

Summer 2020

AGAPE SERVICE PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER UPDATE

Our sixteenth summer was a summer of change, and Agape has adapted and grown in ways we never could have expected. We made difficult decisions and encountered many struggles. However, the good Lord makes all things beautiful, and this summer is no exception. Fruitful collaborations and partnerships helped us be able to live out Agape's mission to serve our farmworker brothers and sisters unconditionally and sacrificially. It takes many hands to bring the Agape Service Project to life, and we are incredibly blessed by the countless prayers, donations, time, energy and support from each and every person that touches our program.

WE MISSED OUR GROUPS

We were deeply saddened by the decision to cancel our youth groups this summer but knew it was the right thing to protect those we serve as well as those we serve alongside.

To stay in touch with all our wonderful groups and supporters, we created a YouTube channel along with other social media efforts to involve as many people as possible, even from a distance.



We posted weekly videos with a message to the groups that would have been serving with us



*Left: Perishable produce box
Right: Non-perishable food box
So grateful for our partnership with Bellingham Food Bank that provided all of the food boxes for the summer*

FOOD DELIVERY

In anticipation of a possible higher need of food items among the families we serve, we added food distribution as a component to our services for the summer in 3 of the farmworker housing sites.

We are so grateful to have partnered with Bellingham Food Bank, who has provided us with protein items and fresh and non-perishable food boxes for 201 families per week on average.



VOLUNTEERS

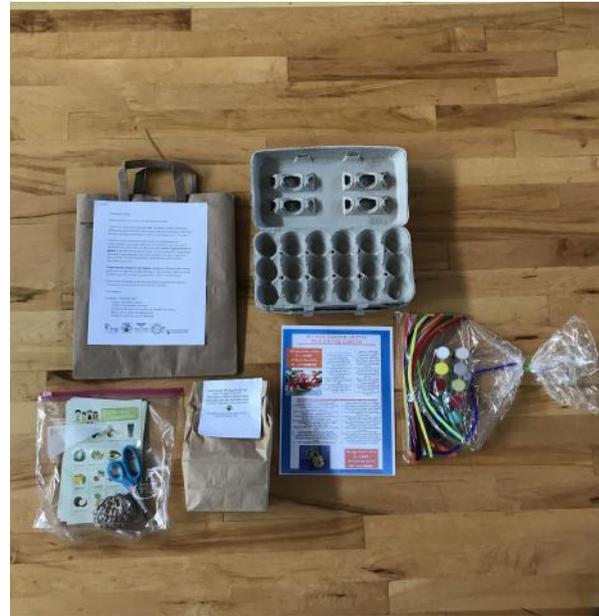
Volunteers this summer were a vital aspect of the Agape team. Without their generosity we could not have sorted the thousands of pounds of rice and beans, the innumerable diapers, the many kid kits and school supplies, or prepped the hospitality table for our food bank. Volunteers brought light and life to each week, both in preparation for and in running our weekly food bank.



Volunteers pack diapers to be distributed at the Food Bank

KID KITS

Our staff assembled and distributed education and activity kits to 70 families each week. In partnership with NWESD 189, SeaMar, and Common Threads, our hopes to provide our families' K-5 students with fun and safe educational engagement over the summer were fulfilled.



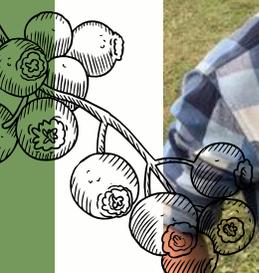
Kid kit with supplies for egg carton critter craft (Agape), Loteria (NWESD 189), and a microgreen planting kit (Common Threads)



At Boxx Berry Farms, staff Ryan and Kendra harvest potatoes for Bellingham Food Bank

FARM SUPPORT

This summer, the six of us staff supported our partner farms twice per week, which included local, organic farms such as Bellingham Country Gardens, Growing Veterans, and gleaning with Bellingham Food Bank. Whatever the farm manager needed us to do, whether that be weeding, harvesting, or cleaning, we were there to help.



2020 AGAPE STAFF

KENDRA



- Summer Highlight: Finding new ways to connect and maintain relationships with the families, partner agencies and youth groups.
- “God Moment”: My God Moment was when I saw a toddler around 2 years old trying to help carry a box for his family. Despite the box being almost as big as him, he was determined to help out. When he couldn’t lift it he would just laugh and try again. His willingness, perseverance and joyful service is a Christlike act we should all strive to follow.
- New insight: You can plan everything perfectly and it still won’t go as planned. But it’s OK because it was never ours to plan anyway. God does not follow our plans. We follow his plans which exceed anything we ever could imagine.

