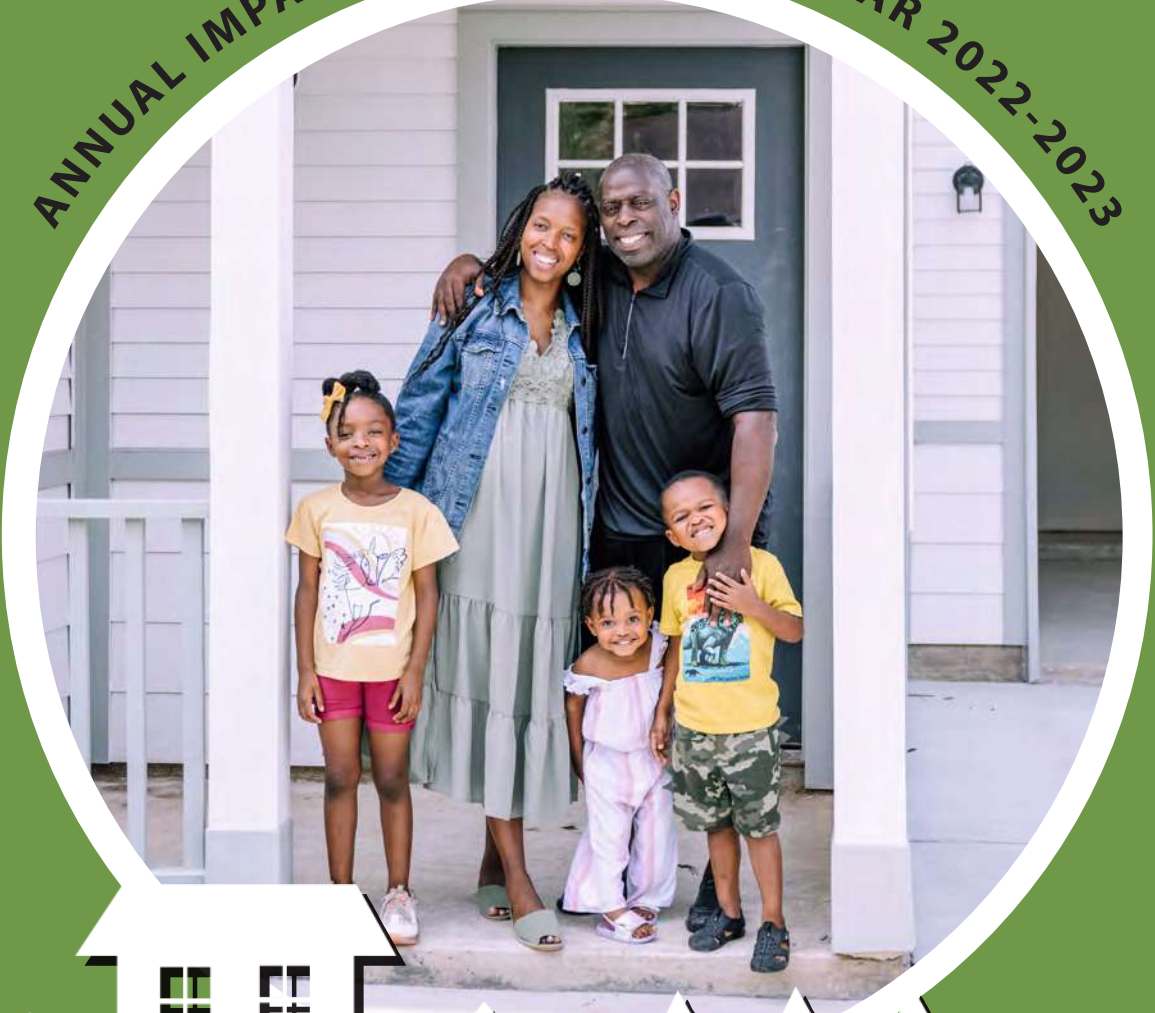


# “Won’t you be my Neighbor?”

DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT : FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023





**watch the video for more  
neighborhood history**



## ***the Neighborhood***



The OST/South Union neighborhood is geographically bounded by Old Spanish Trail, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Scott Street, and Loop 610. In this community, abundant beauty and deep brokenness coexist. OST/South Union has a rich history and has faced challenges with determination and resilience. Year after year, neighbors must contend with increasingly scarce affordable housing options, minimal job prospects, and an inconsistent public transportation system.

