

AGAPE SERVICE PROJECT

2024 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Pipe Cleaner Hearts - An 8-year old bursting with joy, love, and energy, “Ana”, is one of the incredible kiddos Agape has come to know well at one of the farmworker housing sites we visit 3 times a week. And every week this summer, “Ana” made it her mission to make a pipe cleaner heart for every Agape youth and adult participant.

She would bounce around meeting all the new people each Sunday; learning their names and favorite colors. And then would get to work making 20-30 pipe cleaner hearts every week. Ensuring each person received one by our last visit on Tuesday.
Ensuring each person felt seen and loved.

As I was flipping through photos from the summer, I kept seeing “Ana’s” pipe cleaner hearts pop up in different photos from different weeks. I still get a little emotional about this **profound and simple act of love** that was so perfectly child-like and ‘small things with great love’.

‘Pipe cleaner hearts’ has become a little phrase of mission for me. How can we be more like “Ana” and her pipe cleaner hearts - ensuring each person we encounter feels seen and loved, and is left just a little bit better by our small act of love.

To each person who is part of our Agape Family - thank you for your small acts of love and sacrifice that make this program possible. I hope you enjoy reading about our 21st summer of encounter, growth, and love that you are part of.

With Immense Gratitude - Kelsey Harrington, Director



Above- “Ana” & Kelsey

Below- “Ana” & 2023 Agape staff member Deacon Joseph (who visited for a day in July), with 2 pipe cleaner hearts



Highlights

- Agape’s largest summer staff team ever - **10 total staff** including 7 young adults under 25 - providing leadership opportunities for young adults in ministry
- Agape Food Bank served a total of **5,708 households** (21,615 people) over 10 weeks
- **300+ youth & adult participants** from 22 parish/school communities
- **4 college scholarships** (\$1,000 each) awarded to farmworkers pursuing higher education - Agape is honored to play a small role in these educational journeys
- **300+ letters sent to Senators** Maria Cantwell & Patty Murray advocating for them to join as co-sponsors of Senate Bill 269 - Protect America’s Children from Toxic Pesticides Act
- **80+ hours of prayer and formation** led by our staff for participants throughout the 7 weeks of service-immersion programming

Website: archseattle.org/agape

LET’S STAY **Instagram:** [@agape.service.project](https://www.instagram.com/agape.service.project)

CONNECTED **Facebook:** [/agapeserviceproject](https://www.facebook.com/agapeserviceproject)

Email: kelsey.harrington@seattlearch.org

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES OF AGAPE

COMMUNITY MEMBER REFLECTION - “When I think of Agape, I think of kindness. I am super grateful for Agape! I love that they keep their tradition of coming to our camp to provide a free and delicious meal and activities for the kids (and even their parents/guardians). To add, I love that the Agape volunteers and staff are always welcoming and heart warming.

In my perspective, especially staff member Rosa! She has been an older sister that I never had, a wonderful friend, and overall a great person to be around. I am also appreciative of how kind and considerate all the volunteers/staff are. They try their best to remember names, facts, and be a listening ear to any and all people who attend their weekly hang out times at our camp. Even if it sounds like a small act, to me it's very loving.

From the bottom of my heart I truly appreciate and love the times that the Agape community visit our camp. Every year, I look forward to reconnecting with the staff and previous volunteers, hanging out with them, and especially their food, it's always delicious and made with love!” -Joselin



Joselin (junior in high school) & her family live at one of the farmworker housing sites Agape has been serving for 18+ years

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AT FARMWORKER HOUSING

- Agape offered a **weekly communal BBQ at 2 housing sites**
- 3 days a week, we built relationships through play & activities like **volleyball, soccer, bubbles, bracelet making, & more** at 3 sites!
- Additionally, every Monday, we provided **special activities**, such as: **life-sized Lincoln Logs, lanterns, slime, Lotería, & water balloons!**

Through community meals and activities, everyone is able to participate in child-like joy and build a culture of encounter.



Friends making a Stitch lantern together!

MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION



Group members from O'Dea High School helping distribute hygiene products

- For 8 weeks, we delivered an average of **148 food boxes weekly** to **4 different farmworker housing sites** (a total of **1,184 deliveries!**)
- We also offered **hygiene products**, such as diapers, formula, and feminine products
- We are grateful for our partnership with Bellingham Food Bank that makes this service possible

Through food delivery, we provide access to nutritious and culturally-relevant food, and eliminate barriers to food, like transportation and time, for families.

JUSTICE-ORIENTED AGRICULTURE

- Agape staff and groups worked at **4 different organic and justice-oriented farms**
- Together we **harvested** strawberries, blueberries, kale, green beans, and sunflowers!
- We appreciate all the farms who welcomed us onto their farm, and taught us how farm work is dignified labor!