ELLEN

- Summer Highlight: Seeing familiar faces at our food bank each week, followed by the simple exchange, “how have you been?”
- “God moment”: During food delivery day, seeing the plant growing kits that Common Threads gave to the kids sprouting by the doorstep.
- New insight: We need only give what little we are and what little we have, God will take care of the rest :)



JUAN



- Summer Highlight: It was the end of a foodbank day and we had just finished and cleaned everything up so we went to get Edaleen’s ice cream and I just remember looking to my right seeing Ellen crying from pure laughter and it made everyone else laugh.
- “God moment”: Working at the hospitality table serving horchata, watermelon, pineapple or jamaica juice and seeing their faces full of joy; it reminds of me of seeing the face of Christ in every person I encounter and that every single one of us is made unique from one another because of our likes and dislikes.
- New insight: Patience is the most important thing I’ve learned this summer. The importance of it this summer allowed me to show more compassion to my peers and it allowed me to see where others are coming from when they feel frustrated. We grew a lot as a team and I am truly grateful to grow in patience this summer with this awesome dream team at Agape.

JUSTIN

- Summer Highlight: Getting to work for some different farms in Whatcom County each week and meeting fascinating people.
- “God moment”: Seeing such pure joy in so many of the faces of kids who played while we brought food to their families.
- New insight: Be intentional with everything you do, and be grateful for everything you have.

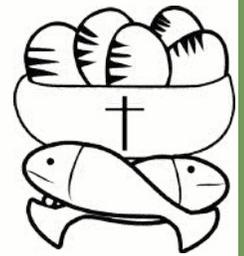


RYAN



- Summer Highlight: Fulfilling all of my forgotten childhood dreams: playing in the dirt and driving big trucks and tractors.
- “God moment”: During the second to last food bank day, I was graced with a new perspective. The logistical details of the day seemed to go considerably smoother than normal, but more than that, everything felt right. I finally felt as if I understood the work we were doing at an intuitive level. It was enough, for that day, to see people worth helping and to help them as well as we could.
- New insight: If you think you need a running start, there’s probably a better way to do it.

LOAVES & FISHES



We witnessed many miracles of unexpected generosity, multiplication and abundance. Many of them left us speechless and in awe! The summer may have had difficult moments, but it was also the summer of the loaves and fishes. Here are a few:

- Bellingham Food Bank taking us on as an official partner for the summer - providing food for every weekly food bank
- The individual families and churches who chose to donate their participant fees even though they weren't able to volunteer with us this summer
- Suzanne with Ferndale Food Bank securing 2,500lbs of rice & pinto beans (the exact amount we needed!) for our food bank from Moses Lake AND picking it up for us
- We purchased hundreds of dollars of personal hygiene items without actually having money for it in the budget; the next day a parish donated \$750
- Surplus of volunteers - services could not have happened without the incredible volunteers who gave so much time! It's unusual for us to host so many volunteers outside our youth groups, but so many people were eager to help
- Abundance beyond the hoped for donated items - limes and fresh tomatoes for the food bank, 75 sets of baby clothes, 110 units of laundry detergent

STAFF REFLECTION



I am drawn to the fundamental workings of things, sometimes to a fault as I focus on details over the big picture. This is probably what led me to pursuing a degree in chemistry. However, as much as I enjoy the scientific study of matter and its properties, all that I find through chemistry also serves to emphasize what cannot be found in chemistry. All that "is" is because of He Who Is. As well as I can see the reflection of God through his creation, I can (to paraphrase St. Augustine) find the Giver in the gift.

This yearning to understand and know God brought me to the Agape Service Project. I became so focused on what or how God is, that I got ahead of my understanding of who God is, personally. As a person, Christ dedicated his life to service. I needed to better understand God's love through service to better know Christ. In hindsight, it's clear why Agape (named for the love that is like God's) was such a persistent option when discerning for my summer.

My summer at Agape showed me how little I know, and how, despite this, I still tend to fall back on what little I know rather than turning first to Christ. I need less faith in myself and more faith in God. Like Peter walking on the water, I only cry out to the Lord after I start to sink. Our summer of "loaves and fishes" further emphasizes how helpless I am without God:

Lifting up his eye, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" (John 6:5 RSV).

Why does Jesus ask Philip what to do? If Philip is anything like me, he internally turned first to himself rather than Christ. Like Philip, I tend to get preoccupied with how or why something will happen rather than simply trusting that God's love for us will bring it to completion.

This summer, I came to more fully understand the necessity of a child-like (not childish) dependence on God. I was shown the joy of having my skepticism overwhelmed by generosity. I came to a more personal understanding of God's love by attempting to more fully live Christ's example of agape. -Ryan

FOOD BANK UPDATE

The Agape Food Bank has remained the core of our services this summer. It was where we were able to assist our families with much needed food, safety supplies, diapers, toys, books, backpacks, and hygiene kits. But it was also where we were able to be in relationship with the families the most this summer. In our efforts to always expand relationships and services, this summer we added a hospitality table and additional resources.