## ***the Neighbors***



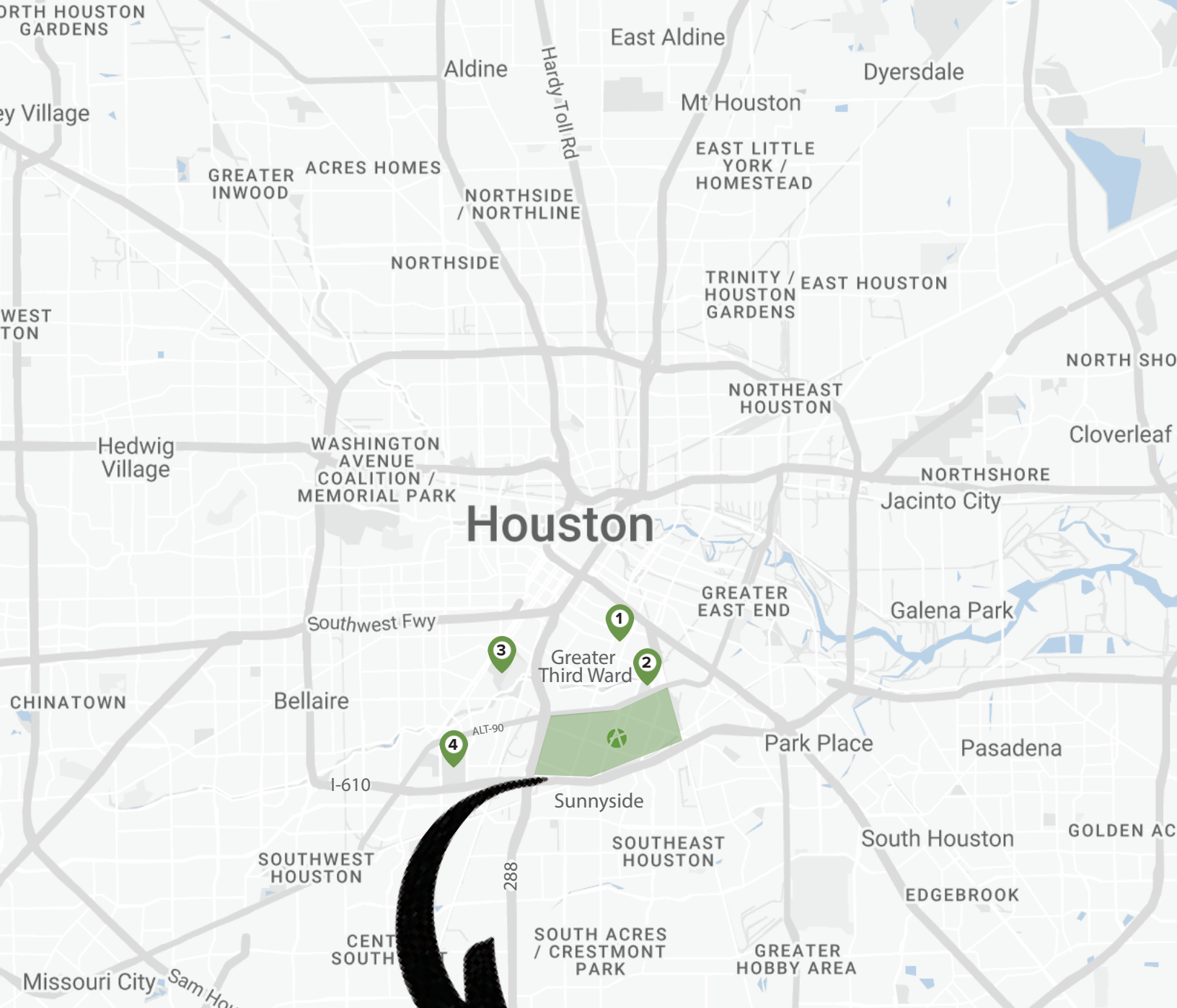
However, each year, we see neighbors overcome incarceration, find jobs, and even start their own businesses. We see neighbors with modest financial means give above and beyond with overflowing generosity as they care for each other's children and care for their neighborhood. Young people strive to build a wholesome community, reversing painful experiences that have existed in their families for generations. This is the place where our mission is rooted. This is the place where our calling flourishes.

## ***the Mission***



The mission of Agape Development is to transform the OST/South Union neighborhood by preparing Christ-following, independent, community leaders.





# Houston

## OST/ South Union

- 1 University of Houston  
Texas Southern University
- 2 MacGregor Park
- 3 Hermann Park
- 4 NRG Stadium



# “Won’t **you** be my **Neighbor?**”

watch our  
theme teaser!



“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart* and with all your *soul* and with all your *mind* and with all your *strength*.’ The second is this: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* There is no other commandment greater than these.”

*Mark 12:30-1*





# this year in review



## JUNE

## JULY

## AUGUST



Camp Agape Staff



Family Reunion



Teen Summer Camp

## SEPTEMBER

## OCTOBER

## NOVEMBER



Back to School



Fall Fest



Volunteer Work Day

## DECEMBER

## JANUARY

## FEBRUARY



BBC Christmas Party



Women's Gala



The Peters in their Agape Home

## MARCH

## APRIL

## MAY



Teen Spring Break Fundraiser



Volunteer Appreciation Month



Lemonade Day



# from our *Director*

"Hi, neighbor!" Remember how Mr. Rogers greeted us at the end of his iconic song to start each episode? In a similar way, I feel that the community of staff, volunteers, neighbors, donors, and other Agape Development partners increasingly share in our neighborhood work. As we celebrate the completion of our 18th year and look forward to the next, I notice a clear sense of kinship growing in OST/South Union, especially over the past year, as neighbor participation has increased in every measure at Agape Development. Inspired by our theme this year, we asked the question, "Won't you be our neighbor?" and the response has been a resounding, "YES!"

When we reached out for reading support in our children's after-school program, you showed up, like good neighbors, to spend one-on-one time reading with kids every single week. When we asked for items to sell at the Women's Ministry garage sale, you gave over and above what we received in the past. When we needed more parents involved in their students' academics, you, as neighborhood parents, showed up at monthly engagement nights to join your kids in their academic journeys. When our timeline for selling affordable homes shortened, you stepped up, as local buyers, working with volunteers in order to improve your credit and receive approval for mortgages.

I have also experienced growth in neighborly friendships this year. Because of the eight additional homes completed, I keep running into neighbors walking their dogs, shopping for groceries, passing one another on the walking path, and working together to tell the story of OST/South Union. The neighborhood is transforming rapidly. New home builds start almost every week, and the vacant lots with trash dumped on them are gradually disappearing.

