

WHAT'S NEW

Metrowest Teens Work With Agape Orphans

A team of Metrowest teens from the Vineyard church in Framingham, MA traveled to India this summer to spend almost two weeks working with Agape. The fourteen teens (Hayley Weinhold, Gloria Chase, Hannah Chase, Chrissy Wilkins, Chris Campbell, Danielle Campbell, Victoria Crosby, Ana Keith, Kevin Stark, Dan Cressman, Alex Harcovitz, Stephanie Zakrzewski, Alicia Stoveland and Jeremy Power) and six adults (Shawn and Jenna Stepp, Susan Norcross, Tim Barrette, Patsun Chiang and Jonathan Cressman) spent the majority of their time working and playing with the Agape orphans. Prior to their arrival, we had a tremendous influx of kids – we added forty new children in less than a month. Many of the new children arrive traumatized – in most cases, their last surviving parent has recently died – and they are alone and afraid. The availability of twenty “temporary staff” to provide hands on attention and love was invaluable. We will share some of the teens’ stories (in their own words) about their experience and the Agape kids they met over the next couple of newsletters.

Hayley Weinhold, Ashland HS Senior

Before I went to India, I wasn't sure if I would like it. But, my heart was stolen by these precious children and there is no other place I would choose for it to be! The trip has changed my life and I can't wait to go back. I think about the kids all the time.



Hayley holds Khajal, age 5. Khajal is HIV positive

I am certain that there is no better place for these kids to be. They are given all they need – as much food as they want, daily showers, toothbrushes, and medicine. Lynne, Ratnam and the staff love these children like their own. We visited a slum to do a medical clinic and Lynne said a couple of kids from the orphanage were from that exact slum; it was heartbreaking. It was a huge trash dump where families had fashioned a tent out of garbage. To know that the Agape kids are now safe and cared for made me want to cry from joy, but to know there are still children living like that fills me with sorrow.



“Kevin makes the kids laugh by performing skits.”

Kevin Stark, Natick HS Senior

While at the orphanage, I was deeply impacted by the beauty and individuality of each one of the kids there. Bhadrapi is athletic, funny and bright. His smile is one of the best things ever! Also, when he played khobadi, he was the best tackler on the team (better than me!). When I saw him playing that game, and thinking about it now, I am sad because he deserves a father to say “that’s my boy” when he dominates. I am grateful that Lynne and Ratnam and the staff are there to laugh at his jokes and be proud of his achievements. That is so huge.

Srinu was just a cute kid. He clung to me the majority of the time. Looking into his eyes, you could see that he needed a father to hold him and a mother to love him. So I held him, a lot. He didn't smile much, but that's just the way he is. When I heard he was HIV positive, I was crushed. I pray that he becomes a fighter of this disease and never gives in to it. It was great to love him as much as I could, hold him, and given him the sense of security that a child needs.

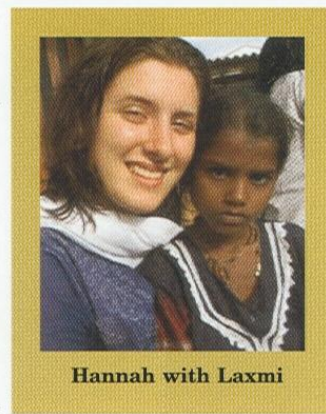
“What the world needs now is love, sweet love.”

- Burt Bachrach

What's New cont.

Hannah Chase, former Framingham HS Senior (now a Freshman at Hartford College)

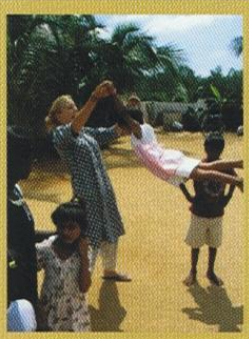
India is the poorest country I have visited. There were beggars everywhere you looked. Some were missing hands, arms, or legs. Lynne told us that many had injured themselves to be able to collect more money and that many of the child beggars had a boss that would beat them if they didn't collect a certain sum each day.



Hannah with Laxmi

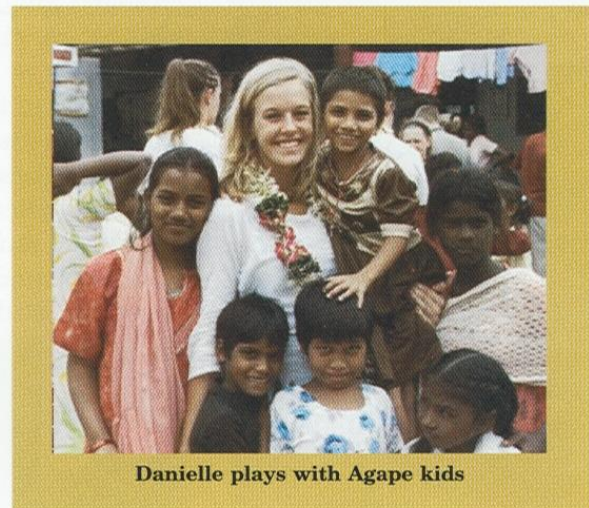
While we were at the orphanage, another child arrived. Her name is Laxmi. She is HIV positive and has TB. She was left by a social worker but we soon realized she was in bad shape. Dr. Ratnam didn't know if she would make it through the night. Someone needed to stay up with her through the night to make sure she was breathing because her lungs were filled with fluid. I volunteered to stay with her. I admit that I

was afraid because I had never been so close to someone who could die, but I felt God's peace and I wanted to help. She made it through the night and during the next few days she got up and was laughing and playing with the other children. She was still breathing heavily and had an elevated heart rate when we left, but she seemed to be improving. I know realistically that Laxmi will probably not get to be my age.



