

AGAPE UPDATES

Volume V, Issue II

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CHRISTMAS BOXES IN 2010

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Children sing and dance showing their talents

many children in the community this is the only Christmas Event and the only Christmas gifts they receive during this Holy Season. During the event

participation of the talented children of the CEC and community, who dance and sing for the children and their parents, AGAPE Staff gives tickets to all the children for getting the Christmas boxes later. All children get nice colorful tickets with the words "God Bless You". After the nice concert all children receive Christmas boxes and blessings from Father Atanas, who opens the concert with Christ-



During the Christmas event more than 700 people visit AGAPE Center

It has been 3 years since 2008 that Project AGAPE receives Christmas boxes for the children of Kashatagh region of NKR. This region inhabited mostly by refugees and also families from the northern regions of Armenia destroyed by the devastating earthquake of 1988 continues to be socially the most vulnerable region both in Armenia and Karabagh. For



Lollipops in 4 big boxes were placed in nice individual plastic bags instead of taking place in the Christmas Boxes and given to the children along with CBs

Father Atanas gives Christmas boxes to the children

mas prayers and closes it with the words of gratitude to all United Methodists who make possible bringing joy and light of Christ to this children, for whom this is the only reminder of the great celebration of Christ's birth. And they rejoice even when nothing around them gives them reason for joy... As for Christians, joy comes not from what they are or what they do, but what HE is and HE does in and through them...

more than 700 people - children and their parents, visit the AGAPE Center. Prior to starting the interesting event with



The children of the Children's Home always get a special attention

GOALS OF PROJECT AGAPE

Develop humanitarian and benevolent activities
Provide housing and livelihood through partnership with Habitat for Humanity & Heifer International
Develop intentional spiritual partnership with those who travel to Armenia

Stand with Armenian people in their service to God;

a. Through partnering with:
-AGAPE hospital

-AGAPE Children's Home

-AGAPE Christian Education Center

b. Through partnering with:
local Armenian community

c. Through partnering with
Armenian Apostolic Church

HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECT ASSESSMENT TWO MORE HOUSES IN 2010

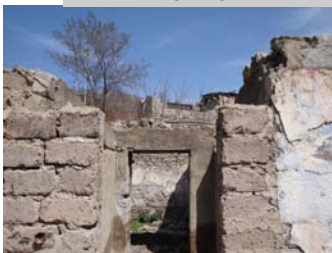
Yura Khachatryan's family is a refugee family from one of the regions of Karabagh now controlled by the neighboring country. Yura is one of the three sons of an old man whose family story was in October 2007 newsletter:

"... After long and hopeless efforts to find my family I decided to go up the hill which had a cross carved on a stone. It was a sacred place for our villagers where we had our baptisms, marriage blessings, many other important for the family events. Our village had no church: the only small chapel we had had been destroyed by Azeries. My desperate condition and insoluble distress directed my steps to the cross to pray one more time before leaving my homeland we were forced to leave and, God Almighty, I saw my whole family gathered near it and praying..."

This is a story of one of AGAPE heifer project families, a refugee family from Shahumyan region controlled at the present by Azeries, and hearing this story it's impossible not to get the goose-bumps... The grandfather of



Yura's house after the collapse of the temporary erected roof



the family told this story during the cattle project monitoring survey, so providing the family with pregnant cow which have already had a calf during the monitoring survey we didn't know about this story, just God directed our steps to this family, so that later the granddad with crumpled from KOWs face but not crumpled up soul full of faith could tell:

"The cross on the hill helped me to find my family, the cross with the flame helped me to survive."

Agnisa & Yura have two children and they are one of the cattle project families. "Because of the moisture and cold the children are sick 12 months; one of them got lung disease because

of the conditions. When it rains, we cannot walk in the rooms because of the



The AGAPE Staff helped Yura and the mason to build some of the walls, the bond beam and the roof floors



The bond-beam is ready for the team

pots put under the leaking spots of the roof." She told this a month ago when the roof was still there, but the day when we went to take pictures, the roof was not there and we didn't find the family



Gagik's House before renovation.

in the house. One of the neighbors told that the roof had collapsed (thanks God, no one was at home at that time to suffer) and now they live in a rented house. Agnisa



has no job, and Yura is a welder and his income depends on when someone in the community has something to weld...