Within our programs, we increased neighbor participation in every area. The Women's Ministry joined a partner church on a retreat, which led to visiting one another's churches for Sunday worship in each respective neighborhood. The Backyard Bible Club increased its schedule in order to provide for working parents' after-school care needs from Monday through Friday. This was possible, in part, because of four neighbors and graduates who took on leadership roles in the ministry. The Teen Ministry participated in a mission trip to Kansas City, where they were able to learn from and serve alongside another community organization in a different neighborhood context. The affordable housing program, Agape Homes CDC, saw the number of housing applicants nearly double in the past year. While in the program, each of our prospective affordable-home buyers spend at least 80 hours volunteering within the OST/South Union community. By creating a path to homeownership, Agape Homes CDC has made it possible for current neighbors, including one long-time renter on my street, to be first in line to buy one of the brand new Agape Homes.

Sometimes it is hard to believe that the whole law can be simplified into two directives – love God and love our neighbors (Mark 12:30-31) — but it is true. The neighborliness required is not merely the quaint "niceness" from a bygone era. The good Samaritan's love of neighbor radically shattered ethnic, political, and religious lines with costly, selfless, inconvenient actions in order to serve the enemy of his people. In this spirit, we are all invited to be neighbors. And no one's name, culture, gender, income, or zip code excludes that person from being on the Lord's guest list. I invite you to enjoy some stories of good neighboring from OST/South Union and ask God how you can be a neighbor this year.

Sincerely,  
Kirk Craig

# from our Board



As an apartment developer, I spend a lot of time considering the following question - Why would someone live here as opposed to somewhere else? Years of experience have taught me that the most successful communities are the ones where people feel a sense of belonging and connection with their neighbors. When residents are embedded in the community, there is a reason to be there beyond the physical roof over their heads. Because of the importance of community, developers spend money, time, and energy building fitness centers, pools, and amenity spaces. The hope is that neighbors will come together in those spaces and build genuine relationships and lasting connections, which are essential to building vibrant communities.

When I think of what it means to be a good neighbor, I think of a community in which neighbors know one another well enough to be available in times of need. It could be as simple as asking a neighbor to check your mail when you go out of town or to let your dog out when a ball game runs late. It could also be reaching out for support after an unexpected tragedy. Good neighbors are invested in your life, through the highs and lows. I think every single Houstonian experienced the power of invested community after Hurricane Harvey, when neighborhoods across the city had such emergent needs. In the days, weeks, and months following the storm, we saw people checking in on one another, congregating in the street together, bringing over meals to neighbors in need, and helping friends and neighbors remove water-logged furniture and drywall.

I see such tangible examples of neighborly when I spend time around Agape Development. Agape is so clearly a place of respite, where community members can go during times of need. The impact of Agape Development's 18 years in the neighborhood is undeniable. I feel that impact when I see community members working so hard to stay in the neighborhood and become homeowners, when I hear neighbors chatting with one another at the picnic tables in front of Agape, and when I witness the warm welcome that each person receives after stepping through Agape's doors. I believe the incarnational way that Agape Development pours into the neighborhood demonstrates to community members that the ministry, the staff, and the volunteers are dependable neighbors who are invested in the good of those who call OST/South Union home. Agape Development's commitment to neighborly permeates every aspect of the ministry. Full-time ministry staff live in the community, so they are both staff members and neighbors. Neighbors and program participants volunteer with Agape Development and serve in many of the ministry programs. Many neighbors and program participants have gone on to become staff members within the ministry. Many of Agape Homes' new and future homeowners are staff members and program participants. "Neighborhood" is truly at the center of Agape Development's mission and ministry.

Inspired to reflect on the theme of "neighbors" this year, I have considered the ways that I see and practice good neighborly. It can be easy to look at my current season of life - in which so many hours are dedicated to driving our kids to school or practice and attending school performances and games - and struggle to find where neighborly fits in. However, I am encouraged when I broaden the scope of neighborhood to all aspects of my life and consider the opportunity I have to glorify God in the relationships in front of me. Being a Christ-follower, with the charge to be a good neighbor, inspires me to love others, albeit imperfectly, when I am at work, within our church community, while driving a car-full of kiddos, and as I chat with parents on the sidelines. We have so many stories to share with you that testify to God's transformative work in and through Agape Development this year. I hope that as you read them, you will see how each story testifies to deep investment - Agape's deep investment in the neighborhood and neighbors' deep investment in the work of community transformation. I also hope that you are encouraged to see examples of good neighborly around you - in your home, in your community, in your church, in your workplace, and wherever you might find yourself.

Sincerely,  
Carter Bechtol





# Children's Ministry



Our Children's Ministry has given us many reasons to celebrate this year. We kicked off the program year in June with seven weeks of Camp Agape. In a beautiful testament to Agape Development's longevity and impact in the neighborhood, the Camp Agape team excitedly welcomed two former Children's Ministry students back as summer interns! Moving into the school year, our afterschool program, Backyard Bible Club (BBC), added an additional day of programming. With these extra hours, BBC students were able to spend more time reading aloud with peers and volunteers, working through difficult math problems, reinforcing new skills, memorizing passages of scripture, and making learning fun and exciting. The Children's Ministry also prioritized creating avenues for parents to stay involved with their students' learning by hosting Parents Nights and designing interactive worksheets for families to do together. As a result, the Director of Children's Ministry, Renae Peters, has seen unprecedented parent engagement. One parent approached Renae after Parents Night and told her how helpful she found the information. She explained that she cared deeply about her daughter's academic progress, but felt frustrated in the past because she didn't understand how to help. Another set of parents collaborated to make custom shirts for the 5th grade graduation. They designed them, printed them, and gifted them to each student and teacher as a surprise! The story of the Scott family beautifully epitomizes the centrality of community — as a safe place to grow, as an instrument of change, and as a reason to have hope for the future.



