

## 'If It Wasn't for COBYS. . .' Father Is Excited to Have His Children Back

Mark Cramer took his five-year-old son, Cameron, and one-year-old daughter, Neeca, to the opening night of the Elizabethtown Fair on Monday, August 18. That's hardly big news. Lots of parents take their kids to enjoy the petting zoo, fair food, and other fun features.

But the evening at the fair was extra special for Mark, 41, since he had just welcomed his children home after they had spent nearly 11 months in foster care. COBYS Family Services supported Mark as he did what he needed to do to be reunited with his children.

"If it wasn't for COBYS, I don't think I would have them back," Mark explains as Cameron munches on a hot dog purchased at the Lion's Club stand.

Mark's long-time partner had a history of drug addiction. The day after she was released from prison

last August, she gave birth to Neeca, but soon relapsed and returned to prison. In the weeks she was home after the birth, Mark left their children in her care, failing to provide adequately for their safety. The county intervened last October to protect the children.

"I was lost without my kids," Mark recalls, "especially Cameron.

He and I were inseparable. We did so much together." (While Mark speaks, Cameron dons his Spiderman jacket and leaps off of the picnic table bench a few times. Judging by some of the hard landings, his web-spinners may be due for servicing.)

The case was referred to the COBYS Permanency Unit in January, and caseworker Christina Hostetter assumed primary responsibility. About the same time, the children were transferred to COBYS foster parents Alex & Carol Rabold, with caseworker Joylinn Ortiz supporting them and the children.

Mark now sensed that he had people rooting for him to succeed and redoubled his efforts to complete his plan. Offering his take on the name COBYS Family Services, Mark observes that the organization felt much like a family to him, with various staff and foster parents working together to support and encourage him. But Mark did the work.

"Mark is motivated," says Christina. "He would call me and say, 'Okay, what do I need to do?' He was always interested in knowing what else he could do so his kids could come home sooner."

In addition to Mark's motivation,



*Mark and his children, Cameron and Neeca, enjoy an evening at the Elizabethtown Fair. COBYS supported Mark as he worked to regain custody of his children.*

*(continued on page three)*

## Mission Statement

*Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS Family Services educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential.*

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*Fostering Hope* is the quarterly newsletter of COBYS Family Services, a Christian family service agency, affiliated with the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren.

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## Quietly Making a Difference

I attended Clair Hurst's memorial service on August 19. Clair was 91 when he died several days earlier. I had learned to know him and his wife, Anna Mary (who passed away in October 2013), during their retirement years, when they regularly volunteered at COBYS to help process bulk mailings.

In addition, Clair continued to participate in the three-mile walk at the Bike & Hike well into his 80s, inviting friends and family to support him and COBYS ministries. Clair & Anna Mary, themselves, gave one or more gifts to COBYS every year for at least a quarter century.

I remember Clair and Anna Mary coming into the conference room at our main office on mailing days. They often were smiling, and always seemed to be in a good mood. Then they would sit down next to each other and start folding letters and stuffing envelopes. While other volunteers more readily engaged in



*Clair Hurst, quietly looking on after walking three miles at the 2009 COBYS Bike & Hike.*

conversation, Clair & Anna Mary worked steadily and quietly. Now and again Anna Mary would join the conversation, but Clair mostly stayed focused on his task.

He would be listening, smiling, and working. I could tell that he was very glad to be there with his wife, and she with him. Watching them work side by side was really very sweet.

I remember seeing Clair & Anna Mary at a nearby store a few years after they had "retired" from volunteering at COBYS. They were walking more slowly and a bit more bent over, but you could still tell that they were pleased to be together. Clair took it hard when he lost his life's partner last year.

My memories of Clair came back easily as I listened to comments from others at his memorial service. He evidently had volunteered at other organizations and also served faithfully at the Ephrata Church of the Brethren, where he was a long-time member. And what was said of Clair in these other settings was consistent with what I knew about him.

I think sometimes it is easy to forget those who are quiet in spirit. Many people (myself included) are more gregarious and freely express themselves, and attract more attention. And there is nothing wrong with being outgoing.

But I am so thankful for quiet servants like Clair. People who make a significant difference in the lives of those they touch. People who live their lives working hard, being a positive influence in their families, making their communities better by volunteering. And doing it all without seeking or expecting any accolades or recognition.