Gagik Sarajyan's family is another refugee family from Shahumian region of Karabagh currently controlled by Azerbaijan, who have survived the nightmare of the war. Now they have two children - Mariam and Liparit, who has been drafted to army just recently in May. They lost their first child in the war and another child - the twin of Mariam - because of the awful living conditions. Gagik, the father of the family, is a forester and his salary is less than \$100 a month. Their family is involved in the cattle project. "After what we experienced during the war I continue to amaze on the kindness and the Christian love of all those people who help us. It's amazing, that in this world full of violence and hatred, there are still angels in the face of those who continue to help the people in need..."

Learning the stories of these two families during the cattle project regular monitoring visits there wasn't a need for extra exploration to chose families who lived in worse conditions. In several days with the help of the family members and AGAPE staff the mason leveled all the walls and constructed

the bond-beams of the two houses. Now both houses were ready for the team to start the next stage of renovation...



JUNE 2010 WNCC BUILDING TEAM

The WNCC 2010 team of 16 volunteers under the leadership of Cecil Donahue arrived on June 16. The team divided into two parts - one to work on Yura's house located near the highway and conditionally called Highway house and the second to renovate Gagik's house which is in a village called Karegah not far from Berdzor conditionally called Village house. The excitement and morale of all - the families being helped and their friends, the team members and AGAPE staff, was very high. In two weeks the team worked miracles changing the lives of the two families not only materially, but also psychically, giving them hope for the future. The two sub-teams managed not only rebuilding the 2 houses, but also renovating the ceiling of the delivery room and

delivered immediately. Hamest's excitement was indescribable: she couldn't believe her eyes!



The team #1 working on Yura's house near the highway - conditionally called Highway house

this is a sweet dream and that any moment I will open my eyes and realize that all these are gone. Yura's family was ashamed not to have even coffee and tea cups to suggest some coffee or tea to the team members. Learning this the team members were so touched that they decided to donate some



The excitement of Hamest was indescribable: she couldn't believe her eyes!

Just the next day a big and tasty cake was waiting the team members to start the



Highway house roof ready



Renovating the ceiling in one of the rooms

working day with tasting a materialized expression of the BIG THANKS for the great gift from the couples in the team and for the UNBELIEVABLE changes of their house, which Hamest couldn't believe till the last day: "I am so afraid



The new stove and dishes, pots & pans purchased on donation of the team members for the both families

partially the roof of the AGAPE hospital. The high professionalism of the experts in the team and the readiness of the team members and others involved to help them worked wonders and the houses were changing like at a touch of a magic wand. The words and dictionaries are powerless to describe the gratitude of both families. They were trying to share what they had and even more to show how thankful they were. One of the team members saw Hamest, the mother of the Village house family trying to operate her 50-years old stove, which could be only turned on and off without any regulator of heat and taking the burned bread out of the oven: he was so touched that decided to donate some money for buying a new stove for the family. The stove was purchased and



The team #2 working on Gagik's house in a village not far from Berdzor - conditionally called Village house



Village house roof ready

not only for Yura's family, but also for the other family. And because Gagik's family had received a stove the second stove was purchased for Yura's house. So, both families received new stoves, dishes, pots and pans. The generosity of the team members once again proved that "Happiness ... consists in giving, and in serving others."