Fifteen years ago, Frances Scott and her husband bought their first home just around the corner from Agape Development. Her husband grew up in OST/South Union and Frances spent her childhood just a few miles south, in Sunnyside. Since moving back into the community, they have seen the neighborhood transform and grow in ways they never imagined. "We just love it," Frances beams. One of the shifts that Frances noticed ultimately led her to Agape Development. "We see kids now!" Frances says with a big smile. During their first years back in the community, Frances was saddened by the noticeable absence of kids playing in the neighborhood. This became particularly challenging when Frances' three year old nephew, Andrew, came to live with them. As Andrew got older, Frances began to recognize that "because of all the things he had to go through in his first few years of life," he struggled to connect with other people. Frances began working with Andrew's CPS case worker to find a summer program where Andrew could meet people his age and enjoy new experiences. She happened to take a different route home one day and passed a group of Camp Agape students playing outside. She came back early the next day to introduce herself to the Director of Children's Ministry and learn more about the summer camp. After speaking with April, Frances filled out the paperwork and Andrew joined his Camp Agape group later that very day!

**scan for  
more info!**







Since that first day in June of 2021, Andrew has spent every subsequent summer at Camp Agape and each subsequent school year in Backyard Bible Club. Frances attributes Andrew's growth over the past few years to his participation in Agape's Children's Ministry programs. Initially, Frances hoped that a summer camp would help Andrew "be able to express himself more, to come out of his shyness, and to feel more comfortable around other kids." Frances sees not only how Andrew has grown in all of those areas, but also that he has overcome numerous academic obstacles and has grown in his relationship with Christ.

Renae, the Director of Children's Ministry, thinks back to Andrew's reserved demeanor around his peers and teachers when he first joined the program. Now, he is always the first one waiting to board the BBC van after school, so excited to get back to Agape. He seamlessly connected with his 3rd grade BBC teacher, Ms. Journey, and danced without inhibitions at the end-of-the-year talent show. Frances believes that by spending every afternoon in the safe environment at Agape, surrounded by people who love him and care for him, Andrew feels more comfortable being himself and less anxious about others' opinions. Andrew has also worked hard to improve academically. After Andrew was diagnosed with a learning difference, Renae made sure Andrew received the individualized support he needed at BBC, working one-on-one with his teacher and with volunteers. Just recently, Andrew approached Renae and proudly announced, "Ms. Renae, I finished my work...and I understood it!!" Andrew feels similarly enthusiastic when it comes to chapel time. Andrew has adopted the practice of saying the Lord's Prayer at home, like they do together at the beginning and end of BBC. In fact, Andrew says what he loves most about BBC is "learning about Jesus."

The testimony of Andrew's growth speaks both to the amazing ways God works through our Children's Ministry and to the commitment and dedication of his aunt, Frances. Although Renae requires BBC parents to come to only four Parents Nights each school year, Frances comes to all of them. Frances feels a passion for helping not only Andrew succeed, but also

all of the neighborhood kids who make up the next generation of community leaders. "The more we do for these kids," Frances explains, "the more we get as a community." After a long career working for the City of Houston, Frances plans to retire in December and dedicate herself to community work here in OST/South Union. We are beyond blessed to have neighbors like Frances who advocate on behalf of their children and the community. We love that Frances and Andrew found a place in the neighborhood where they can grow and learn and use their gifts for the good of our neighbors.

"the more we do for these kids, the more we get as a community!"

98

**children served**

90%

**reading at or above grade level**

1,071

**hours of Children's Ministry**

2.5

**average benchmark improvement**





# Teen Ministry

Our teens had an exciting year! Agape teens spent a weekend at Stoney Creek Camp, toured four colleges in the fall, tried their hand at making pizzas from scratch, wrapped presents at Pride for Parents, visited a museum for Black History Month, organized a car wash fundraiser, participated in a service-learning trip to Kansas City, and prepared to relaunch the Agape Shaved Ice Program. With our team of one full-time and two part-time staff members, the

Teens Ministry has been able to focus on getting to know each teen on a personal level. In addition to the 235 hours of program time this year, the ministry staff spent 334 hours of intentional encounters with students. In an effort to prioritize quality time, teen ministers took teens to a Christian rap concert, challenged teens to mini-golf games, heard about their lives over dinner, and enjoyed the latest movies together. The Teen Ministry also welcomed a number of new students from the neighborhood and reconnected with students from years past. We are grateful for the many opportunities to invest deeply in the lives of students, those who just recently joined and those who have been a part of Agape for many years.

We like to take this opportunity each year to introduce you to our newest high school graduates. Please make sure to congratulate them if you see them around and wish them luck as they move into this new season!

**Daveon:** While he cannot remember exactly, Daveon thinks he joined Backyard Bible Club over 11 years ago. He has been a faithful member of Children's Ministry and Teen Ministry programs for the past decade. One thing Daveon has learned through his time here is "not to let anger build up." As a graduate of Jack Yates HS, Daveon plans to enroll in the Welding Technology program at HCC. Daveon dreams of joining the Navy and then transitioning into real estate or running his own AirBnB.