Danielle Campbell, Hopkinton HS Senior

The kids were absolutely beautiful; their eyes were radiant and filled with surprise upon seeing a group of twenty new faces. Right away we began playing with the kids, learning their names, and to our surprise, discovering that they had been learning ours as well. They screamed our names and wanted to match our faces to them. They yelled "Chris, Chris!" and then my brother jumped up and said "I'm Chris!" I began crying hysterically because I was so touched by the excitement and gentleness on their faces. I had a group of five little girls constantly attached to me – Soniaghandi, Shamala, Shirdisha, Sai and Khajal. These girls were very precious to me – I loved them and sang to them. It broke my heart each time I thought of their broken backgrounds – perhaps the streets, abuse or child labor and always the shared experience of losing their parents to AIDS. God showed me so much through the tender spirits of these girls.



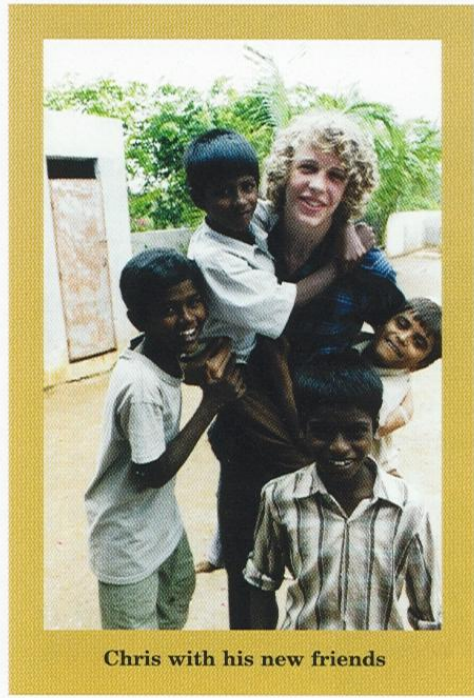
Danielle plays with Agape kids

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Chris Campbell, Hopkinton HS Sophomore

This trip was a life changing experience for me. Being able to comfort the Agape kids and play with them showed me what a great thing it is to help those in need. Going into such poverty, I was fearful at first. But then I realized these people are no different than you and me. I thought to myself as I looked into the eyes of the kids and teenagers I met, "Who am I?" I'm just like them, except I was born into very different circumstances. Without Agape, these kids just like me would be beggars or even prostitutes. Those I met helped me to realize how blessed I am, and how I should never take anything for granted.



Chris with his new friends

HERE IN THE US

Agape Kicks Off First Annual Golf Tournament – Sort Of



The winners with the Cup

We planned our first annual golf tournament for September, but decided to cancel the event and reschedule next May (Friday the 19th – mark your calendars!) when turn out was less than we had hoped. However, a number of die hards insisted on playing anyway – especially when they learned that the Agape Cup had already been engraved with room for 2005 winners!

Two highly competitive foursomes duked it out for the Cup – at several points sending runners to determine how the other foursome was doing. But in the end, Frank Huntowski led his

foursome to victory. The winning foursome, Frank, his lovely wife Kim Ogden (an admitted Agape insider), Jon Keene, and Kim Harvey, were proud of their win but are unwilling to share the winning score (let's just say that *anyone* has a very good chance of besting this record next year). As Team FRS's leader Charles (Charlie) Herel stated – “hey – we came in second – and that's not bad.” Herel's team (which included his colleagues Joe Ricca, Ed Shey and Geoff Wood) have already committed to return next year to defend their runner up title.



Second Place Team led by Charles Herel

LIFE AND CULTURE IN ASIA

A Tale of Two Buffalo

Lynne and Ratnam woke up to the phone ringing at 1:43 AM to let them know that our newly purchased buffalos had arrived safely from the village (4 hours away) accompanied by Yesu Mani, one of our staff workers, and a friend. We were proud owners of our own milk production for the kids. One buffalo arrived with her young calf and the other was expecting. The total cost for the two buffalos - \$325. Milk costs are among our highest – we would spend \$600 a year per orphanage – so the buffalo pay for themselves quickly. Believe it or not, the buffalo roam and graze freely around the orphanage (we do pay a small fee to allow them to graze on unused land in the area. Lynne laughed when I worried that others might secretly milk our buffalos...)



Susan Norcross, Framingham resident and Agape volunteer hanging out with the water buffalo.

However, we are learning animal husbandry the hard way. While the teens were visiting this summer, one of the buffalos (the pregnant one) suddenly and unexpectedly died. But the teens rallied, and quickly pooled their money to buy Agape another buffalo. So we're back to two... Buffalo milk by the way is apparently quite tasty and more nutritious than the milk available for sale otherwise (whole milk vs. 3% milk otherwise available).



Anil, one of the HIV positive boys available for sponsorship, with one of the Agape Home puppies.

GET INVOLVED

Child Sponsorship Program Kicking Off

Now that we have 80+ kids and more on the waiting list, we are moving forward with our child sponsorship program. The program will allow sponsors to “adopt” a specific child. Sponsors will receive a photo of their child and a brief summary of the child’s background, health status and interests. As we get the program going, children will write their sponsors once per year (we simply don’t have the administrative staff or funds to allow for more frequent communication yet). However, sponsors can write their children as much as they would like. You and your family can “adopt” a child for \$325 per year or an HIV positive orphan for \$650 per year. Payments can be made on whatever schedule works best for you – through a check to our PO Box or online through our website. In addition, we encourage sponsors to provide a \$50 gift to their children once per year (which allows us to purchase much needed and appreciated personal supplies for each child including school materials, a toy, and clothing). Please contact Kim at kim@agapeintl.org if you are interested in sponsoring a child.

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