



## MISSION STATEMENT

At Agape Development we are transforming our neighborhood by preparing Christ-following, independent, community leaders.

***Love your neighbor***

**Join us in changing lives**

**in Houston's Third Ward**

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Agape is the Greek word for love in its truest form—a love that is authentic, intentional and long-lasting. At Agape Development we apply this *agape* approach to community development in the Third Ward. Together, we will transform our neighborhood and provide a model for authentic community development in Houston.

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At Agape Development we prepare our neighbors to become  
Christ-following, independent, community leaders.

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**1. We are neighbors.**

We believe that authentic community development can only come from within the community.

All of our staff live with-in the neighborhood where we serve.

We have built a community center in the heart of the 24 block radius we are serving.

**2. We are Christ-following.**

We believe that authentic community development must be grounded in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

We provide year-round spiritual programs for our neighbors aged 5 to 25.

We have started a church in the community to further ground our work in Christ's kingdom.

We have sports camps and overnight retreats to address the “whole” person.

**3. We prepare for independent adulthood.**

We believe that authentic community development must create employment opportunities that can end the cycle of generational poverty.

Our Gateway program provides residential living for men/women after high school as they seek full-time jobs.

Our community center offers job placement and resume services.

Our student entrepreneurial club gives them on-the-job training and lets them experience earning a paycheck.

**4. We are community leaders.**

We believe that authentic community development must address the physical needs of the neighborhood.

We actively partner with other neighborhood organizations to build a community garden, clean up vacant lots, and promote economic renewal.

**Volunteer Mission Statement:** The purpose of Agape Development's Volunteer Program is to build relationships that foster and encourage positive behaviors and choices through mentoring and sharing of knowledge by volunteers. Through their relationship with Agape Development, we hope volunteers come to better understand the complex needs of the poor and to be able to appropriately respond to these needs with empowerment of the residents as the basic tenet. It is with volunteers that we are able to extend the work of Agape Development beyond the capacity of staff.

Agape Development has identified three levels for volunteers to serve with us. These levels are differentiated by their involvement with the community and length of service. Although we value all volunteers, our hope is to build a solid foundation of committed and involved volunteers who are committed to building relationships with the people we serve.

- High Impact - These are our most invested volunteers. It involves multi-day commitment and interacting directly with neighbors and staff. The goal of a high impact volunteer opportunity is to begin deeper relational development with neighbors. Example: Be an Adult Ally for a minimum of eight months.
- Try It Out - Try It Out opportunities are usually a one-time event but will be more program orientation. This will begin the relational introduction to neighbors. Example: Bring a meal for one of our programs and eat with the program participants.
- Work and Program Projects - These opportunities usually involve doing something for Agape Development in a one-day project. This is where volunteers can start building a relationship with Agape Development staff and learn more about the community we serve. Example: A garden workday.

## Volunteer Testimony by Amanda Thompson

I found Agape at a time in my life when I was lonely - I had just moved to Houston after college with my new husband, feeling uprooted from the life I was familiar with and wondering what my purpose in Houston was supposed to be. In college, I mentored high school students (a ministry I was initially terrified by and would never have chosen on my own if it were not for God's clear pushing in that direction) and I have been forever changed by it. Hanging out with wonderful, silly, moody, hurting, broken kids, I had never been so desperate in prayer, pleading with God on behalf of the kids I spent time with. I had never experienced longing for something so much - for my kids to know Jesus. I admit that often I would think to myself, if only the crazy broken parts of their lives were gone, if only the education they received was better, if only their family situation could improve, if only they could get out of this town and move far beyond everything that holds them back. I would find myself paralyzed by these thoughts. Thankfully, I had wise friends loving these kids alongside me who would point me back to truth - Jesus loves these kids and their families far beyond what I am capable of. He knows all of these parts of their lives and wants to enter into every broken piece.

I can't even express how excited I was when I learned about Agape Development. I love that the staff lives life right alongside their neighbors and the people they serve. How much more real does the gospel become when those who bring it choose to stick around, choose to commit, choose to love daily in tangible, real, everyday, commonplace ways? A huge part of the reason I was drawn to Agape Development was because of that requirement to commit and stick around.

I am currently mentoring a girl at Agape Development that I met while coaching her middle school volleyball team. This girl makes me laugh every single time she gets into my car. She is fierce and girly and has a strong sense of what is unfair or unjust. It has been such an honor to get to know her better and to walk through the process of gaining her trust by showing up when I say I will and keeping promises. I very strongly feel the weight and responsibility of being in this mentor relationship, and I never want her to wonder if I will continue to be present in her life. I want her to know I am committed. I love that our time hanging out together can be unstructured - one week we go to the aquarium, the next we sit in my car for an hour chatting and eating ice cream - but regardless our time can still be purposeful. Conversations about life and Jesus usually flow out of talking about what happened at school that day, how her family is doing or what's going on with her friends. I look forward each week to our time together. I love that I know her family and that she knows mine. I know what is going on in her life, whether it is hard or good, and she chooses to ask me about my life. It has been the greatest privilege to share my life and enter into hers. I am so excited to continue our friendship in the years to come.

