



Agape Flights' F406 during a recent fuel stop in Key West.

VENICE-BASED **AGAPE** FLIGHTS Delivers Hope for Millions

7:26 a.m.: Just after sunrise, a blue-and-white twin-engine airplane makes its way to Venice Municipal Airport's runway 13. The Brazilian-made Embraer 110 begins to roll, slowly at first, until—at about 100 miles per hour—the aircraft and its 3,000 pounds of cargo begin to climb into the sparkling Florida sky.

In the 43 years since Agape Flights was founded, the local organization has made thousands of flights and taken millions of pounds of cargo to missionaries in the northern Caribbean. Operating from a single hangar adjacent to Venice Municipal Airport, Agape's two turboprop airplanes provide weekly mail and cargo deliveries to several hundred mission partners in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas. The planes depart most Tuesday and Thursday mornings, laden with food, medicine, building supplies, truck parts, schoolbooks, solar power equipment, and anything else it takes to serve 22 million people in developing nations.

To the missionaries it resupplies each week, Agape Flights is a lifeline.

"We need Agape Flights now more than ever," says Mark Stockeland, CEO of Haiti Bible Mission. He and other missionaries in Haiti used to travel to Port au Prince for some supplies, but gang violence has made trips to Haiti's capital impossible.

1:45 a.m.: In Les Cayes, Haiti, the sound of an approaching aircraft captures the attention of a small group of men at the local airport. "Agape!" someone shouts, pointing to a dot on the horizon.



Agape Flights volunteers sort mail and cargo, load the planes, and keep the organization operating.



Longtime Agape Flights volunteer pilot Steve Koch, left, on a checkout flight with Agape's Director of Flight Operations Greg Haman

Missionary Lee Nunemaker and a small team of cargo handlers don orange safety vests as the aircraft touches down and taxis to an unloading area. Twenty minutes later, after the handlers and the two Agape pilots have emptied the plane's cargo hold, the aircraft lifts off and turns northeast toward Cap Haitien. After a quick stop for Haitian Customs, the pilots will settle in for the four-hour flight to Palm Beach and an appointment with U.S. Customs and Immigration.

A small team of about a dozen full-time employees fill key business and operational roles at Agape Flights, but it's a roster of more than 100 volunteers who really keep the organization flying. Volunteers sort the mail, load the cargo, and even fly the airplanes.

"Volunteers make our work possible," says Agape CEO Allen Speer. "It's really not 'Agape Flights' working to make life better for millions of people. It's the good people of Venice and Sarasota County who do the heavy lifting."

7:30 p.m.: In the waning twilight, N316AF taxis toward the Agape Flights hangar at Venice Municipal Airport. In the dozen hours since the plane left Florida, another ton of cargo has been delivered to the hangar, ready to be sorted by the next morning's volunteer crew. On Haiti's south coast, a teacher prepares lessons on a laptop delivered by Agape Flights. Up north near Cap Haitien, an anxious mother clings to hope at a malnutrition treatment center. Her child is showing signs of improvement, having been treated in a clinic that was recently resupplied by an Agape Flights



Haiti Bible Mission CEO Mark Stockeland, left, and Agape volunteer pilot Doug Graber, far right, join the unloading crew in Jeremie, Haiti.

delivery. A new well near Jacmel is producing clean, safe drinking water, its pump back in service after an Agape-delivered part was expedited to the scene.

Find out more about Agape Flights at the organization's open house, Pie in the Sky, on March 2, 2024, 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., at 100 Airport Avenue East in Venice. The event is free and open to the public. Visitors can tour the Agape Flights hangar and see the Agape aircraft, fly the Agape simulator, and get up close with other amazing airplanes.

For more information about this advertorial, log on to AgapeFlights.com or call 941.488.0990. Located at 100 Airport Avenue E., Agape Flights is open for guests and interested volunteers 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.