mentors. They experience sacrificial giving through the goods and services that are provided. They see unity in the body of Christ as we all work together to accomplish a common Godly goal. In other words, they see and experience the nature of God's love for them.

As Christ followers we are called to be a light in the darkness, a city on the hill, and the salt of the earth. This can seem like such a monumental task at times! But, quite simply put, they will know that we are Christians by our LOVE.

Kim Bowman, Executive Director

PRAYER MINISTRY

Please join us in prayer.

Pray for the provision of a building for all of the Agape Center NRV ministries to operate under one roof!

Pray for the renewal of all our volunteers in mind, body, and spirit.

Pray that our clients would know and understand the love that God has for them in Jesus Christ.

MEMBER CHURCHES

Cambria Baptist Church

Christian Growth Center, Inc.

Dwelling Place Christian Fellowship

Hope Valley Church

New Life Christian Fellowship

New River Fellowship

The Bridge

The River Anglican Church

Tried Stone Christian Center

Victory Restoration Center



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Phil Di Francesco



Phil Di Francesco became involved in outreach ministry nearly 50 years ago, when he began cutting hair for inmates in a Florida jail. From there, his desire to share the Good News grew into a lifelong passion. Phil dedicated 23 years of his life to prison ministry, gifting inmates with eyeglasses and Bibles while sharing the hope that's found in Christ.

Phil's wife, Cindi, was first to begin volunteering as an Agape Center mentor. Cindy peaked his interest and when Pastor Jamey Hutton asked if he would like to give it a try, Phil stepped up to the plate and knocked it right out of the ball park,

quickly becoming one of Agape Center's most dedicated and beloved mentors. Many of our clients ask for him by name and say they look forward to their monthly visit, because they get to see and talk with Phil. Despite his popularity, Phil makes it clear that it's not about him. When asked why he serves at Agape Center NRV, Phil said, "I get pleasure out of it because it brings glory to God. I want to be an extension of Christ. With Covid and everything happening in the world right now, I want to offer hope. I like to pray with people and I really enjoy the people who come here. They are very honest and sincere. We have good conversation and community."



CELEBRATE RECOVERY IS COMING TO THE AGAPE CENTER

Celebrate Recovery (CR) is a Christ centered 12-step recovery program that helps people overcome their hurts, habits and hang-ups. CR is for anyone who is struggling with life and is based on the Beatitudes of Jesus. CR began in 1991 as a ministry of Saddleback Church, with the support of Rick Warren. It has helped millions of people in over 35,000 churches worldwide and is one of the largest recovery support programs in the United States. CR is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our lives.

We are in need of volunteers to help in areas such as greeting, worship, food preparation and group facilitators. If you need help or would like to volunteer, please contact Tom Smithwick at 540-449-7618



UPCOMING EVENTS

Chosen Community Hour

New River Fellowship, Fridays, September 3 – September 24, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

We are super excited to announce our first “Community Hour” at Agape Center NRV!

We invite you to bring a friend and come join us for some light refreshments and casual conversation while we watch Season 1, Episode 3 of the highly acclaimed series “The Chosen” that everyone is raving about. Come see what all the buzz is about. You can see Episode 3 Fridays from 3:30-4:30PM starting Sept. 3 – Sept. 24. Episode 4 will follow in October. We hope that you will come out and join us.



Debbie Kountz is pictured here with The Chosen crew. Debbie is the Co-Director of the Lynchburg Agape Center. She was an extra on the set. Too cool!



NRV DIAPER PANTRY AND THE GIVING TREE FOOD PANTRY BECOME AGAPE CENTER NRV

Ministries Supported by the River. This week, praying for

AGAPE CENTER NRV

- Formerly known as the Diaper Pantry-now much more!



Our goal is attending to the felt needs of individuals and families, while also addressing their spiritual needs in a manner that gives God the glory.



Current Needs: Canned Goods, Diapers sizes birth through adult, financial donations, volunteers, permanent location

In 2018 Blacksburg First Church of God and the River Church came together and formed the NRV Diaper Pantry, with Lucy Copeland, Executive Director and Carolyn Ansley, Administrative Director. With financial and volunteer support from both churches as well as from members and businesses in the NRV we were able to open our doors in February of 2019. The Diaper Pantry existed to care for the whole person, one life at a time, beginning with the basic provision of diapers. Our long term goal was to strengthen other critical areas of life: emotional, financial, relational and spiritual. A diaper is a small thing but it can impact big things. The need is tremendous. The cost of diapers per month can be between \$70-\$100 and wipes around \$25 per month. Diapers and wipes cannot be purchased with SNAP or WIC.

