



newsletter

The mission of Camp Agape is to provide a free summer camping experience, in a setting of God's unconditional agape love for Vermont children who have experienced a parent's incarceration.

Joey Comes to Camp

Two years ago, 'Joey' came to Camp Agape. A very active nine-year-old who enjoyed camp but had a difficult time settling down, paying attention, following instructions, Joey met at least once a day with his cabin counselor, the chaplain and one of the camp directors to discuss ways he could enjoy camp even more and not be disruptive.



Slippery Slide at Camp Agape

Finally, the day before the week-long session was to end, it became obvious that Joey simply couldn't handle it and would have to be sent home. He was well aware that he had pushed the limits. Joey was assured that he would be welcomed back to next summer's session, that a place was already reserved for him. As the car drove out of camp for the ride home, he saw the campers enjoying sliding down a hillside on the 'Slippery Slide,' a huge plastic sheet covered in soap suds.

Once more assured that he would be welcomed back the following year, Joey asked, "Could we do that Slide the first day?"

Joey came back last year. He had many of the same behavior issues. He met regularly with his cabin counselor, chaplain and camp director who encouraged him to try new behaviors and to make it through the entire camp session. He tried very hard.

Thursday, the next-to-last-day of camp, the traditional Water Carnival was held and Joey slid down the 'Slippery Slide' again and again having a wonderful time. That evening after supper, he came up to his cabin counselor, held up both his thumbs in triumph and said, "I made it!"

Joey is one of the first campers to register for this summer's camp.

Welcome back, Joey!

Volume 2, Issue 1
Spring, 2009

2009 Camping Schedule
Covenant Hills Christian
Camp Cabot, Vermont
Session 1—August 9-14
Session 2— August 16-21

- Remember to pray for prisoners, their children, camp counselors and staff.

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Camp Agape Partners with Kids-A-Part

We will be partnering this summer with Kids-A-Part of the Vermont Children's Aid Society. Kids-A-Part was started in October 2006 to address the needs of children whose parents were incarcerated. Tara

Graham, Program Director, and Colleen Dwyer, Community Coordinator, will be training Camp staff and Volunteers about the particular needs of the children who attend Camp Agape and will also be

helping with the camp program each week. For more information about Kids-A-Part, contact Tara Graham at tgraham@vtcas.org and visit the Vermont Children's Aid Society's website www.vtcas.org.

Meet Sherry Osborn—Camping Coordinator

After three years of increasing enrollment and successful operations, it became clear to the Organizing Team in the fall of 2008 that some part-time staff was needed.



Thanks to a most generous gift from an anonymous donor, the search was begun for a Camping Program Coordinator.

In January of this year our search was ended when we contracted with The Rev. Sherry Osborn, Rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Springfield, VT. Sherry brings a wealth of camping experience having served for six years as Education Director for the Adirondack Mountain Club in Lake Placid, NY and three years as Assistant Camp Director of Camp Catherine Capers, Wells, VT. She's led wilderness trips and high and low ropes programs for 15 years.

Sherry is experienced, she's organized and she brings a deep commit-

ment to camping as a way of life and to the children of Camp Agape. When she arrived at St. Mark's in 2006 she knew that she wanted to be involved in some sort of camping program and when she heard about Camp Agape she knew this is the camp she wants to work with.

Sherry has been busy recruiting staff and counselors, coordinating relations with our host camp facility, Covenant Hills Christian Camp, as well as assisting in developing the weekly camping programs. Welcome aboard, Sherry – we're delighted to have you

What About the Older Children?

Camp Agape is basically for children ages 7 to 11. What is available for those who are older, especially for those who have attended Camp Agape for a year or more? *A very important question.* For the past two summers we've tried, with varying degrees of success, to deal with this issue by offering something different during one week of camp. This year we were faced with the fact that 25 of last

year's campers would be 12 or older.

We decided for 2009 to offer 'a camp within a camp,' for 12 and 13 year-olds with special on-site and off-site activities geared to this age group. **Beth Ann Maier**, a pediatrician, a deacon in the Episcopal Church and an original member of the Camp Agape Organizing Team, has joined forces with

Steve Matush, a retired school teacher, to make this program available the first week of camp.

Limited to 5 girls and 5 boys, the camp is already filled. What about future years? *Another very important question.* One for which we will be seeking the Spirit's guidance as soon as the August camps are completed.

We Sure Do Have a Place for YOU At Camp

As a **Daily Volunteer** you would arrive about 9 a.m. and spend the day (through supper and evening program if you wish, meals are provided) working with a cabin group as it goes through its daily activities and providing relief for the regular cabin counselors so that they can have time off. Daily Volunteers are needed Mondays through Thursdays of each camp week. Come for one day or one day each week or more – it's a great way

to experience the joy and love of camp.

As a **Relief Counselor** you would reside at the camp for the week, provide relief for regular cabin counselors like the Daily Volunteers do and be available if needed as an extra cabin counselor for a night.

As a **Photographer**: Come up one or two days each week and take lots of

pictures of campers and their activities which we can use in our brochures and when we make presentations at churches and service clubs.. Pictures help us tell the Camp Agape story.

Like to **fish**? Come on Tuesday morning and help **bait** hooks, **un-snag** lines and **cheer** when a camper catches a 'brookie.'

Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

Major steps have been taken in the past 9 months to strengthen the Camp Agape organization and program: it's quite a list!

We're **incorporated** as a not-for-profit Vermont organization, thanks to the good services of Steve Unsworth, a member of the Shelburne United Methodist Church and partner in the law firm of Unsworth and Barra, Essex Junction.

We have our **tax-exempt, non-profit**

status from the Internal Revenue Service thanks to Sherry Prehoda, CPA, member of Burlington United Methodist Church and partner of JMM & Associates, CPA, Burlington. This means that all contributions to Camp Agape are tax-exempt to the full extent of the law.

We have **our own website**, thanks to the work of Ken Lynn of the UCC Church in Essex Junction and the Reverend Ken

Hitch, Rector of St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction.

The website is: www.campagapevermont.org. Click on "To view our most recent **presentation**" to see a great Power Point show with wonderful pictures and compelling stories.

Our deepest thanks go to these very generous and gifted folk who made these steps possible.

What Does It Cost To Provide Camp Agape For 80 Campers?

Contract with Cov. Hills— facilities,	
Meals & Summer Counselors	\$29,000
Camp Directors' Stipends & Some Counselors.....	\$4,000
T-shirts, Caps, Hoodies.....	\$4,000
Sleeping Bags, Backpacks	\$5,500
Administration, Miscellaneous.....	\$1,500
Total	\$44,000*

Where does the money come from?	
Individuals	
47%.....	\$20,680
Churches	
40%	\$17,600
Foundations & Service Clubs	
13%.....	\$ 5,720
Total	\$44,000

Plus thousands of dollars in volunteer time, quilts, backpack goodies—and..... hours of prayer.

Our heartfelt thanks to all those generous individuals who continue to make summer camping possible for the children of Camp Agape.

You are a blessing!!!

* This figure is a little more than what it costs the State of Vermont to keep one person in prison for a year.

What Do We Do At Camp?



Covenant Hills has four separate clusters ('villages') of two cabins, each of which house five campers and two or three counselors. Each village has its own campfire, has its meeting time for choosing and planning activities as well as its schedule of chores (Kitchen Kapers, bathroom clean-up), and participates as a group in camp activities.

Of course, there's swimming, fishing, games, crafts, chapel times, great food and plenty of it, songs, 'smores at campfires, time to share the beauty and joy of God's creation, Water Carnival, story

and prayer times before lights out and, most especially, there are the growing, trusting relationships between campers and counselors.



And, there's more: two **-weavers** bring their looms to camp each week so that the children can practice their skills; **Darren Haines, magician** extraordinaire, teaches magic tricks and plans, this year, to spend a whole day leading both large and small groups; a **scrapbook lady** comes on Fridays to help the children prepare memory books from all the pictures cabin groups take during the week; a **story-teller** from the Chil-



dren's Literacy Foundation will gather the children who, last year, were enthralled with the story.

New this year, **Kids-A-Part** of the Vermont Children's Aid Society will be working with each village through art, acting or writing to help the children share their experiences and feelings about having a parent in prison. This will help fulfill Camp Agape's mission to try to break the cycle of 'generational incarceration,' and give children the opportunity to be with others who are in the same situation.

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An ecumenical ministry of the Troy Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont and the Vermont Conference of The United Church of Christ



Facts about Camp Agape

In 2006 we started with one week of camp and 28 children. 2007 saw 2 camp weeks and 49 children; in 2008 we had 75 children and this year we expect to be 'maxed out' with 80 campers. Our return rate ranges from 30% to 60% from year to year.

How many people does it take to staff Camp Agape? 15 each week from Covenant Hills staff (Director, cooks, grounds, summer counselors, etc.); about 30 week-long residential folk each week plus 10 to 15 people who come as 'dailies' or with special program skills.

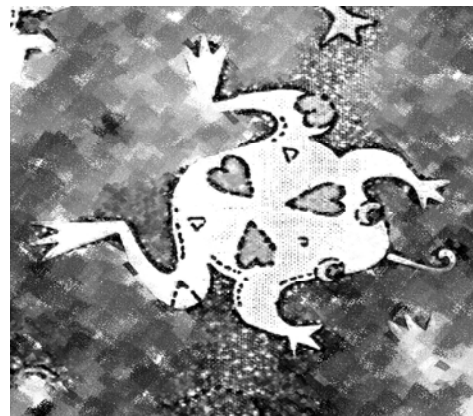
Camp Agape Vermont is one of 19 similar camps sponsored by Episcopal dioceses around the country and the only one which is ecumenically co-sponsored. We are blessed to work with members of the Troy Conference of the United Methodist Church and

the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.

We have a website:
www.campagapevermont.org. You can download this year's two brochures, one for volunteers, the other for campers. We still have more work to do to establish links with other organizations – but it's a beginning and there are great pictures!

PowerPoint Presentation: We have developed a DVD which has proved very effective in service clubs, church groups, governmental and non-profit agencies involved with the children of the incarcerated. It tells a compelling story and helps to recruit campers and volunteers as well as raise money.

Please call Con Quinby at 802-862-4174 to schedule a presentation.



“I can't believe this; when I heard about Camp Agape and what Agape meant, I didn't believe that someone could love me without even knowing me. Then I came here and it's true!”

a 2008 camper

