

LISTENING



Have you ever heard of a guest *listener*? Do colleges offer courses in public *listening*? While critically acclaimed speakers receive handsome fees, the listening friend often has the most influence in our lives. How many times has a friend shared a problem where you gave no advice but just listened? I have to bite my tongue just to keep my “wise counsel” to myself until my friends finish talking.

While working with inner city young adults, I have the opportunity to give advice almost every hour, and at times I have. That didn’t work. Listening and asking open questions produces the greatest results. Young adults share deeply about their lives, their past, and their struggles in a way that small group leaders can only dream. I have learned about the inner workings of prison, drug dealing, addiction, abuse, and how a heart is broken. I have also learned about sacrificial giving, resilience, survival techniques, and deep faith. I learned because I listened.

I started Agape with my own ideas of how to transform lives, but I have learned that master plans without community input will always fail. Without trust, Agape can affect no one, and without listening, no one will trust us. Before our work begins, we must listen to the community, to the residents. Power and achievement can complicate listening. The expert helper thinks to himself, “I started this company because I know what to do, how to manage, how to lead, how to succeed.” However, in working with people in communities, the “client” is the expert in her own life.

Jesus was entering Jericho, and blind Bartimaeus cried out to him on the road. Jesus asks him “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” The LORD Jesus Christ probably knew the desires of Bartimaeus, but he took the time to ask and listen. Jesus could have done any number of things for the blind man including feeding him and giving him money. If Jesus takes the time to ask questions and listen, how much more do we need listen to the people of our community?

By Kirk Craig

Listening to the community is one of four core values of Agape. Each newsletter this year will talk about one of the core values.

GATEWAY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Over the past three years Agape has held various job placement programs, bible studies, service projects, retreats, college guidance sessions, and individual versions of each. Third Ward’s young adults are working, praying, following Jesus, parenting, and taking college classes!! However, many young adults have taken two steps forward and at least one step back. Some changes have been lasting while others were fleeting. The Agape staff and board have earnestly sought the best solutions and wisest uses of donor resources, and we know our next step.

I am excited to report that Agape will begin the Gateway Residential Program for young adults in the Third Ward!! We intend to bring 18-25 year olds together to improve in five categories: physical, economic, educational, relational, and spiritual (PEERS). We believe that by increasing the amount and nature of our time with participants, we can create a lasting transformation in the community. Gateway will be a combination of our other programs as well as an amplification of the intensity and commitment.

Over the next few months, we will be telling you about new opportunities to volunteer (*see next page*), advise, and donate to Gateway. Please begin praying that God will send all of the resources, and ask him what role He has for you in this new work.



Work, Work, Work



Is work the best part of your day? Should it be? Many Christians believe that work is a necessary evil and part of the fall of mankind. If your job includes lifting hundreds of pounds of concrete everyday, you may be right or you may not be using all your gifts and talents. God created work even before there was sin in the world because activity and productivity nurture our souls. Many Agape members struggle through menial jobs and get frustrated by low pay and hard work. We try to find a balance between “paying your dues” and searching for meaningful work. In reality, the educational system and the community support have not qualified our members to access life sustaining employment choices. I admire our men and women who have worked their way up in retail to become senior employees.

I greatly respect those who waited patiently until an entry administrative position became available. Whether at Yellowstone Academy or Bed Bath and Beyond or HISD, Agape members improve their community and build a foundation for further career growth. Pray for members who are looking for work, and notify us of any openings with the potential for income that would support a family.

AGAPE FAMILY MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Agape looks like a family. Kortnie Powe has been in the family for about a year, though she has known David and Melissa Hill for many years. Kortnie has faced and overcome many struggles to live as a godly woman in the inner city. Without support from her parents, she relies upon God and trusts the advice of her mentors. Despite being only 20 years old, Kortnie always assists her older brother and younger sister whenever they ask. I am proud of Kortnie and excited that she is working in the office to fill the role of administrative assistant for the ministry. She wants to delve deeper into ministry and begin a college degree. Pray for Kortnie’s spiritual and academic success.



GIFTS IN KIND

HOME FURNISHINGS : dishes, drawers, TV’s, kitchen table & chairs, twin beds & sheets, lawn mower, and end tables for Agape’s Gateway house.

PAPER FOLDER : a small electric paper folder to save staff time on newsletters, receipts, and mailers.

CUBICLES : 3-4 used office cubicles for staff desks.

BOARD GAMES & MOVIES : healthy and appropriate for stimulating young adult minds.

For questions or delivery details, please contact Kortnie Powe at 713-658-1001 or

donate@agapedevelopment.org

GATEWAY NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Resume/Interview Team prepare participants for job searching

College Completion Team financial aid applications, course enrollment, and tutoring

Family Mentoring invest in a young adult with your whole family: laundry, movies, family dinner, friendship

Childcare care for the children of the participants during Bible study, workshops etc.

Life-Skills Workshops give advice in your area of expertise: savings, buying a car, parenting, etc.

For details and a complete list, please contact Kortnie Powe at 713-658-1001 or volunteer@agapedevelopment.org