

Winter
2010

Agape
International

LOVE IN ACTION

What's New

The Joy of Christmas at Agape

Lynne and Ratnam love Christmas – and every year they work very hard to bring that same joy to all the Agape children. It's a huge job (I have trouble with pulling it off with my own small family) – imagine Christmas for 250+ children!

Christmas Day is a very full day at Agape. Ratnam, Lynne and other American volunteers visit each of our six orphanages in turn to deliver a personal Christmas gift and a new outfit to each child. This year, Roshel and Mark Robey, parents of one of our long term volunteers Angie Robey, visited Agape for Christmas and came bearing gifts. Roshel organized a number of local churches to help purchase gifts for the children, and Roshel and Mark brought the gifts with them in 10 extra suitcases. Women from the Robey's home church, Notus Baptist Church - Notus, Idaho, stitched cotton gift bags for each child. Long term volunteer Emily Richard's church, Grace Street Church - Cambridge, MA, also raised \$1,000 towards the new Christmas outfits. Thank you as well to the sponsors who sent in extra money for Christmas gifts. The children's delight in opening their presents is a beautiful thing to see.



Keerthana, Pooja and Ravali opening their Christmas presents



Saritha receives her Christmas gift and hug!

Christmas lunch is the all time favorite of the children – Hyderabad Chicken Fry (a special treat given the cost). After lunch, the children love to put on a full program including Christmas carol singing, cultural dances ending with the candle light dance, and a Christmas drama. The Agape children love to sing and dance – so the Christmas program is a wonderful part of their celebration. The full day ends around 9:00 PM with a special traditional sweet.



Bhavani happily shows off her new gift

Meet Our Agape Family

Khajal

Khajal joined us on April, 25th 2005 when she was five years old. Khajal's mom was a sex worker in Mumbai until she met Khajal's father, a regular client. Khajal's dad was a truck driver originally from New Delhi. They married and not long after the wedding, Khajal's mother went back to her old



Khajal in her first few weeks at Agape (her wounds are healing well)

profession in order to earn income for the family. In response, her husband packed up their belongings and moved to Hyderabad, hoping that a new location and new life would solve the family's problems. After coming to Hyderabad and after the birth of her two children, Khajal's mom found out she was HIV positive. The father, after testing negative, kicked the mother out of the house. Khajal's mother was living on the street and very ill when a woman from Action Aid found her. She took her to an Action Aid's woman's shelter where she died 2 weeks later. Just before she died she asked Action Aid to bring her children to her, but Khajal's mother died before she was able to see the children. Khajal's truck driver father was on the road when her mother died. The children

were alone in the house when Action Aid located them. Action Aid helped them to be placed in Mother Teresa's orphanage on a temporary basis with the understanding that Action Aid would find them somewhere else to go. The project director agreed despite the fact she didn't know of any home that would house HIV+ children (Khajal is HIV positive. Her younger brother, Ravi, is also at Agape but thankfully is HIV negative). Later that same day she learned about Agape.

When Khajal came to us she had open ulcers on her face and all across the entire back of her neck. Only a few days later Dr. Ratnam managed to get the ulcers dried up. "The first day I met her she was heartbreaking to look at! It was so hard initially to hug her with all her open wounds all around the face and head area" says Lynne, Agape's Executive Director. "But she really needed that hug."

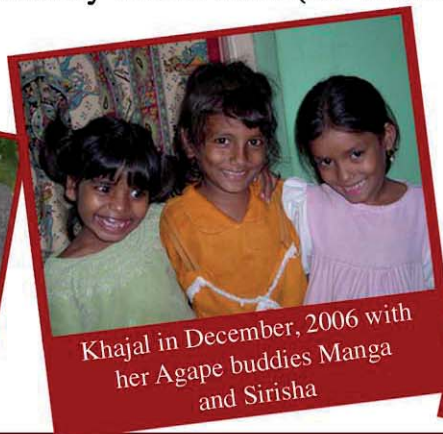
Khajal is an amazing child. She is filled with constant JOY. She loves to love on you and to be loved on. That smile on her face is constant. She has endless energy. She loves to sing and dance. She is now in the 3rd class and is doing particularly well in Math (her teacher says she is "very clever!").



Khajal in 2006



Ravi Khajal's Brother



Khajal in December, 2006 with her Agape buddies Manga and Sirisha



Khajal at Easter in 2007



Khajal in 2009

In the US

Innovative Retailer JoEllen Designs Partners with Agape

Jo Ellen Designs is a Camden, Maine based home goods design studio that creates and produces beautiful, well crafted items for the home. But they also want to do more. They want to sustain this same value of beauty and "good craft" in all they do – from the locations where they are made, to the people who make them, to the materials used, to how they invest locally, nationally and internationally.

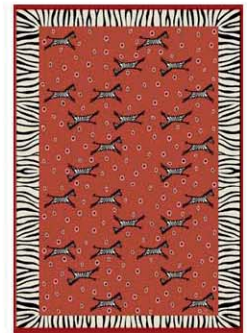
They have great vision for their line of 100% wool hand hooked rugs and pillows. They are committed to donating 10% of all profits after tax to charity and local scholarship funds. In addition, through their Designs for Good program designated organizations receive \$10 from each rug and pillow purchase.

Each of their 10 designs are partnered with an organization whose work is admired. Agape is honored to be the chosen partner for the Zebra Chili design. <<http://www.joellendesigns.com/zebrachilirug.html>>

Visit Jo Ellen Designs at 22 Main Street and tell them you are an Agape supporter!



Jo Ellen Designs at
22 Main Street, Camden, ME 04843



Zebra Chili Design

In India

HIV/AIDS Continues to Be Stigmatized in India

One of the reasons that Agape decided to start its own school is the continued stigma attached to HIV/AIDS in India. We have reprinted below the following July 3, 2009 article that appeared in the *Times of India*.

Elimination of 24 HIV Infected Students from Government School

24 HIV positive children are under the shelter of the Freedom Foundation Ashram (home). The Ashram is also taking care of their education. They have admitted the children in a private school which is located in the city outskirts. For seven years these orphan children have been studying in the City Primary School in different classes. Suddenly some of the parents of the healthy children came to know about the HIV infected children in the school. They demanded the management to issue TC's (transfer certificates) to the children. Though the management and the local MLA Dr Shankar Rao arrived and tried to convince the parents, they were not at all willing to listen to them. They also threatened the school management that if they do not eliminate them, they would take away their own children from the school. They forced the school management to issue transfer certificates to the 24 students.

Mr. Kishore, Freedom Foundation Ashram Manager, with great agony says that the future of the kids has become uncertain with the inhuman act of the parents and also it shows their lack of awareness on AIDS.

Mr. Chandravadan, Director, AP Aids Control Society, expressed his concern for the children and said it is very unfortunate such things happen in the capital city and its illegal to issue the TC's to the students in the middle of the academic year. He also said that he will write to the educational ministry to take legal action on the school management.

Agape International



Agape children are thrilled
over their new classroom

Get Involved

Sponsor an Agape Classroom

We've moved into the new school and the kids are loving it! The building is much bigger and much better equipped for our needs, but much higher cost than our previous building. We are looking for "classroom sponsors" who will cover the our annual cost of educating a full class of children (approximately 20-25 children) including building rental, teacher salaries, and supplies. For \$2,500 a year, you can educate an entire classroom of children!

Contact Kim at kim@agapeintl.org to learn more.

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