A devotion from Mission Aviation Fellowship devotion book Retool, spoke directly to what we felt God was calling us to. "Courage to Speak Christ", Acts 20: 24 "I consider my life worth nothing to me, my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me." The task is to testify to the good news of God's grace. John 10:10 "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." And Philippians 4:11-12 – "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation." Were we content with how God was moving and growing our ministry, one life at a time, and were we willing to testify to the good news? Yes.

In the fall of 2019 we felt that God was pushing us to go out into the community with our ministry. Where God took us was to the Giving Tree Food Pantry. The Giving Tree's goal, under the direction of Kim Bowman and New River Fellowship Church was also to strengthen emotional, financial, relational and spiritual areas of individuals as well as families. Little did we know that God was way ahead of us, moving in the hearts of many people in the NRV desiring to see broken lives brought to Christ or restored to Christ. In the early spring of 2020, an interest meeting was held and the beginning of AGAPE Center NRV started becoming a reality. A year later the Diaper Pantry is officially a part of the AGAPE Center NRV.

In August, my dear friend and partner with the Diaper Pantry, Carolyn Ansley moved to Winston Salem, NC. Without her administrative skills I'm not sure we would have survived. She loved and cared for individuals and families, giving tirelessly of herself.



(Carolyn Ansley, left)

1 Corinthians 2:9 "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love Him." We continue our journey of faith, seeing and hearing what God has for the AGAPE Center and for each person that comes through our doors. Please pray for the AGAPE Center and every volunteer that helps with food distribution, diaper distribution, clothing, and mentoring. Pray for a permanent location. Pray and ask God how you might journey with us. But most importantly pray that the AGAPE Center would complete the "task" that God has called us to, the "Task of testifying to the good news of God's grace through word, deed and service.

Lucy Copeland, Executive Director NRV Diaper Pantry

FOOD DRIVES AND DONATIONS

The Glean Team 1214 lbs. of produce

Joe & Frank Frazier 210 lbs. of produce

Plenty 275 lbs. of produce

Tried Stone Christian Center 102 lbs. of canned foods

Virginia Tech 55lbs. Eggs

FOOD PANTRY REPORT

MONTH OF AUGUST 2021

Pounds of food

Agency Partner Pickups	2,914
Food Drives	<u>3,778</u>
Total	6,692

Families Served	73
Clients Served	204

Year to Date 2021 Jan 1 – Aug 23

Agency Partner Pickups	34,792
Food Drives	<u>16,239</u>
Total	51,031

Families Served	880
Clients Served	2,449



AGAPE CENTER NRV PARTICIPATION IN SUMMER FEST 2021

Summer Fest 2021 was held on Saturday evening, July 31st at Tried Stone Christian Center in Blacksburg. Along with the members of Tried Stone, other organizations and schools, the Agape Center NRV participated by having a station for families to come by and learn more what the Center is all about while participating with the families in a game of soccer.

The theme this year for Summer Fest was “Made in His Image.” The hope was that this be a night that each child, teen, and parent would walk away encouraged, built up, and filled up with TRUTH and HOPE, and also have a great time with games, food vendors and some intentional activities for the families. We prayed that the activities and interactions would speak life and encouragement over each family! We also prayed that our identity in Christ be strengthened and sharpened, and that we know who we are in Him. Ephesians 4:24 says, "and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

The theme fit right in with what the Agape Center NRV is all about – loving on others by fulfilling their needs as well as showing them the love of Christ. Several Agape board members that volunteered that night were able to meet and talk with the community as they walked through Summer Fest. Our hope is that the interactions with each family as well as the other organizations, churches, etc., that participated in Summer Fest would see what truly can happen when we all work together with each other through the unity of love and bringing ALL the Glory to God in the NRV. Thank you, Kim, Kristen, Hannah and Tommy for taking the time to continue getting the word out about the Agape Center NRV while working alongside Tried Stone Christian Center.

Linda Bland