**42**

**teens  
served**



**334**

**hours  
of intentional  
encounters**



**\$1,577**

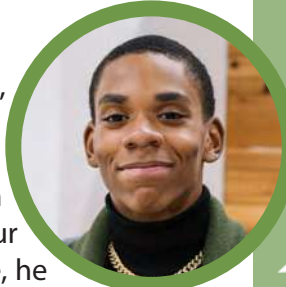
**raised  
for Spring Break  
service trip**

**235**

**hours  
of teen  
programming**



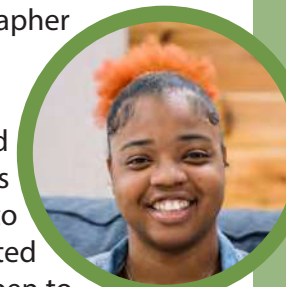
**Ayaan:** Shortly after relocating from Philadelphia in 2016, Ayaan joined the Teen Program at Agape. Although there are far too many favorite memories to count, Ayaan especially loved the New Orleans mission trip, Stoney Creek Camp, and all the fun summer field trips (like visiting the ship channel and getting a tour of a law office). Ayaan is grateful that through his time at Agape, he learned “how to communicate and talk to people,” and most importantly, how to “control my emotions.” Ayaan graduated from YES Prep Southside and is already committed to Texas A&M Prairie View, where he plans to study criminal justice. Even though he knows it will take lots of time and effort to achieve, Ayaan wants to become a detective because he hopes to use his position to help people in crisis.



**Angel:** Angel attended Teen Ministry programs when she was in 8th grade, and after a period of time away, she reconnected again three years ago. She most fondly remembers getting to know teen ministers Ibironke and Sydney during the summer of 2021. Through her time at Agape, Angel has come to know that God is her father and to appreciate family (and friends who are like family). Angel graduated from the Houston Academy for International Studies and will be attending Texas A&M Prairie View in the fall. Angel dreams of pursuing her love of photography and becoming a well-known photographer one day.



**Myra:** Myra heard about Agape from her cousins and started participating in Teen Ministry programs a few years ago. Myra's favorite memory from her time at Agape is when the teens went to Kansas City for a spring break service-learning trip. Myra graduated from Bellaire HS and hopes to go to college next year. Myra is open to lots of possibilities in the future, but is most excited to pursue a successful, meaningful career.



**Tray:** Tray joined the Teen Ministry in 2015 after hearing about Agape from one of his closest friends. Tray will always remember the powerful experience he had at Stoney Creek summer camp. Tray graduated from Jack Yates HS in May and is still undecided about his plans next year.



\* We would also like to congratulate DJ (Yates), Arneisha (Austin), and Janine (HAIS) who also graduated this year! Congratulations, graduates!

Graduating from high school represents a significant step towards independence. With a high school diploma, students qualify for higher paying jobs and can continue their education at a post-secondary institution or a trade school. Each of these eight teens persisted in the face of challenges and walked across their respective graduation stages in May. We are grateful for the opportunity to celebrate all they have accomplished and thank God for the ways He will continue to work in and through them in the future.



# Women's Ministry

The Women's Ministry enjoyed a year full of meaningful fellowship, personal growth, and good neighboring! The Women's Leadership team grew in number and ladies assumed new responsibilities within the ministry. This core group of women planned and executed more amazing events than ever this year - a ladies' tea party, the annual garage sale, a New Year's gala, the spring popup shop, and a leadership retreat. The women also joined ladies from St. John the Divine on their annual women's retreat in January. Over the course of this year, the members of the Women's Fellowship celebrated wins together and surrounded one another with love during challenging times. The ladies celebrated when someone purchased her first car and when other ladies found more stable housing. They encouraged one another to identify and develop their spiritual gifts. They came together to celebrate with a housewarming party when the Women's Ministry Director, Renae Peters, purchased her first home. The women also supported ladies facing health challenges. They cooked meals, babysat kids, and walked dogs for one another during times of need. Tameyka's story beautifully illustrates the ways in which a safe, loving community can be a place of healing and a catalyst for growth.



When Tameyka found herself in a difficult situation, her daughter - who was a teacher in our afterschool program - encouraged her to come to Agape. At the time, we were looking for someone to help with custodial responsibilities and Tameyka, who had recently lost her job, was a great fit for the position. Two weeks after Tameyka started working for Agape, she moved out of her unstable housing situation in the neighborhood and into The Haven of OST. Tameyka remembers how "closed off" she felt during her initial days, but after realizing that her new neighbors and the Agape staff were "so nice and friendly," she began to open up. In an effort to become more invested in the community, she started taking daily walks with a new friend (an Agape Homes homeowner!) and began attending Women's Fellowship meetings on Monday evenings. It was on the van ride to the St. John the Divine Women's Ministry Retreat in January that God rekindled in Tameyka a passion for sharing her testimony and encouraging other women. Maveya, a leader in the Women's Ministry, remembers the moment on the trip when one of the ladies opened up about being in an abusive relationship. As Maveya listened, she prayed, "I wish I knew someone who could share with her, who would be able to speak with impact." At the same time, Tameyka felt a gentle nudge from the Holy Spirit. Tameyka immediately recognized the call, explaining, "God had been calling me, but I kind of shut down. I kept running from it." This time, though, Tameyka took courage and began to share how the Lord saved her from an abusive relationship, hoping and believing that God could use her story to encourage someone else. The whole van went silent as Tameyka spoke. Maveya could see the tangible impact of Tameyka's vulnerability on the other ladies, an effect that continued into the weekend.

**watch the video!**





Tameyka's bravery "took away the stigma, the shame," and paved the way for others to share vulnerably as well. One woman opened up about her own experience with domestic abuse. "I have known her for 10 years," Maveya explains, "and never knew she had gone through that."

Since then, Tameyka takes every opportunity God gives her to encourage others. Tameyka feels more like herself than she has in years. "I love loving on people," she beams, "God is love and that's what I share back to others." Inspired by the power of Tameyka's story and the effect it had on the whole Women's Ministry, Maveya invited Tameyka to speak at her church. After she spoke, one of the church leaders rose from her seat, gave Tameyka

a big hug, and, with tears in her eyes, told her she was "so blessed" by Tameyka's testimony. Tameyka has now shared her story at multiple church events and received an invitation to speak at a conference for more than 100 churches later this summer. In addition to using her story to encourage women, Tameyka leverages her other talents to help others as well. Tameyka works with seniors as a home health nurse. Her favorite part of her job is the opportunity to give her patients hope by making them smile and laugh. Ultimately, Tameyka dreams of retiring from her nursing job in order to dedicate herself to her clothing business, Koinz 2 Kash Boutique.