Through farm work, groups practice solidarity, build a connection with creation, and support farms with a better vision of agriculture.

Students from Our Lady Queen of Heaven harvesting green beans at Christ the King Farm



FOOD BANK UPDATE

How can you infuse a spirit of hospitality into this day? This was the challenge given to our groups, volunteers, and staff each Wednesday. Reminding all of us that loving attention and presence to each person is the ultimate priority.

This summer, **Agape Food Bank was able to provide dignified, joy-filled food access to an average of 570 households weekly** for 10 weeks (total of 5,708 HH & 21,615 people). Over the years, Agape has become not just a food access point, but a community resource hub. Although food is the service being offered, our **biggest goal is that those present feel welcome, seen, and loved**. And the unique aspects highlighted below have made the space more of a *mercado*, or farmers market, than a food bank. Creating a culture rooted in **caring for the whole person and the whole family**.

Providing the quality and quantity (33+ items weekly) of culturally-relevant food items, diapers, feminine hygiene, etc. requires us to purchase almost everything we offer. This is our commitment to **dignified food access** so that those who harvest the food in our community can achieve their own nutrition security. We are grateful to the many foundations, grants, and individual/group donors who join us in this work and make it possible. You play a critical role.

FREE TACO STAND



We foster a spirit of **hospitality** for our guests by providing a hot meal. This summer, we served around **1,150 tacos weekly!** Thank you, **Chispita de Sabor** for the delicious food!

KIDS PLAY AREA



Our play area is **essential** for our guests - to serve the need for **children to play** while their parents shop. This emphasizes that the **entire family is welcome** at our food bank!

CLOTHING & BOOKS



Thank you to all of our groups and guests for donating clothing and books! Our guests enjoyed shopping through a **variety of clothing and books** for their families!

LOCAL FOODS



We are grateful for a grant that helped us purchase from **local growers and makers**. Using our purchasing power to support local agriculture is an act of **social justice** and moving the agriculture system in a better direction.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



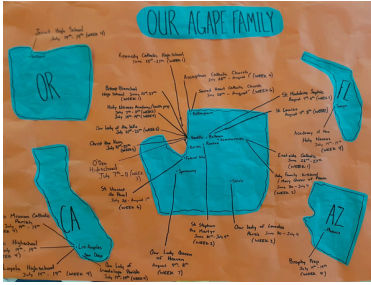
Offering info booth space to **19 other agencies** throughout the summer provides access to services and resources Agape cannot provide - serving the **whole person & whole family**. See the list of partners on the last page.

BACKPACKS



Every year, we offer **fully stocked backpacks** for students. We do this to help students better **access their education**. Thank you to all the communities who donated school supplies and helped provide **530 backpacks!**

AGAPE FAMILY - 2024 GROUPS!



Agape welcomed 300+ youth and adult participants from:

- 4 western WA Catholic high schools
- 11 parishes from Archdiocese of Seattle & 1 from Diocese of Yakima
- 6 Catholic high schools from FL, AZ, CA, OR, & WA during our Ignite week in partnership with Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

We are so grateful to our returning & new groups alike - it is an honor to grow with and serve alongside these remarkable youth and adults who give so selflessly, reflect with such intentionality, strive to find Grace in all things, and infuse our program with joy and energy! We are in awe of our growing & beautiful Agape Family!

STUDENT REFLECTION - SIMEON, HOLY FAMILY, KIRKLAND

Hi! I'm Simeon and I'm a sophomore from Bellevue. I have been doing Agape since I was in 7th grade and it has become **an anchor for my summers**. For me, the highlight of Agape is always the food bank. I feel like I get to take charge and make a meaningful difference in something that is meeting the needs of families. It's hard physical work, don't get me wrong, but it's always a really good (and actually really fun) team-building experience. **No matter how much I put in, I always seem to get more out**, and the friendships I build with the other students are not just for that week but pick up year after year. There is a particular bond that comes with having hoisted 50lb potato sacks together and in the end, we get to see mountains of food go home with smiling faces.



Simeon paints the nails of a new friend at a farmworker housing site.

We also **get to spend time with the families we serve**. We BBQ and eat together, play soccer and do games or crafts, and through it all we experience that the people we serve are just ordinary families, ordinary people like us. What is not ordinary is how hard they work in the fields. We get a few days of work to sample that, and it's hard, but I appreciate that it helps me to see a glimpse of how that might feel day after day and how that would impact life.

Finally, I can always rely on a valuable small group session with my Core Team leaders. We talk how the day might **impact our lives and see how our work connects to our faith journey**.