EDUCATIONAL & OTHER ACTIVITIES

It's true for all the teams that the main project of the volunteers is not the only fulfillment while being in Armenia and Karabagh. And this was the case also for the 2010 team. Just before their arrival AGAPE received a shipment from North Carolina. It was a forty foot container this time, because there was a Ford truck in the shipment donated by



The team members are helping to unload the container goods received just before their arrival



Chris Shively to the Project AGAPE. He was in the VIM team to Armenia and

Karabagh in 2009 and seeing the condition of the 14-years old Dodge truck serving perfectly 300,000 miles on the rough roads he had decided to donate his 2007 Ford truck to the Project. And his generous gift was in the shipment. It took a day to do the cus-



The new FORD truck donated to AGAPE by Christopher Shively

tom clearance of the Ford, and several more days to do the rest. It was God's timing really, otherwise with the limited staff of Project AGAPE it would be impossible to arrange everything as well as this timing allowed to. And just a day before the team's arrival the container was cleared and ready to go to Berdzor. Everything - the big truck transporting the goods to Berdzor plus some more construction material needed for renovation of the two community houses were ready to follow the team. Of course the big truck was slower than the vehicles taking

the team members to Berdzor and when the truck with the goods and construction material arrived all the team members were ready to help unload the goods in the warehouse and the lumber at the two community houses.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL FOR THE CEC & CH CHILDREN



The children enjoyed so much having the Vacation Bible School and many of them were wondering when they would have it again

many of them were wondering how many days the Vacation Bible School would continue and when they would have it again next time.

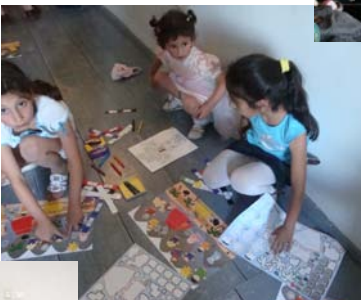
The dedicated volunteers who had a heart for children, the wonderful sup-



tosa-Brown created different age groups and assigned volunteers to run crafts and games. Each day they had a welcome activity, a craft, playtime, a Bible story and songs. Everything

was organized very well and Father Atanas, the director of the Christian Education center, who was also taking part in the Vacation Bible School, was very pleased with how well it was planned and implemented raising children's morale and interest in such undertakings and told it was a great experience and input in Christian education of the children of the CEC and CH.

The 3-day Vacation Bible School brought such a joy to more than 100 children of the community joining it. The funny religious songs, arts and crafts with stories from the Bible were so interesting for the children that



plies and materials, that the team members had brought with them made it a great and successful program for the children. The team of volunteers under the leadership of Cecil Donahue and Jill Alven-



VISITS TO THE FAMILIES, HOSPITAL & CH



It's a tradition for each team to visit the AGAPE Hospital and the Children's Home every time visiting Karabagh. And it's becoming also a tradition to visit the families whose houses had been renovated by the VIM teams. So the WNCC team of 2010 visited those families whose houses were renovated in 2009. It was interesting for some team members who were in the team of 2009 building the roofs and the ceilings of those houses to see what was done after they left and how the families enjoy leaving in those nice transformed rooms.

Valerik Avanesyan's family completed the rest of renovation works before the New Year and Christmas and celebrated those in the renovated house. And this were not the only family celebrations in their newly renovated house. Their oldest son married as soon as the house was rebuilt. The team members were pleasantly surprised knowing that. And the family was so happy to see the team members who so generously renovated their house making their dream to see their oldest son married a reality. "You don't know what this means for me: I am sick and may not live long, but now I know that won't die without seeing this house repaired and my sons married as they were

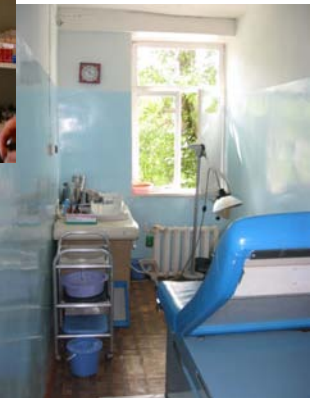


ashamed to marry in those conditions and concerned for the health and life of their family members," says Valerik, father of the family, "And this would not happen if not



the kind hearts of people like you. May God bless and keep the good people in the world. I don't know what would happen to us if not your help..."

