

# *Connections*

from  
*Agape for Youth, Inc*

Welcome to a New Day!



Okay...can anyone believe that the Christmas and New Years holiday are in our rear view mirror? That this year's journey of my beloved Ohio State Buckeyes football team...on second thought...I 'm not going don't that road...way too sad.

In this months newsletter you will be introduced to "Agape Strong", an agency wide strength-based initiative being introduced by Dr. Pam Gulley, one of our newest co-workers. We believe "Agape Strong" will and has already to some degree, has set a foundation for our agency's future of serving all who are entrusted to our care.

We are in the process of establishing, and will soon be launching new foster family and staff trainings designed to strengthen our ability to address the ever-changing therapeutic needs of families and youth placed in our care. Further, we are challenging ourselves as co-workers to "serve beyond our present boundaries".

In honest reflection, over the past couple of years the evaluating of our agency has been based from a perspective of addressing weaknesses, and at times, being emotionally reactive to the many changes and challenges encountered within our field. We have moved to a new map, and thus a new road that we are travelling.

We greatly appreciate our partner agencies, our donors and supporters, our foster and adoptive families, our reunification families, our Board of Directors, our co-workers and we also recognize, and dedicate ourselves to grow in the continued positive acknowledgement and importance of each.

It's a new day and time, Agape's new day, and time!!...resulting in this new, fresh perspective!!! Agape will continue to build upon the many positives and strengths we have established over our near 24-year history, and build upon the unrealized strengths we believe we will discover in this exciting journey.

We will be "Agape Strong". I invite you to come join us, as it's going to be a great ride!  
Take care,

Handwritten signature of the author.

*January/February 2012 Edition*

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from

## Agape for Youth, Inc

In this edition we begin a new feature by Dr. Pam Gulley. Dr. Pam is the Development Coordinator at Agape for Youth, Inc. and the creator of the “Agape Strong” initiative

### AGAPE STRONG

An initiative has been introduced that is designed to renew and restore energy in the workplace so that we can begin to think about the future and what needs to be put into place to sustain Agape as a top of the line provider of foster, adoption and reunification services. Each staff completed a Strengths Finder Survey to identify personal strengths. Individual ‘Top Fives’ were tabulated and the ‘Top Five’ strengths of Agape for Youth, Inc. were identified.

#### **Developer..... Empathy..... Responsibility..... Belief..... Adaptability**

Developer: recognizes and cultivates the potential in others.

Empathy: ability to sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others’ lives or others’ situations.

Responsibility: ability to take ownership of what one says they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

Belief: ability to exhibit certain core values that are unchanging.

Adaptability: ability to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

We can clearly document that Agape for Youth, Inc. is a strong agency because the staff exhibit talent in cultivating the potential of others, through an understanding of how others feel and because the staff take ownership of what they say they will do and follow-through. Staff is committed to honesty and loyalty as core values that are unchanging and give them a purpose for the life they lead. Agape staff is “able to go with the flow” and are discovering the future one day at a time.

In the months ahead you will be informed of the following:

- Mission statement revised to reflect strength-based direction.
- Strategic planning focused on critical success factors for sustainability.
- Foster Parent training focused on as *Strengths-based Parenting* and *Challenge Parenting*
- Staff training to develop strengths-based coaching skills
- Programming for youth in care to identify their strengths and to learn how to cultivate those talents to turn life challenges into life opportunities.

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## Agape for Youth, Inc

In this edition we begin a new feature by Bruce Bridges.  
Bruce is the Licensing/Compliance & Intake Supervisor at Agape.  
He is "The Rules Guy"

### Focus on the Rules

Licensing Rules are in place to provide a standard of care and quality as opposed to the above pictured rulers that provide a standard of measurement. Because care and quality are much more difficult to measure Agape for Youth's Licensing Department needs everyone's assistance in maintaining compliance with all rules implemented by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

All of us in Licensing urge families to ask for advice and guidance when you have questions about any decisions or changes that seem out of the ordinary. Usually, if we know about something before it occurs it is much easier to complete necessary requirements. This month we want to focus on rules that require notification of a change within foster parent's households. Following is a **shortened version** of rules for required notification.

- A) Foster parents must notify Agape in writing before allowing someone to stay in the home for more than two weeks.
- B) Foster caregiver must inform the agency within **thirty days** in writing if they are certified to operate a type B day care.
- C) Foster parents must notify Agape within **one hour** of the following circumstances
  - 1) Serious illness or injury or death of foster child
  - 2) AWOL of foster youth
  - 3) Removal of foster child by any person or agency other than the placing agency
- D) Foster parents must notify agency within **24 hours** of:
  - 1) A fire in the home requiring the services of the fire department
  - 2) change in marital status of the foster parents or in household occupancy
  - 3) Serious illness or death in the household
  - 4) Any criminal charge brought against the caregivers, other adults in the home or youth older than 12
- E) Foster parents need to notify the agency four weeks prior to a planned move

Please help us to help you with everything that is required. We know you are busy, but take a minute to call to discuss any questions, concerns or changes it will make everyone's life easier!

