

Joanna Garcia-Santiago

Hello! My name is Joanna Garcia-Santiago and I am a senior enrolled in the International Bachelorette (IB) Diploma program at North Atlanta High School. I have been a part of the Agape family for four years now. Through Agape, I have been able to learn and experience many great adventures. To begin, I would like to share the definition of Agape with you all. The primary definition we know and understand Agape to mean, is unconditional love. However, another definition is Amazing "having the mouth open because of wonder, surprise, or shock." This amazing love is exactly what Agape is and does. When I first began with Agape, I remember meeting the staff and immediately feeling at home. They were all so kind and very understanding. They provide so much support and give each child the attention needed, such as having Agape counselors at our Agape Schools. Personally, this left me in a state of amazement. In the same

year that I joined Agape, I attended the summer program called "Go Girl Go" along with my two sisters and my little brother, who attended fitness camp. As a volunteer at Go Girl Go, I helped out with the 8-10 year old girls. That summer, I was able to meet wonderful new people, go to great places, such as enjoying the summer feeling at the pool, racing up Stone Mountain, roller skating for the first time and watching the girls in the program have the time of their lives. This left me surprised. For two consecutive summers I was able to experience the excitement of watching the White Agape bus stroll in to pick up all the little anxious children and watch as they all came home, tired and happy after a day full of fun activities. I watched as each day, we all drove off to the summer of our lives. While working, I was able to learn courage and how to maintain a positive attitude, even in the most difficult of times. And many times Mr. Harris was able to lift my spirits through his beautiful spirit and the wonderful

lessons taught even today. Not only did they provide an amazing summer, but once school started, Agape kept us going. I remember my siblings coming home and having all their homework done without needing my help since the Agape tutors had surely done their job. This was, again, amazing. Even then, the Agape love didn't stop. I remember the book bag drives and the parking lot being full of people. I remember volunteering and watching as each child walked away, including my siblings, with the happiest of smiles, ready to conquer a new school year. And even today, as I begin to move closer and closer to my graduation date of May 26th, I can proudly say that Agape has helped me put on my cap and gown. With the infinite support and the very much needed help that Agape provided my family and I, such as holiday giveaways and the wonderful informational events we have been blessed to attend. I am now the first in my family to graduate from high school and the first to attend college.

Through Ms. Lilli's patience, support and constant reminders to fill out applications. I've been accepted into Augusta University, formally known as Georgia Regents, where I will be attending in the fall as a computer science major. I will also be in the first class, at Augusta, to participate in the Chinese Program, which I studied for four years at North Atlanta.

I am very happy and beyond honored to be a part of the wonderful Agape program which beautifully matches its definition. I have never felt more love and support from a group of people before. Today I thank the wonderful staff who have helped shape the person I am today. On behalf of all the children of Agape, I can very happily say, thank you Agape! For the wonderful surprises, wonders and infinite love you provide. But mostly, thank you for the support you show each and every day. Keep making the world a better place, one child at a time!