The visit to the hospital ended up with the decision to renovate the ceiling of the delivery room and to patch the roof of the hospital using some new tin bought from Stepanakert, which were implemented as soon as the roofs and ceilings of the houses were completed.



The delivery room, the ceiling of which was renovated by the team



Little Natalie's transformation from a sad child not making even any eye contact with the children and team members a year before as some team members remembered, amazed them greatly and pleasantly

toys filled up their hearts with joy making the vacuity caused by the troubles of their lives a bit smaller...

The biggest surprise for the team members was the smile on the face of the youngest girl in the orphanage - little Natalie. When some team members saw her in 2009 she had just joined the children of the Children's Home and she was very sad not interacting with the children and adults and

not even making a n e y e c o n t a c t with anyone.



Along with the hard work at the two houses the team visited the children at AGAPE Children's Home and delivered Shoe boxes to all the children of the CH. The visit of each work team is a great event for the children of the orphanage. They sing and dance for the team members who, they know and feel, love and care for them... Many of the children have never known a home, and the Children's Home gives them the feeling they have a family, gives HOPE and FUTURE.

And, of course, the nice gifts and

When the team members saw her in 2010, she has completely changed: she was



Children are dancing and singing for the team members whom they are always happy to see

The warmth and the LOVE radiating from the hearts of the people loving them transformed their monotonous days demonstrating Christ's love for them and letting them know that Jesus loves them and cares for their needs ...

THE FAMILIES & AGAPE STAFF CONTINUE THE RENOVATION

As soon as the team left leaving enough funds to buy construction material and to continue the renovation of the two houses, the AGAPE Staff and the families started to do the rest of the renovation of the houses. The families were provided with new doors and windows along with cement, paints, more lumber, laminate flooring, everything needed to complete the renovation project. AGAPE staff members helped the families with constructing the plumbing systems and trained the family members to take

together the laminate flooring. Because there are some works that require special skills, a plasterer from the community was hired to complete those with precondition that he

would teach the landlords as much as possible the skills he had during the main work.

The smile never disappears from the faces of both family members. Hamest says she showed the pictures of the new roof to their son drafted to the army just two weeks before the team started the house renovation and her son didn't believe it was their house. "Now he counts the days remained to come and see it first hand," says Hamest with tears in her eyes. "We were born in a country teaching us that it's the most humanist country in the world and we couldn't believe what was happening to us during the war in that "humanist" country. We had lost our faith... And I would never

believe that there are people like these who care about others and love them like their sisters and brothers. Our eternal prayers will be with them. I have a feeling that they are Angels sent by God to let us know that there isn't only violence in the world, we had to go through. May God bless

them richly, as they blessed our house and brought the light of Jesus and hope back to our hopeless souls."



Yura's family at the entrance door which is shown before the renovation on the 2nd page

WAREHOUSE REPAIR



The only plasterer in the community - Lyova, repairing the warehouse.

importance of the warehouse have on serving the families in need effectively and efficiently during the distribution and having all the construction tools, equipment and other supporting supplies in order to get what's needed in the known place and in time. Getting the



limited. But AGAPE staff does its best to always have a clean and repaired as much as the limited funds allow warehouse. In March the staff with the help of a plasterer implemented some repair works in Berdzor warehouse.

The windows were changed and some closed, as during the winter it's very hard to work in the warehouse because of the low temperature. Some walls were plastered to reduce the presence of extra spaces/holes for the insects to grow. Everything was cleaned and the dust removed from the tools, equipments, shelves and all the boxes in the warehouse. This was an auxiliary but important project to support the main and the most important purpose of serving the people well.