# Agape Development Program Descriptions

## ADULT PROGRAMS

**Adult Allies** - While similar to a mentorship program, we hope that Allies will be mutually beneficial to neighborhood participants (graduates) and their “allies.” The Getting Ahead graduates have much to teach about their neighborhood and what they know and have learned about poverty. While the allies can help them practice networking and work on some financial goals, we want both graduates and allies to be able to hold each other accountable spiritually. The commitment required is to meet weekly (day still TBD) with their partner for 6 months, understanding that travel sometimes interferes. Our hope is that these relationships become close, life-long friendships, which foster more stable lives for everyone involved.

Serves: Adults who have graduated from the Getting Ahead program

**Gateway** - The Gateway Houses are part of a residential program to help 18-25 year olds make the transition to healthy adulthood by assisting with housing, utilities, food, and transportation while also providing counseling, job preparation, and guidance in continued education. The goal is to assist young adults on the path to becoming independent healthy adults who are not only able to support themselves through gainful employment, but are also able to support their community through volunteering, church membership, and active community involvement. The Gateway houses are also available for those young adults who may be in college or are recent graduates who have an interest or desire in urban ministry and would like to gain some experience while living in community. Several steps are in place to monitor the progress of Gateway residents. Each participant is assigned an accountability meeting every two weeks where goals and progress are discussed and managed. Twice a year evaluations are held for each participant to determine if pre-stated goals and objectives have been accomplished and if the participant is ready to transition to independence on their own.

Serves: Young Adults 18 - 25 years old

**Getting Ahead** - Getting Ahead is both a workbook and an experience. It's based on Philip DeVol's Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-by-World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life. Participants, called Investigators, work in groups to examine the impact of poverty on themselves and their communities and to explore the world through the lens of economic class. The aim is to provide a safe, agenda-free learning environment where adults can reflect on and examine their lives, investigate new information that is relevant to them, assess their own resources, make plans for their own future stories, and offer ideas for building a prosperous community. The unique part of this experience is that it puts the learning and growing directly in the hands of the investigators. They are empowered to seek for themselves rather than being lectured. Getting Ahead will meet weekly on Wednesday evenings this fall and will provide free childcare and dinner for the investigators and their families.

Serves: Adults 18+

**GED** - FREE neighborhood GED classes will be offered starting in September. Times and dates to be determined.

**Retreats** - Agape Development organizes several adult retreats each year for the purpose of providing adults in our community with the opportunity to have experiences outside of what they could afford or be able to try in their normal routine. This is accomplished through our men's and women's retreats and one young adult coed retreat each year. These retreats are designed with the goal of providing participants with an impactful Christ centered experience that will guide and

direct them as they return to their homes and community. It is also designed to help them develop new and stronger relationships with other adults from similar backgrounds who are facing similar challenges. After these retreats, we work hard to follow up with the participants and pull them into Bible studies, church, and discipleship relationships. *Serves: Adults*

**Women's Ministry** – We have several programs available to the women in our neighborhood. We have morning Bible studies, women's fellowship nights, mom's group, and occasional women's health nights. We meet to offer encouragement and discipleship. Through these activities we've also formed a core group of women that pray and encourage one another.

*Serves: Adult Women*

## **CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade)**

**Backyard Bible Club (BBC)** - Backyard Bible Club is an after-school program for elementary aged children in the Agape neighborhood. The goal of BBC is to provide children with appropriate, nurturing, consistent adult attention in a structured and engaging environment that teaches participants the importance of education, staying active, being respectful, keeping a positive attitude, and following Christ's example in their lives.

*Serves: Kids grade K-5*

**Rise Up Summer Adventure** - For eight weeks of the summer Agape Development provides a summer camp experience for the K-5<sup>th</sup> graders of the neighborhood. For three hours, Monday-Thursday, the kids participate in devotionals, singing, memory verses, games, crafts, short courses, and field trips. This is a time for summer counselors and staff to pour into the kids the love of the Lord.

*Serves: Children K-5<sup>th</sup> grade*

## **YOUTH PROGRAMS (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

**Too Hype Teen Night - (THTN)** - Too Hype Teen Night is a discipleship program for young teens in our neighborhood to gain a better understanding of the Bible and how it applies to their lives. One night a week, we have a time for these teens to gather in a youth group environment where they spend time eating, fellowshiping, worshipping, discussing hot topics, and digging into the Word together. THTN also provides monthly field trips and other events for the teens to bond together and have fun.