Tameyka combines her interest in fashion and her desire to love others by curating a collection of pieces for people with financial difficulties. Recently, she ran into one of our neighbors from the Women's Fellowship looking for an outfit at a local clothing store. She asked Tameyka for advice and Tameyka jumped at the opportunity to use her gifts to find something in which her friend would feel confident. Tameyka feels especially passionate about helping people find clothing for interviews and the workplace because business attire is often so expensive. Tameyka primarily views her business as a ministry opportunity, not merely a source of profit, and hopes to leave a legacy by making beautiful, professional clothing more accessible to her community.

Tameyka marvels at the ways that God used the community and the Agape family to transform her life in a matter of months. She feels grateful for the support she receives from Agape - a listening ear whenever she needs advice, a second chance and the opportunity to work, a community of friends and sisters who support her passions, and a space to pursue God's call on her life. We feel equally blessed by Tameyka's commitment to loving the neighborhood and everyone she encounters. We are grateful to call Tameyka neighbor!

"God is love  
and that's  
what I share  
back to  
others."



10

**members  
of the Leadership  
Team**

670

**hours  
serving the  
community**

24

**neighbor  
led projects**

13

**popup  
shop  
vendors**





# Adult Independence



Agape Development continues to support adults on their path to independence. The Haven of OST provides safe, affordable housing to neighbors in need of transitional living arrangements. Our Ministry Center serves as a multi-purpose resource hub for neighbors looking for a place to make copies, use the computer, fill out job applications, draft a resume, or practice for an interview. Our Community Engagement Liaison, Amanda Longoria, has taken the initiative to assist neighbors in need of support as they seek greater independence. As a community member, Adult Independence program graduate, and former volunteer, Amanda uses her experience to connect with neighbors from a position of understanding and compassion. Leveraging her wealth of connections in the neighborhood, Amanda established a relationship with the manager at Pyburns, a local grocery store. Since then, four individuals referred by Agape have found employment at Pyburns. The manager hired the last candidate on the spot, having been so impressed with the other employees that came through Amanda. Finding employment opportunities in the community is a persistent challenge and having a connection like the one Amanda established with Pyburns is invaluable. Whether Amanda is working with someone looking for affordable housing options or helping someone acquire a driver's license, assisting someone with their very first resume, or walking someone through an assistance program application, Amanda gets to know each individual on a personal level and provides encouragement and accountability throughout the process. We are grateful for Amanda's neighborhood expertise and her commitment to loving neighbors on their path toward independence. Sheona is one example of someone who has taken advantage of the support and stability she has found in the community in order to pursue her career dreams.

Three years ago, while staying with relatives in the neighborhood, Sheona and her daughter, Reeselynn, learned about Agape Development from some friends at the playground. Sheona immediately signed up for as many Adult Independence programs as were available. Sheona completed both Getting Ahead and Agape at Work and participated in numerous networking events. Encouraged by her own positive experience at Agape, Sheona also enrolled Reeselyn in Backyard Bible Club.

The Adult Independence classes equipped Sheona with the motivation and the skills to pursue greater independence. She found the recommendation to send thank you cards to the employer after an interview especially helpful. In fact, nine months ago, she landed a job with the Trade Show Department. She even had the opportunity to work the Final Four Experience at the George R. Brown Convention Center this past March.



**12**

**IDs  
secured**



**21**

**residents  
served at  
The Haven of OST**



**131**

**job  
applications  
submitted**



**43**

**job  
referrals**





**watch the  
video!**



When looking for an independent housing option, she applied and moved into The Haven of OST. Sheona has noticed the growing importance of being embedded in community since she and Reeselyn relocated to the Haven. When they first moved, Sheona avoided talking to people, but little by little, the kindness of her neighbors “helped break down that barrier.”

Sheona always dreamed of owning her own business. She enjoys trying new things and pursuing the ideas that pop into her head. In 2018, during a time when she needed something to occupy her mind, she had the idea of starting a candle-making business. She turned her dream into a reality, launching Renique Scents LLC later that year. Initially she focused on making dessert candles, yummy scented candles in the shape of cupcakes, pies, or cinnamon rolls. Since then, with more practice and experience, Sheona has hit her stride creating unique fragrance blends. She feels particularly drawn to earthy scents, like frankincense and myrrh, rain, and tobacco. “People don’t know that there is such a variety of candles,” which makes the challenge of creating interesting combinations all the more exciting.

Since starting Renique Scents in 2018, Sheona has noticed fluctuations in her business depending on the stability of her situation. Having steady work and a safe place to call home have allowed her to dedicate herself to growing Renique Scents. In fact, Agape Development contracted her services to make candles for our new Agape Homes homeowners. Upon moving into their new home, each family receives a welcome basket filled with housewarming goodies from the community, including a delicious-smelling candle by Renique scents! When Sheona thinks about the future, she dreams of having a bigger space to expand her business. She is interested in trying a different technique, called dipping, which requires different tools and a more spacious work area. She also envisions being able to accommodate rapid custom orders for clients in the future. Ultimately, she hopes to walk into a major chain store one day and see her candles on the shelves next to other brands like AirWik or Glade.

**RENIQUE  
scents  
by Sheona**



Sheona’s story is a testament to the impact of community and stability. Once Sheona connected with a supportive community where she learned new skills, found a job with steady income, and moved into a stable environment, Sheona could pursue her dream business. She is able to lower her walls and form meaningful connections with her neighbors. She can support Reeselyn and encourage her to pursue her own dreams. We are grateful for this powerful story of transformation and grateful that Sheona is able to bless the neighborhood with her gifts.