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This is how the warehouse looked after repair and cleaning

warehouse repaired and cleaned is very advantageous for the mentioned above purposes, but it requires funds and consumes time, which are both



The room with tools and equipment, extension cords and different size screws and nails arranged in good order

Keeping the warehouse of Project AGAPE in Berdzor in good condition has always been priority, as it's very important to keep the goods in a clean and nice environment in order to distribute those to families. Operating the distribution from the warehouse the AGAPE staff is aware through many years of experience how much impact the

MONITORING & PASS-ON OF HEIFERS



Siranoush is so grateful for the cow received from AGAPE, which gave her 3 offspring

The Cattle Project, which started in 2006 with 17 families and involved 26 more families in 2007, is a model of Heifer Project International and uses the same



people who helped her to receive the pregnant cow every time the AGAPE staff visits her family. "Every early morning the first thing for me is to take care of the cattle and along

basic principles of HPI. Each participating family studies animal husbandry through undergoing training and agrees to donate any female offspring to another family. In this fashion, a single gift multiplies far beyond the original investment.

Through regular monitoring visits the AGAPE staff and the veterinary hired by the Project work to ensure that the gift of each animal will eventually help an entire community to become self-sustaining. In 2009 17 families passed-on the gift and the total number of the families involved became 60. The pass-on of the gift of the other participating 26 families is in the process and after its completion the number of the families involved will turn 86. Siranoush Mkhitarianyan doesn't get tired to thank all those



Seiran and his children are taking good care of the cow and the calf

It's amazing how much children enjoy helping their parents to keep cattle

with that I say words of blessing and pray for all those good people who helped me." Now she has three offspring and shall pass-on the gift.



The little calf with a heart on the forehead now is as big as the mother-cow



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CENTER

The Christian Education Center continues to function in Berdzor, providing opportunities for enriching the religious, cultural and educational life of the community playing a substantial role in its development. The AGAPE Center provides classrooms for Christian Education and Bible teaching with accommodations for Sunday School, VBS, Art, Chess, Computer, Embroidery, Rug knitting, TESL, Sewing and other classes. For 12 years the CEC proved to be the most efficient place for the children's, teenagers', young adults' and even adults' after-school provision, as many of them received sustainable knowledge and skills that helped them to adapt to the constantly changing social-economic factors faster and easier. Computer and other trainings helped them to become more sociable, to find jobs based on skills and knowledge from the CEC.

Neither the full list nor the gratitude of those people and all the children and their parents towards Project AGAPE can be placed in this updates. "I am grateful to you, to your organization and all those kind people involved, for the knowledge and skills given to me at AGAPE Center. You helped me in my career choice, in my internal growth and sociability, that I gained through that



knowledge and self-confidence." These are the words of Hayarpy, a petite young lady who used to work at the Children's Home, and whom we saw at Karabagh Telecom office working on the computer keyboard like playing a piano. To the question where she had received those computer skills she answered gaspingly: "Where else? Of course at AGAPE Center"...

The problem that the CEC Computer Class faces now are the very old computers. 2010 was the only year when the CEC didn't have computer classes. The teacher that used to teach on those old computers found a better job abroad and no one agreed to teach on those computers. Hopefully the generosity of the United Methodists and UM Churches will enable getting new computers to keep up the great reputation of the CEC.



CONTAINERS AND DISTRIBUTION



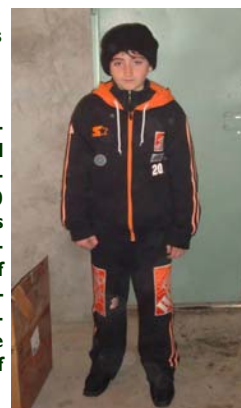
Along with giving much preference to focusing efforts on long-range development in a variety of fields like housing, cattle project and education at the CEC, immediate assistance in the form of humanitarian aid is still essential in this socially most vulnerable region of both Armenia and Karabagh. The global recession highlighted malnutrition, homelessness and other forms of vulnerability and led to a level of poverty not seen in Armenia and Karabagh since 1990s, when the country was curved under the burden of both natural and man-made disasters. The flow of the people to AGAPE center could be compared only with the first years of the Project's work in this area, when there were so many people needing humanitarian aid and waiting at the gates of AGAPE Center, that a small slip would make a huge river of people angry and flow inside.