ADULT REFLECTION - DESTYNE, OUR LADY QUEEN OF HEAVEN, TACOMA

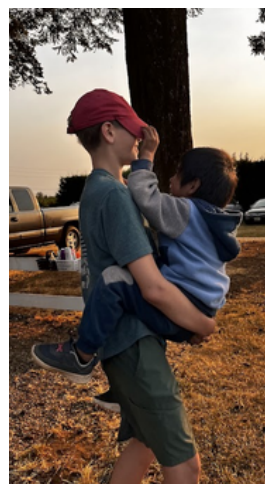
Destyne (left) & the OLQH group

In summer of 2019, I had the privilege of serving as a youth with Agape. And there was a major difference from other mission trips - **the families we worked with during Agape were right in my backyard**. This had a lasting impact on me regarding the importance of service and gave new understanding to the story of the Good Samaritan. It showed me that service does not need to be done in far-off places, that it can be done, and it is needed, at home.



Being able to return five years later to, not only serve at Agape, but as a leader was **a rekindling in my faith that I needed**. It is one thing to go about your faith in the silence of your home, going through the motions of mass and prayer. And it is another to teach others the value and importance of those things. It was the opportunity to show my group **the importance of mass and prayer and how it fuels us to go out and serve others**. We as human beings are frail, get burnt out, and often misunderstand or lose track of why we are serving; but that is why we turn to our Lord. He is the perfect example of service, so it is necessary, to lean on Him in order to be vessels for His work.

Through Agape I had the honor and privilege of **learning the meaning of self-sacrifice and service**, then using what I learned to teach others. Of course it is the Lord's work, I was just open to being His vessel to those all around me. So, I encourage those who have gone before and who have gotten stuck in the motions of their faith to return. Go to Agape and be reminded of how **a smile, a coloring page, a game of soccer, a day at a food bank can leave a lasting impact on those you serve and yourself**. I hope to get the chance to return to Agape again; if you have the opportunity please go, please send your youth. **Plant that seed and let the Lord change your heart into being a vessel for His work**. God bless you.



2024 AGAPE YOUNG ADULT STAFF



Isabel, 1st Year - It's the little things done with great and gentle love that change us in deep profound ways. Where actions speak louder than words. It was in being present in each moment and fully engaging with the person in front of me. Whether it was checking people in at our food bank, interacting with the kids, our weekly youth group folks, the farmworker community and so many more people that allowed much fruit to be borne in relationships. In giving of ourselves and receiving the gift of others - in being known. It's the little things that can impact lives profoundly.

Kaleigh, 1st Year - Agape, what an incredibly incomprehensible word. Definitionally impossible to actualize. By the grace of God through this program, I think I understand it a little more. The absolute capacity that I have witnessed from my colleagues, from our volunteers and most importantly from the farmworker community. To love radically and so self-sacrificially has molded my faith in a deep, profound and everlasting way. I have been so privileged to witness and to see Christ loving and seeking those around me. By the grace of God, I have experienced immense and incredible growth. Praise be to God!



Loriza, 1st Year - Community, connection, and faith are just a few words to sum up this summer working with Agape. Agape helped me open up my heart to others and open my eyes to see Christ in the stranger. Whether it's playing with children, experiencing that childlike joy, or working at the food bank. One of my favorite memories this summer was making a handshake with a girl named Paloma and it reminded me of when my younger sister and I would create handshakes. I'm very thankful to have worked for such an amazing program that helped restore my faith in God, taught me how to build a connection with others, and gave me an opportunity to serve the community.

Lizveth, 2nd Year - Agape has brought a lot of meaning, joy, and intentionality into my life, from being a youth participant in 2019, to being a staff member for the last 2 years. I want to thank everyone I've met through this experience, my fellow staff, youth and adult participants, community volunteers, and most importantly the farmworking community of Whatcom County. I've been so blessed to be welcomed and trusted into these peoples' lives and can never express enough how grateful I am to these families. These kids are the best example of what it means to be selfless. They will forever inspire me to continue doing work for others and will always hold a huge piece of my heart.



Kateri, 3rd Year - They say 3rd times a charm and this third summer with Agape has been an incredible one. I hoped this would be a summer of storytelling. Numerous faces and names will continue to flood my mind when I think about all I am grateful for in these last few months. It has been so life-giving to say "hey" and "see ya later" to friends new and old. Thank you to all who have been part of our community. From fellow staff, to youth, to Agape partners, to BFB and, of course, the trucks, I have loved all the moments we've shared. Thank you for sharing in Agape this summer and allowing hospitality and solidarity to inspire us in continuing this work.

Rosa, Social Services & Food Bank Manager - Every summer, I leave with a full heart because of the work Agape does for others. This summer was impactful due to my new role and growing friendships! As Agape's (first ever) food bank manager, I was able to connect with families, provide profound experiences for youth groups, and continue to share joy and laughter with the kids at the camps. I am grateful for this new role, as it has allowed me to continue to share my gifts with a community that I continue to love and share memories with.