# Agape Homes



Take a quick, five-minute stroll around the community and you will see the visible signs of neighborhood transformation and the realization of a decades-long dream. It brings such excitement to watch empty lots slowly transform into beautiful, new houses. We feel infinitely more excitement, though, knowing that these Agape Homes belong to community leaders and dedicated neighbors who persisted through the long homebuyer process to become homeowners. The Agape Homes Homebuyer Program increased the number of educational opportunities for future homeowners by adding a five-week financial course called Money Moves, a quarterly Will and Testament class, and an interactive Welcome to the Neighborhood orientation for homeowners and homebuyers under contract. As part of their 80-hour volunteer requirement, future homebuyers participated in 2,374 hours of service to the community. During this fiscal year, Agape Homes CDC started construction on 25 homes and completed a total of 14. As of the end of this fiscal year, ten families have purchased an Agape Home. This year, we had the privilege of celebrating alongside new and old friends when they signed (and signed, and signed!) on the dotted line and received the keys to their very own home. We know many of you have followed along and celebrated these momentous occasions with us and with our neighbors. We invite you to celebrate as you hear Corisha's story about realizing her dream of homeownership, finding strength from neighbors, and her commitment to being a good neighbor herself.

Corisha describes her experience with the affordable homebuyer process, which started in February of 2021 and eventually resulted in closing on her beautiful, new home in April of 2023, as "tough, but a good tough." Even as a kid growing up in OST/South Union and the Third Ward, Corisha dreamed of becoming a homeowner one day. For much of her childhood, though, owning a home seemed like a distant dream, especially while bouncing between apartments and other temporary housing situations.

Corisha first heard about Agape Development from a neighbor in Project Row Houses, a non-profit organization in Houston's Historic Third Ward. At that point in time, Corisha was navigating an unstable living situation and struggling with her mental health. Corisha is so grateful that her neighbor "saw that I was trying to take that next step, but I didn't know what to do." As a result of her neighbor's urging, Corisha contacted Jessie, the director of Agape Development's Young Adult Ministry at the time, and eventually became a resident in the Gateway Program, a ministry dedicated to supporting youth on their path toward independence. Since then, Corisha has participated in almost every program that Agape has offered. Corisha has been an active member of both the Young Adult and Women's Fellowship communities. She graduated from Agape's Faith & Finance class as well as Getting Ahead. Corisha always comes to community events at Agape Development, a faithful presence at our Pop-Up Shops, Lemonade Days, Fall Festivals, and Family Reunions. For the past few years, Corisha and Nikki, another Gateway graduate, lived together in a nearby Agape rental property.



**watch the video!**







When we needed drivers to help with transportation to and from Teen Night, Corisha and Nikki both volunteered and served in the Teen Ministry. Most recently, Corisha dedicated herself to the Agape Homes Homebuyer Program process and succeeded in purchasing her very own home!

When Corisha looks back on the past eight years, she marvels at all that she has accomplished and at the many ways God has transformed areas of her life. Corisha went from being a discouraged and directionless young woman looking for safe, stable housing, to being an independent adult pursuing a meaningful career, a dedicated neighbor committed to her community, and a new homeowner enjoying her beautiful home! Corisha feels grateful for “the persistence of the team members at Agape” who surrounded her with support and pushed her towards her goals. Even though Corisha faced many roadblocks while working towards homeownership, she held onto hope and persevered. “You have to keep pushing through,” Corisha advises, “keep looking, keep applying...because someone is going to say yes.”

Even though Corisha struggles to pick a favorite part of her new home (she says the “whole thing is my favorite”), she looks forward to hosting people in her new space. She hopes to create a place where people feel comfortable; where they can come and enjoy, hang out, and play video games. In fact, she kicked off her very first weekend as an official homebuyer by hosting a housewarming party for family, friends, and neighbors. She made sure to extend the invitation to the Agape Development staff, many of whom have known her since she joined the Gateway House in 2015.

When Corisha thinks about her future, she asks herself one central question: “how can I best help my community.” Corisha works for Texas Rising, a non-profit organization focused on inspiring, educating, and equipping young people of color to engage politically and become leaders in their community. Personally, Corisha sees herself continuing to work in the political arena, with the ultimate goal of launching her own congressional campaign. As a congressperson, Corisha hopes to communicate transparently with her constituents, improve neighborhoods like OST/South Union, and fight against the displacement caused by gentrification.

Neighboring plays such a central role in Corisha’s story. Corisha grew up here, in the OST/South Union community, dreaming of becoming a homeowner one day. A good neighbor from Project Row Houses cared enough about Corisha to support her and direct her to the resources Corisha needed. Then,

Corisha moved into an intentional community at the Gateway House and began to build meaningful relationships with her peers, with Agape staff, and with neighbors. Corisha decided to stay in the neighborhood and even chose to pursue a career that allows her to advocate for and with members of our neighborhood. And then, after over two years of hard work in the Agape Homes Homebuyer Program, Corisha bought a home just blocks away from our Ministry Center. While we can’t welcome Corisha to the neighborhood as a new neighbor, we can give her a warm welcome into homeownership!