1100 families of Kashatagh region received the following aid in 2010:



- 3006 new clothing
- 99 pairs of new shoes
- 2611 kg of used clothing
- 39 bags
- 78 new blankets
- 81.3 kg used blankets and bedding
- 1074 Christmas boxes
- 66.8 kg medical supplies
- 47 new bedding
- 44 kg sewing supplies

- 24 new pillows
- Prayer shawls
- The RA Ministry of Social Security received 300 new t-shirts for the school-children of socially vulnerable families in some regions of



The mother of the boy has made pants from the 3XL size jacket



Armenia to deliver in the scopes of the project supported by the government called "When September comes". The total price of all goods distributed including the price of the new Ford truck, its spare parts and some construction equipment, tools and supplies was \$124,517.

BED & BREAKFAST FOR THE GUESTS OF THE REGION



The AGAPE Center building where the VIM teams and guests stay

AGAPE continues to be the only lodging place in this region not only for

singers of Armenia" visited Berdzor for 3 days giving concerts again in several places and coming back to stay overnight at AGAPE Center. On the last day they received gifts from AGAPE and were so pleasantly surprised that wanted to give a special concert for AGAPE staff.

Knowing how tired they were and how much they wanted to leave for Yerevan AGAPE staff limited the concert to one song. The children were very grateful for the hospitality shown to them by



The "Little Singers of Armenia" at the kitchen of AGAPE Center

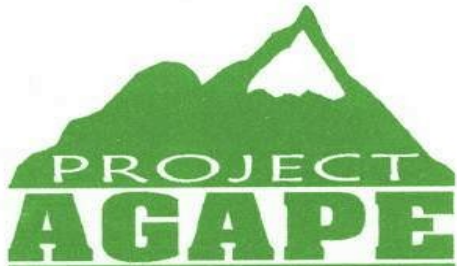
the VIM teams, but also for the guests of the region visiting it on different occasions. In March the students of Yerevan State University visited to give some concerts in Berdzor, Stepanakert - the capital of Karabagh and some other towns and to plant trees in those places. They stayed at AGAPE Center overnight for 5 days and left for the destinations early in the morning coming back late afternoon. In April a choir called "Little

AGAPE Staff and for the wonderful accommodations at the Center.



A happy picture of the choir children whom AGAPE Center accepted with open arms

"Paul writes not about brotherly or human love (philea), but divine love (agape); that is, a love which only the Spirit can impart to the human heart" (Rendell 59)



American Great Armenian Partnership Efforts

An outreach ministry of the Western North Carolina and the North Carolina Conferences
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Another year passed full of projects, interesting events, overwhelming feelings and change, another year of charity for the people of Armenia and Karabagh, for your sisters and brothers in faith through your love and compassion... The activities carried out by Project AGAPE are incredible in the size and the scope, are unbelievable in changing the lives of your brothers and sisters living in the small mountainous country known as Armenia, in changing your lives, because:

» *You know that Devine Love always has met and always will meet every human need*

» *Love is the force that ignites the spirit and binds teams together*

» *You have learned in life how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things*

» *YOU are little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world...*



In February 2010 Sergey Poghosyan, the father of 15 children, about whom was the AGAPE newsletter #38 of October 2009, presented Project AGAPE with a carved cross-stone (in Armenian Khachkar) as appreciation for all help and support his big family had received from the Project AGAPE since 1997. He is not a professional carver, he is an amateur, but his willingness to express his gratitude by carving a cross-stone for the Project was so big that he did his best to accomplish his inner requirement. His gift found a special place in the same row with two other cross-stones presented by an old man whose son was

killed in the war in Berdzor and the students of the Carving Class of the CEC. The words on the cross-stone presented by Sergey are the following:

"PRAISE THE LORD AND HIS MISSIONERS"

