

Spring

2006

Agape
International

LOVE IN ACTION

AGAPE FAMILY

In Loving Memory

We are sorry to report that we have lost three members of our Agape family since November. While we certainly realized that the death of many of our HIV positive children is inevitable, you don't really wrap your mind around this reality until you are forced to face it. Dr. Daniel Mupiddi, a US based physician that is a member of our Board, tells us that the experience in the US (with much better healthcare and access to drugs) is that a baby born with HIV has an average life expectancy of eleven. Given this and the low quality of care that our children have received prior to coming to Agape, we can expect that we will lose many, if not most of our HIV positives.

However, we can continue to pray for miracles and be thankful that the children who do die were well cared for and loved while at Agape.

Thank you for all you do to help these children.

The three children who died were all very special and will be cherished in our memories:

Laxmi, age 10

Laxmi's story was highlighted in our Fall 2005 newsletter. She is the little girl who arrived at the Uppal home while a group of teens from the Vineyard Metrowest Church were in India working with our orphans. She was very ill with HIV related TB when she arrived and our staff feared she might die her very first night at Agape. Hannah Chase, one of the teens, bravely volunteered to stay up with her through the night, clear her mouth and throat from the life threatening mucous, and comfort Laxmi who was understandably afraid. Laxmi made it through that night and did have five months of relative good health. She was able to laugh and play with the other children and she particularly loved to color and play board games. She succumbed to TB related complications in late November while Lynne and Ratnam were in the US. It was very hard on Lynne and Ratnam that they were not there with Laxmi at the end.

Laxmi's father died from AIDS. Her mother is living with the virus. She is very weak and unable to work. She is living in a homeless shelter. Laxmi's body was returned to her at the shelter where her mother kept it laying next to her for days waiting to find a place to bury her daughter. It is difficult to imagine the grief and pain this poor woman is suffering.

AGAPE FAMILY contd.



Shivani, age 5

Lynne and Ratnam returned in December from spending Lynne's first Christmas in the US in four years and Ratnam's first ever to an outbreak of chicken pox in our two Hyderabad area homes. For all of us who have experienced chicken pox among our own children, imagine that times thirty-two (the number of children who eventually did get it). Almost all of the HIV positives did get sick, which is not surprising given their immune suppressed state. Shivani was one of the five children who were hospitalized as a result of the chicken pox epidemic.

Both of Shivani's parents died of AIDS. She has one older sister, Shirisha, who is also HIV positive and lives at Agape. Shivani came to Agape when her relatives refused to care for her. She was starved for attention and would light up when you spent time with her. She loved just sitting on your lap and being held.

HERE IN THE US

Fall Dinner Helps Raise Much Needed Funds

Agape hosted it's first Fall Dinner in November. The dinner was held at Masala Art, a beautifully decorated, gourmet Indian restaurant in Needham, MA and was attended by over a hundred Agape supporters. Lynne and Ratnam, visiting from India, updated attendees on Agape's history, mission and current activities before dinner. After dinner speakers included Susan Norcross, a Metrowest hospital healthcare professional who traveled to India to work with Agape this past summer and Kevin Stark, a Natick high school student who also visited Agape in India this past summer.

Lynne shared some of the worldwide statistics on AIDS and pointed out that while there have been many global disasters in recent years that call for our help, each year AIDS kills 25 times the number of people lost in the tsunami and leaves millions orphaned. Sue shared some of her personal stories from her trip, including her connection with Shankar, an HIV positive nine year old boy who came to Agape while she was in India. She told about the remarkable medical and emotional transformation that she was able to witness in Shankar during the two weeks she was in India. Kevin stole everyone's heart as he bravely stood in front of a room of adults and told about the kids who had made such an impression on him while in India. We were all personally moved and challenged by Kevin's compassion for these children.