“you have to keep pushing through...keep looking, keep applying”

10

**new homeowners**

2,374

**volunteer hours logged**

1,009

**education hours logged**

268

**homebuyer program applicants**





# Our Volunteers

17



33

**churches  
represented**

342

**volunteers**

1,684

**volunteer  
hours served**

\$32

**volunteer  
hour value**

So many of our programs rely on the generosity of volunteers who donate their time, resources, expertise, and heart to the work of transforming our community. This year, Agape Development has enjoyed being able to enrich the volunteer experience with a training on Community Engagement and to grow our volunteer base with people who are a part of the Agape Homes program. Volunteers commit to high-impact opportunities such as working with elementary students to improve reading and math levels or providing safe and reliable childcare so parents can attend programs. Volunteers also help with general upkeep of our facilities and properties. Volunteers generously serve in their areas of expertise, which allows us to reserve funds for direct programming costs. We structure most of our volunteer opportunities in a way that encourages reciprocal relationship between the volunteers and participants. Through these experiences, we hope that our volunteers develop a deeper understanding of the OST neighborhood and a long-lasting relationship with Agape Development and our neighbors.



"I volunteer because I enjoy helping others and teaching about something that is critically important to so many people. Agape is important to me because it not only helps people in the community, but it is an interwoven part of the community now. Not just another outreach agency. This feels genuine to me. I have learned how to be more grateful and humble after many years of volunteering at Agape. It's a place where we can all learn and grow together."

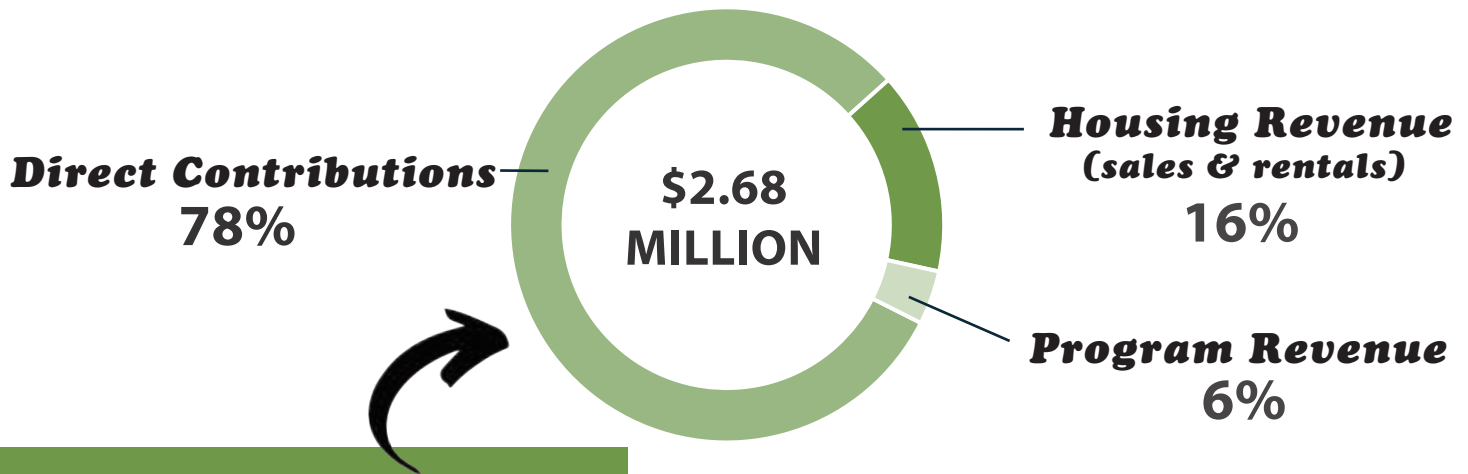
Matt Titus (CFA, senior portfolio manager for investment company)

"I like volunteering at Agape because of the relationships I've made (and will continue to make) through serving. I have so many fun memories at Agape being a summer camp counselor and volunteering for Monday night Bible study. When I walk into Agape and see all the kids, I know it brightens their day just as much as they brighten mine! I've learned so much from the kids and they've shown me what it means to be joyful in all circumstances. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve at such a wonderful ministry."

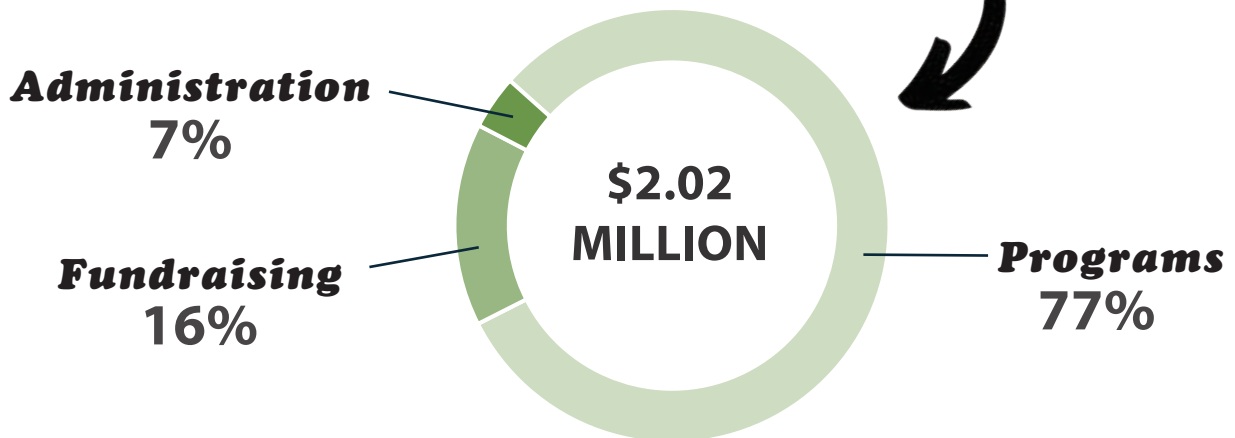
Claire Field (high school volunteer)



# Fiscal Year Financials



## Annual Expenses



## Annual Revenue Contributions by Source