Thanks for all you do.  
Bruce, Bridget, Pam & Val

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## *from Agape for Youth, Inc*

### **Education Update**

With the school year in full swing we are proud of the 38 youth who earned C's and above on their first quarter grade cards, 19 of which made the honor roll.

Agape continues to support our former foster youth currently attending college by sending a monthly stipend. During the month of December we had 6 youth involved in this program with another youth to join in January.

If you have any questions regarding tutorial services for the youth placed in your home, need information on how to receive the college stipend, or would like information on how to become an Agape tutor please contact:

Christina Pennington, Education Coordinator  
(937) 439-4406 ext 18 or [cpennington@agapeforyouth.com](mailto:cpennington@agapeforyouth.com)

### **Mentoring Update**

Agape currently has 14 active mentors matched with the youth in our agency and several mentors that are currently in the process of being approved. Our mentors do a variety of activities with our youth and in the process build relationships with them to positively impact their lives.

We are currently in need of additional male mentors. If you are interested, please contact Lindsay Fisher at (937) 439-4406 ext. 20 or [lfisher@agapeforyouth.com](mailto:lfisher@agapeforyouth.com)

### **Youth Council Update**

The Youth Council had a busy holiday season that included volunteering at the Agape Family Christmas party at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery, and helping children from Agape shop at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Santa's Secret Workshop.

The Youth Council members used a portion of the money they earned from volunteering at the Air Force Marathon and provided Christmas for a family in the Reunification Services Program. They purchased gifts for the entire family! We are extremely proud of the Youth Council and look forward to this program growing and having additional community service opportunities in 2012.

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## **Many Thanks**

There is an ever-growing list of individuals, businesses and organizations that opened their hearts and helped provide Christmas for the children and families being served at Agape for Youth, Inc. During the 2011 holiday season our thanks go to the following:

McKenzie and the Greater Dayton Humane Society  
St. John's United Church of Christ  
Brandon and friends  
Truly Warm  
Back to Health Center  
Ultimate U Total Health  
The American Heart Association – Dayton Chapter  
The Dayton Racquet Club  
The Durkee Family  
Helzburg Diamonds  
Belton Foods  
The Sargent Family

## **Reunification Services Update**

The families served through the Reunification Services Program were the recipients of numerous donations that were received at Agape during the 2011 holiday season. All of the children in the program received gifts through the Giving Tree program and many of the families benefited from the food drive that was held by Dr. Merkle and the staff and patients of the Back to Health Center. The Reunification Services Program continues to grow and receive referrals for services on a regular basis. If you have any questions about this program, please contact Ann Morrissey, Reunification Services Supervisor at [amorrissey@agapeforyouth.com](mailto:amorrissey@agapeforyouth.com).

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## **February/March On-Going Training Opportunities**

Agape offers a range of courses to help our foster parents meet their Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA) for recertification. Contact Val at ext. 36 if you have questions about needed coursework to meet your ITNA.

**Please remember that children are not permitted to attend training classes.**

### **Strongholds of Parenting: Parenting to Encourage Lasting Relationships**

**Instructor: Dr. Pam Gulley – Saturday, February 4, 2012 – 10:00AM – 4:00PM**

The key components of relationship building will be discussed in the context of parenting. Techniques will be reviewed that support strengthening the relationships between foster parents and youth in their care. The objective is to develop lifelong skills for youth to encourage independent living.

### **Daddy Dearest: The Impact of Fathers on the Outcomes for Children and Families**

**Instructor: Cathy Tiggs – Saturday, February 11, 2012 - 9:00AM – 12:00PM**

Discussion will be on national trends as it relates to the absent father, positive and negative outcomes based on their involvement and how those outcomes affect children involved with public children's services agencies.

### **Special Education Services - What Caregivers Need to Know**

**Instructor: Cathy Tiggs – Saturday, February 11, 2012 – 1:00Pm – 4:00PM**

This course will discuss the devastating effects that child abuse and neglect has on a child's ability to perform in school. Caregivers will walk away with information on how schools are required to accommodate children with special needs and the legislation that outlines this responsibility. You will learn how to monitor plans gain insight on assessing plans and walk away with some educational advocacy resources.

### **Gold at the End of the Rainbow: Maintaining a Positive Outlook Parenting Difficult Youth in Care**

**Instructor: Dr. Pam Gulley – Saturday, March 10, 2012 – 1:00PM – 4:00PM**

Strategies for dealing with the stress and fatigue of parenting challenging youth will be presented. This training will focus on skills that foster parents need to develop youth strengths instead of correcting deficiencies.

### **Packing and Unpacking: How to Deal with the Baggage of Visitation**

**Instructor: Jim Still-Pepper - Saturday, March 17, 2012 – 9:00AM – 4:00PM**

This training will help participants explore the issues and dilemmas created by visitation. We will devote time to developing strategies that maximizes positive aspects and minimizes negative issues. We will explore how to help youth make transitions to and from visitation. We will also look at how we as adults can cope with visitation. Please note, the training will NOT cover legal issues, or ways of getting out of visitation.

**You can register for upcoming classes after hours after hours by calling 439-4406 ext. 36**