Dinner festivities also included a silent auction with 35 items – all with an India theme (many brought back by Lynne from India) or donated by some with an Agape connection. The auction turned out to be a huge success with our youngest attendees – a number of people brought some of their children to the dinner (a wonderful way to expose them to the realities of life for much of the world's children). Mary Hronicek, a Sudbury resident and committed Agape volunteer (she is our pro bono tech consultant), was delighted that her handmade jewelry box and 24 bracelets was THE hotly contested item of the evening. A bidding war between several families broke out and the end result was \$925 raised for Agape (Mary graciously agreed to make additional boxes for the losing bidders at the same price). Other favorite items included an original oil painting by Agape Partner Deanna Cryan, several collections of India themed children's books and jewelry from India.



Agape Executive Director Lynne Voggu (left) and Board Member Debra Brede.



Needham Friends, (left) Sally Kane and Leslie Medalie (right).



Agape Volunteer Administrative Coordinator Joanne Thompson and Agape COO Kim Ogden's newest addition, baby Hope sporting genuine fashion from India.



Agape Board Member Dick Csaplar and his wife Joan.



Board member Dr. Daniel Mupiddi and his wife Mary.

HERE IN THE US



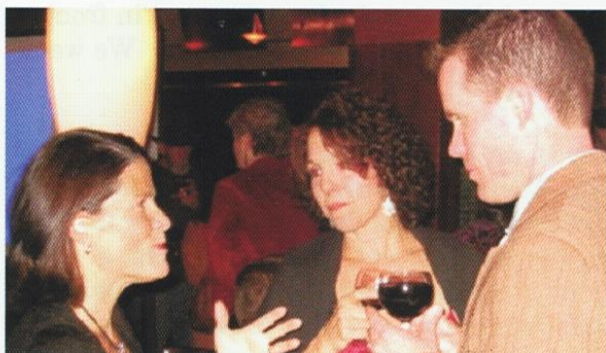
Addie Fiske Saylor catches up with friends.



Ken Jeffers and others peruse the auction table.



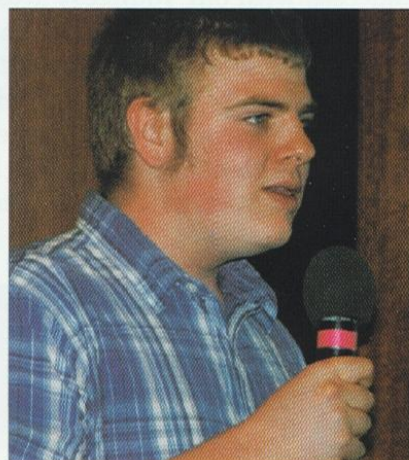
Susan Norcross, a Metrowest health professional, talks about her experiences in India with the Agape children.



Sherborn residents Mimi and Bob Krier talk with Susan Herel from Sudbury.



Long time Agape supporters, Donna and Chip Hazard from Weston.



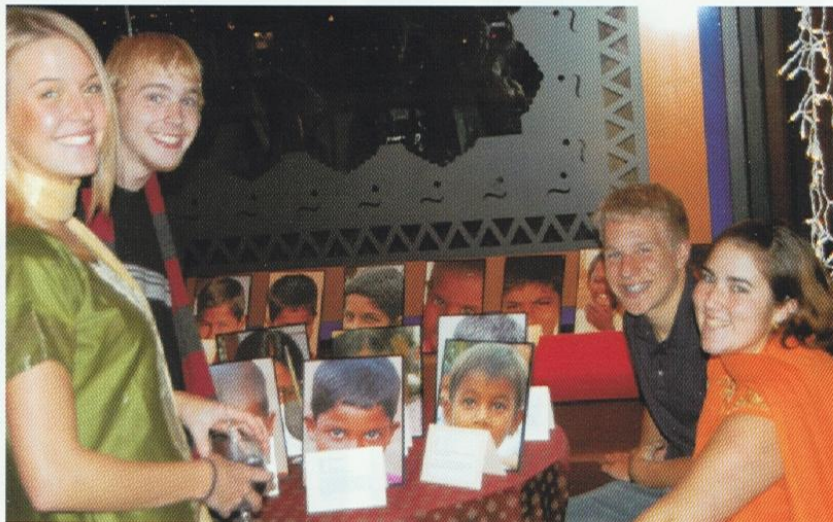
Kevin Stark, a Natick high school student, tells about his trip to India to work with the Agape orphans.