The food bank is always only possible because of our incredible partners, generous donors, sacrificial volunteers and the many miracles of our Lord; we stand in awe and gratitude! This summer we served an average of 93 families each week in a very modified drive-thru model.

HOSPITALITY TABLE

The heart of Agape is building relationships with the families and creating a dignified experience at the food bank. These aspects are more difficult with social distancing, masks and a drive-thru model.

Our new hospitality table was our attempt to create a joyful and relational aspect of the food bank. Each week, our volunteers helped us prepare different juices or fruit to distribute to the families, creating a space of connection and hospitality.



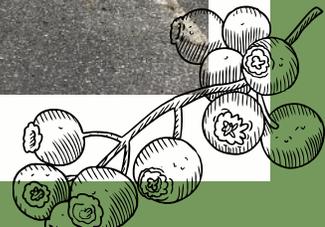
Volunteers Grace and Sergio serve agua de jamaica at the food bank hospitality table

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A major goal for this year, even before coronavirus, was to make our food bank more of a health fair model - invite other agencies and organizations that provide additional needed services. This became an even greater need with the pandemic.

This summer SeaMar Community Health distributed health and safety information and resources each week at our food bank. Labor & Industries Language Access Program provided resources and support for wage, hour, and safety in the work place for our farmworker families.

We are so grateful for these organizations that support the families with additional services and are excited about continued expansion of our health fair model.





VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

My name is Josh and I volunteered at Agape this summer. By volunteering I gained the knowledge that helped me appreciate the food we eat.



One of the things I learned is that the migrant families that harvest our food live in a tight community. The migrant families rely on each other for support. The days I volunteered several people picked up food for other families that were not able to come to the food bank that day. The migrant families send some of what little they earn back to their families in their home countries to support them. Also, while they are here, their working conditions are not good. They work long hours each day and they are not well paid.

Working with Agape helped me to understand that we need to take care of those who are taking care of us. I enjoyed working there because it helped me give back to those who put food on my table.

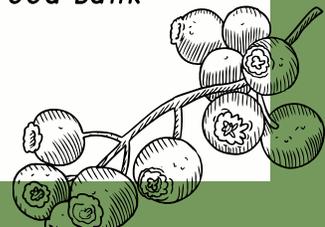
- Josh, 8th grader at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Seattle

BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 weeks of services
- 6 staff members
- 45 volunteers served 442 Volunteer hours
- 410 kid kits distributed to families
- 201 families served on average each week
- 26 partner community agencies
- 3,642 total pre-packed boxes of food distributed
- 60 gallons of aguas frescas made & served at our hospitality table
- 3,050 masks distributed
- 155 backpacks with school supplies distributed
- 8,460 diapers distributed at the food bank



Juan purchases diapers at Costco to distribute at the Food Bank





THANK YOU!

It was a beautiful summer of collaboration! We could not have served the farmworker families without our amazing partners and generous supporters! Thank you so much!!

- **Food Bank and Distribution:** Bellingham Food Bank, Ferndale Food Bank, Project Hope Food Bank, Third Christian Reformed Church, Kids Need Books, SeaMar Promotores Program, Department of Labor & Industries - Language Access Program, Christ the King Farm, Bellingham Costco
- **Kid Kits:** NWESD 189, SeaMar Community Health Centers, Common Threads
- **Farms:** Bellingham Country Gardens, Growing Veterans, Bellingham Food Bank Gleaning
- **Operations:** Assumption Church, Sacred Heart Church, CYO Camps, CYO Athletics, WWU Newman Center
- **Food Bank Collections:** St. Louise-Bellevue, Sacred Heart-Enumclaw, St. Joseph's-Seattle, Our Lady of the Lake-Seattle, St. Catherine's-Seattle, Holy Names Academy-Seattle, Seattle Prep
 - Thank you to all the parishes who organized and promoted their own donation drives to make our services more than we hoped for
- All of our generous donors, volunteers and prayer team who support us year-round



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



We have gotten very creative with our socially distant staff photos this year

Kelsey Harrington

Kendra Baker

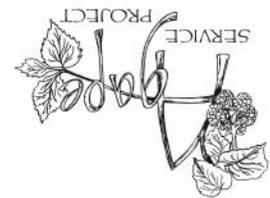
Juan Balmedina

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Justin Hecht

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LET'S STAY CONNECTED



Artwork by Former Staff
Member Emily Hillman

Website: wwunewman.com/agape

Facebook: facebook.com/agapeserviceproject

Instagram: instagram.com/agape.service.project

Youtube: Agape Service Project

Northwest Catholic Article: "Students Serve
Whatcom County's Farmworker Families With
Agape Love"

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