GET INVOLVED - 4 WAYS TO JOIN THE WORK & STAY CONNECTED

1. Give - financial support

Agape Service Project relies on donations to make our services & programming a reality; we are abundantly grateful for the donors who make our work possible each year.

If you are interested in financially supporting our continued work, please visit:

archseattle.org/give-serve/agape-gift
or contact Kelsey Harrington



2. Give - time (volunteer)

Join us in the culture of encounter and upholding dignity - volunteer with Agape! Volunteers are needed every summer in Whatcom County - both groups & individuals.

- For groups: reach out to Kelsey
- For individuals: join our volunteer database at:
archseattle.org/agape-get-involved

3. Shop Sustainably

Every purchase matters - in our life and in the lives of others. Everything we buy is connected to the livelihoods of others. So if we are going to buy something, why not buy something that empowers farmworkers, benefits every hand that touches it, and protects the environment? We can make an impact and uphold the dignity of workers by changing how we shop.



It can be a little overwhelming at first, so maybe start with just one change - chocolate, coffee, or socks. Or shop at your local farmer's market once a month.

It may cost you a little bit more. But, that little bit more from you is a little bit more for the person who harvested it or made it for you.

#SeekTheSeal - Looking for the Fair Trade logo is a great place to start!

O God of seed and harvest, we come to this table mindful of your generosity.

Keep us also mindful of the workers whose labor makes all of our meals possible.

May the nourishment of this meal strengthen us to work for justice and equity, through solidarity and kinship. Amen.

4. Pray

At meal prayers, keep in mind those who make our meals possible - all of the individuals who have touched our food and therefore our lives - with a simple statement of gratitude or a full prayer.

THANK YOU!

This work cannot happen without collaboration, and we are so grateful to our amazing partners and generous supporters!

- **Food Bank and Social Services**: Bellingham Food Bank, Lynden School District, Food Lifeline, Chispita de Sabor, CHS NW Lynden, Catholic Community Services' PREPARES, Christ the King Farm, Puget Sound Food Hub, Stow-It, WSDA EFAP, Sustainable Whatcom Fund of the Whatcom Community Foundation, American Heart Association, Puget Sound Energy Foundation, Eleanor and Henry Jansen Foundation, CRS Rice Bowl Grant, Ferndale Food Bank, Builder Boards, Whatcom County Library System
- **Health & Human Services Present at Food Bank**: Bellingham Central Lions Club, CCS Farmworker Center, Community Health Plan of WA, Community to Community Development, Department of Social & Health Services, Food Lifeline, Inspire Development Centers, Lydia Place, Magic Show for Kids, Migrant Education Program, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Opportunity Council, Puget Sound Energy, Skagit Legal Aid, SNAP-Ed, St. Joseph Church Lynden, US Department of Labor – Wage & Hour Division, Whatcom Center for Early Learning, Whatcom County Library System
- **Farms**: Bellingham Country Gardens, Bellingham Food Bank Gleaning, Christ the King Farm, Growing Veterans
- **Operations**: Church of the Assumption and Assumption Catholic School, Bellingham Public Schools, Catholic Community Services, WWU Newman Center, Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center,
- **Agape Participating Communities**:
 - **Catholic High Schools**: Kennedy Catholic HS (Burien), Bishop Blanchet HS (Seattle), Holy Names Academy (Seattle), O'Dea High School (Seattle)
 - **Catholic Parishes**: Holy Family (Kirkland), Mary Queen of Peace (Sammamish), St. Stephen the Martyr (Renton), Our Lady of Lourdes (Selah), Our Lady of the Lake (Seattle), Christ the King (Seattle), St. Vincent de Paul (Federal Way), Assumption & Sacred Heart (Bellingham), St. Madeleine Sophie (Bellevue), St. Louise (Bellevue), Our Lady Queen of Heaven (Tacoma), St. John (Seattle)
 - **Ignite Groups - In partnership with Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center**: Holy Names Academy (Seattle), Jesuit High School (Portland), Verbum Dei High School (Los Angeles), Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (San Diego), Brophy Prep (Phoenix), Academy of the Holy Names (Tampa)

And all of our generous donors, volunteers, & supporters who carry us year-round!

With Immense Gratitude, The 2024 Staff

Director - Kelsey Harrington

Food Bank & Social Services Manager - Rosa Figueroa

Core Staff - Kateri Rinallo, Lizveth Delgado-Olvera, Kaleigh Morton, Loriza Rombaoa, Isabel Vega-Lemus

Chefs - Sergio Mendoza, Andrea Smith

Language Access Specialist - Anthony Thomas Meza Santos