*Serves: Youth grades 6-12*

*Meets: Thursday evenings*

**Teen After-school Program (NEW!)** - Agape Development's teen after-school program will begin its pilot year for the 2015-2016 school year. Our aim is to provide individualized academic, career, behavior, and life skills counseling to teens in middle and high school. To this end, we will begin a commitment with a small group of teens to journey with them through their school year, assisting them in setting and achieving their goals. We hope to assign these teens to an internship or job site starting January 2016, to provide engaged learning opportunities in a real-life career setting.

*Serves: Youth grades 6-12*

*Meets: one-two afternoons a week*

**Serenity** - Serenity seeks to provide a safe place for teen girls in our neighborhood to connect with one another, engage in positive conversations, and be empowered by the love of Jesus Christ. Our hope is that these young women will grow in confidence as they mature together, becoming a community of friends rooted in faith.

Serves: Teen girls, grades 6-12

Meets: one evening a week

**SWAG: (Saved Without Apology & Godly)** - SWAG aims to evangelize, empower, and equip male youth through the inspired word of God. The term SWAG is culturally relevant and it relates to this current generation. SWAG is an out the box approach that is focused on leading young men into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal is to make dynamic disciples that will become world changers. We will utilize SWAG as a way to gather and connect young men into meaningful worship, Bible Study, and healthy dialogue about God and faith as they know it. Under this umbrella we will teach them what it means to stand out for the cause of Christ.

**Theme Scripture:** Romans: 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Serves: Teen boys, grades 6-12

Meets: one evening a week

**Too Hype Summer Experience (THSE)** - Too Hype Summer Experience is a summer career readiness and discipleship program for teens in our neighborhood to gain job skills and experience with a biblical perspective and foundation. By the end of the summer, participants create short and long-term educational, career, personal, and spiritual goals for themselves. Through career readiness curriculum, job site visits, speakers, and our start-up snow cone business, the teens learn valuable lessons that will serve them well when they are ready to enter the job market one day. Teens also learn the importance of keeping Christ at the center of their journey into adulthood through daily worship and devotions, service site visits, and trips to two Christian summer camps that present the gospel in an engaging and relevant way.

Serves: Youth grades 6-12

Meets: 7 weeks in the summer

**Sports Ministry** - The mission of Agape Development 's Sports Ministry is to introduce Jesus Christ to young men and women through various sports activities. We envision this to be a way to reach individuals and families with a message of hope and salvation in a relaxed and culturally relevant way. Agape sports ministry provides consistent mentoring, strong discipleship, and positive reinforcement that result in a true desire for a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ. We promote our coaches to teach discipline, respect, and teamwork, as those are all important principles to live by. Agape Development offers a variety of sports opportunities such as flag football, basketball, soccer, baseball, dance and step teams. We encourage all family and friends to come support our Agape Development teams because we value the sense of community and support.

Serves: Children and Youth

# Agape Development High Impact Opportunities

**Allies - January - June 2016 - Adults** - Team up with one of our community members who has completed the Getting Ahead class and become mentors and advocates for each other. The graduates have much to teach about their neighborhood and what they know and have learned about poverty. While the allies can help them practice networking and work on some financial goals, we want both graduates and allies to be able to hold each other accountable spiritually. Group will meet weekly.

**Houston Inner City Sports (HIS) League** - HIS League is collaboration between Generation Once, The Forge for Families, Cornerstone, Agape Development, and several other Houston faith-based organizations, to bring sports to the youth of Houston's underserved areas.

**Flag Football Coaches - September - November 2015 - Sports - Boys - 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> grade**

Games and practice at Texans YMCA

Practice once during the week

Games on Saturday, time TBD

**HIS League Volleyball Coaches - September - November 2015 - Sports - Girls** - HIS League is expanding to include girls' volleyball. Share your skill set and knowledge with our girls!

Practice and games TBD

**HIS League Basketball - November 2015 - March 2015 - Boys**

**Teen After-school Program - Partners for Progress - Minimum twice a month for one semester - Tuesdays - 4:30-6:30** - Our new teen program will meet at the City of Refuge Church during the school year. Commitment is semester-long, but we hope that most of our Partners will go the distance with their teen for the entire school year. Volunteers will be partnered with a teen to discuss their spiritual, educational, and life goals, and then empower the teen to take action towards building a plan with detailed steps that are both short term and long term. Volunteer will work with the teen to make progress on these goals. Teens will have ownership, think of yourself as a guide - you have the resources, tools and experience to share but will let the teen develop a plan for themselves as they engage in research on the computer and at our college or job site visits during the school year.

**Too Hype Teen Night Volunteer - Minimum twice a month thru May 2016 - Thursdays - 6:00-8:00pm - Teens** - Come for food, fellowship, worship, spiritual lesson, and fun at our youth night. Fellowship (and eat if you want!) with teens during dinner, engage in activities, help "keep the peace" during worship and the talk time, and build relationships with our amazing teenagers.