Agape Board Chairman, Doug Macrae and his son.



Hayley Edgerly poses with the much desired jewelry box and bracelets during the silent auction.



Metrowest area teens helped out during the dinner. From left: Danielle Campbell, Jeremy Powers, Alex Huntowski, and Victoria Crosby. Danielle, Jeremy and Victoria were all part of the group that traveled to India to work with Agape last summer.

AGAPE FAMILY contd.

Akhil, age 6

Akhil was a lovely boy. His parents died of AIDS and he was living with an elderly grandmother who could not manage his health issues. He was very frail and didn't have any energy when he arrived at our home. When he first arrived, he slept all the time and could not engage in any activities. We put him on TB meds and he responded so well he started to attend school. He loved going to school and was quite clever in English. He loved reciting and spelling English words to Lynne.

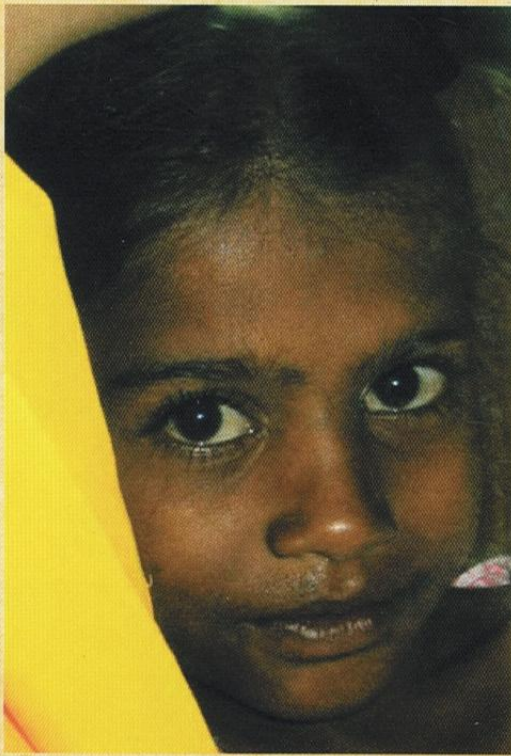
Akhil also had HIV related multi-drug resistant TB, but he had survived the chicken pox. He had been coughing (which is normal for TB patients) for several days, but did not appear to be near death. The day he died he ate a full breakfast but in the afternoon he cried out, "I'm dying - I'm going to die" and within a half hour, he died. Ratnam was working at the hospital and the orphanage staff called Ratnam at Akhil's request. Akhil said "Please come Uncle, please come so I can hold your legs," but he died twenty minutes before Ratnam could get to him.

The loss of these dear children is a reminder of the suffering that all AIDS orphans face. Our hope is that their deaths will serve to spark more to help fight this disease and the devastation that it leaves in its wake.



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International



Laxmi, age 10

Lynne Voggu, Executive Director, lynne@agapeintl.org Kim Ogden , COO, kim@agapeintl.org
www.agapeintl.org P.O. Box 918, Sudbury MA 01776, P:978-443-3180, F:978-440-8925

GET INVOLVED

YOU CAN HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!

IT'S FUN (AND PAINLESS)!

HERE ARE THREE OF THE MANY WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

1) ORGANIZE AN AGAPE WALK FUNDRAISER AT YOUR CHURCH, SYNAGOGUE, NEIGHBORHOOD..

We have letters and information packets ready to go - but we need people who will help get it going.

2) COLLECT CLOTHING FOR THE KIDS.

Contact Kim for information regarding collection locations/times. We are planning to ship a large container of supplies in the coming months!

3) SEND INFORMATION LETTERS TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

Again, we have the letters ready to go - just contact us!

Sudbury, MA 01776

P.O. Box 918

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