## Agape Development Try It Out Opportunities

**Superfan - Sports - Game Days Vary** - Come cheer on our players and provide a snack and drink to the hardworking team!

**Getting Ahead/Adult Allies Dinner and Childcare - Wednesdays 6:00-9:00 - Meets September through December** -- Come support our adult programs by providing dinner to the group and helping to watch the children while their parents participate in our Getting Ahead class.

**Lemonade Day- May 2016 - Backyard Bible Club - Ages K - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade** - Let your church be a sales site for the children who attend Backyard Bible Club! Lemonade Day begins teaching the principles of business and sales. Lemonade Day season ends with the kids putting what they have learned into practice. Members will come to Agape Development on Sunday morning, help load kids and supplies, then assist the BBC staff with the kids while they sell lemonade after church service.

**Photographer - All Programs** - There are many events throughout the year that Agape Development would love to have documented: sport games, community events, summer program, BBC activities, etc. Let us know you're availability or program preference and we'll contact you when there is a photo opportunity.

**Rise Up Summer Adventure (RUSA) - Monday thru Thursday 1:00pm - 5:00pm - K-5<sup>th</sup> grade** - Sign your small group/youth group (high school and/or college) up to serve on week with RUSA. Volunteer groups will be responsible for planning games and crafts, participating in worship time, and to help direct the behavior of the kids.

**Rise Up Summer Adventure Short course leaders - Ages K - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade** - What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? Painting, woodworking, ballet, music, football, computers, building towers, step, basketball, songwriting...the possibilities are endless! Give two hours one week during the summer to share your interest with a child.

**Sports Banquet** - At the end of each sport season we like to celebrate with the team and their parents. Bring your group to help decorate, serve, and then to visit with the families during this time. November, March, May.

### **Too Hype Summer Experience Lunch**

Provide lunches for our teen summer program - a huge blessing! Any day(s) Mondays thru Thursdays for the 7 week summer program, around 30 teens total. Stick around and join us for lunch to meet the teens if you're interested!

**Too Hype Teen Night Dinner - Thursday 6:00-7:00** - Come support our teen program by providing dinner to the group. Volunteers are welcome to stay and eat with our teens to get to know them. This is a great first step before committing to mentoring a teen.

**Snow Cone Sale Site - Too Hype Teen Experience - Summer 2016 - Middle & high school youth** - Do you host a VBS or other summer activity? Let your church or business be a site for our teens to sell snow cones.

## Agape Development Special Work/Program Projects

- Computer Curtain - Time flexible** - Since the front room is used for so many purposes it would be beneficial to be able to close off the computer area at times. There is currently a PVC pipe hanging above the computer area. We need a curtain made. Email [amandag@agapedevelopment.org](mailto:amandag@agapedevelopment.org)
- Garden Work Day** - Agape Development's Community Garden continues to flourish! Occasionally we need groups to help build new beds or clean out existing ones. Call or email for availability.
- Handyman Projects** - We keep a running list of repairs and organization projects that need to be done around the office. Bring your small group out and help us cross some of these items off! Email for list and available dates.
- Office Clean up** - Volunteer with a group of friends or from church and help up stay clean and organized! Our building has many programs happenings, so sometimes we get a bit messy.

## A g a p e   D e v e l o p m e n t   I n   K i n d   N e e d s

**Meals:** Food has historically brought people together. It's a time for people to share and tell their stories. Many of Agape Development's programs serve meals as an opportunity for participants, staff, and volunteers to begin to build lasting relationships that are critical to Agape Development's vision of lasting relationships. Email or see above Try It Out opportunities for more meal information.

### **Teen Program:**

- 30 Daily devotionals: One God, One Plan, One Life by Max Lucado
- Healthy snacks for teen afterschool program: Gatorade/Powerade, chips, beef jerky, frito pie mixings

### **Children's Program:**

- Alphabet stickers (to be able to spell names)
- Plastic cups that are different colors (solid colors) to use for snack time (40) in K-5<sup>th</sup> grade program
- 4 rugs that have fun designs that a group of about 7 children could sit on (they need to be able to fold)
- 40 glue sticks
- Fresh fruit for snacks

### **Adult Programs:**

- 5 Sewing to start a sewing club.
- Gift cards to local food locations so we can take adults to lunch for fellowship: Subway, Chick-Fil-A, Sonic, McDonalds

**Office Items:** 8 1/2x 11 Pinter Paper, Pens, Sharpies, Coffee, sticky notes, Large 3M Sticky Pads 2' x3'

**Large items:** 5500 watt Generator, Lawn mower, weed eater, blower.

**Trades On Call:** There are times when Agape Development has emergency needs of electricians, plumbers, and other skilled worked. We would like to have a database of people we could call on when these situations occur.