One can't help but think about one's own mortality when attending a memorial service. As I was listening to what was being said of Clair, I thought, "I would be pleased if some of the same things one day could be said of me."

*Mark Cunningham, Executive Director*

*Clair's family has designated COBYS as a recipient of memorial gifts. If you would like to honor Clair's memory, simply send in your gift and write "Clair Hurst Memorial" on the memo line of your check. We also could use some new volunteers like Clair & Anna Mary to help with mailings. Contact Bethany at 717-656-6580 to learn more about volunteering. The pay isn't great, but the company is good and lunch is included.*

*(continued from page one)*

the case, says Christina, also stood out in that custody of the children has been given to the father, instead of the mother. While most single parents are mothers, she observes, “we have noticed a trend in Permanency that dads are really stepping up and working to get their kids back.”

Whether it is with dad, or mom, or both, says Christina, “our first choice is always for the kids to

return home if it’s possible. The best place for a child to be is with their birth parents, with their family.”



Last year, of 38 children whose cases with the COBYS Permanency Unit were concluded, about half were able to return home, while the others had parental rights terminated in anticipation of adoption. Mark is happy to be counted among those who successfully were reunited.

Asked why he worked so hard to regain custody of Cameron and Neeca, Mark is adamant: “They’re my pride and joy. They are my responsibility, no one else’s. I made them and it’s my responsibility to raise them.” Seated on her dad’s lap, blue-eyed Neeca seems to agree as she nibbles contentedly on a hot dog roll.

Since the primary concerns that

**‘We have noticed a trend that dads are really stepping up and working to get their kids back.’**

led to the children’s placement were related to their mother, who remains incarcerated, Mark’s case was less complicated than some. He completed a required mental health evaluation, received counseling, and was referred to a Personal Parent Trainer for assistance with parenting skills.

Otherwise, Christina explains, he needs to maintain adequate housing and income, which he does through his part-time job and the disability benefits he has received since having multiple heart attacks a few years ago. And he’ll need to



continue to keep his kids safe.

While he has made some mistakes, Christina says of Mark, “He’s always been very motivated to get his kids back and has shown that he wants the best for them.”

Of course, challenges lie ahead. Cameron is beginning kindergarten, which could be a difficult transition. And in the future, to keep his family together Mark will have to be wise in monitoring interactions with the children’s mother if she continues to struggle with addictions.

“I know she loves her kids,” he says of their mother. “But you have to be a full-time mom. You can’t be a part-time mom.”

Mark has no illusions that being a single dad will be easy, but he does have supportive family members and friends in the area. His children’s foster parents, the Rabolds, also are rooting for him and provided Mark with their contact information. Mark is appreciative of the care they provided for his children, but he is ready to reclaim responsibility for his kids.

“You take it day by day,” he says. “You’re going to have your good days and your bad days.”

On a pleasant summer evening at the fair, with the aroma of French fries and funnel cakes in the air, a little girl on his lap, and his boy by his side, this one feels like a good day.



*(Clockwise from left) Checking out the goats at the E-town Fair; caseworker Christina Hostetter; and Mark & Neeca.*



# 2014 Annual Report

Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS Family Services educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential. During the past year (July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014), 65 staff (26 full-time) helped to carry out our mission in these ways:

**Adoption.** An affiliate of the Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN), the COBYS adoption program helps prepare children and families for adoption, finalizes adoptions, and provides post-adoption support.

Adoption staff finalized 37 adoptions and provided additional services to 211 foster children and 34 foster/adoptive resource families. Nineteen families received support services after their adoption. The number of adoptions finalized and children served grew by some 30 percent over the previous year.

In addition to these SWAN-related services, COBYS provided free birth parent counseling to seven families facing unplanned pregnancies and worked with eight families who were seeking to adopt an infant. One infant adoption was finalized.

**Counseling.** COBYS therapists provided 2,686 hours of therapy, an increase of more than 100 hours from

the previous year. COBYS offers individual, family, and marital counseling on a sliding scale basis for uninsured clients and also accepts payment from some major health insurers.

Therapists address relational issues with couples and families; depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders; challenges commonly faced by abused and neglected children; and more.

Five part-time therapists provide services at the Oregon Counseling Center, north of Lancaster; and at the Palmyra Area Counseling Center, hosted by First United Methodist Church. Growth in the counseling program took place despite the closure of the Solanco Counseling Center in January.

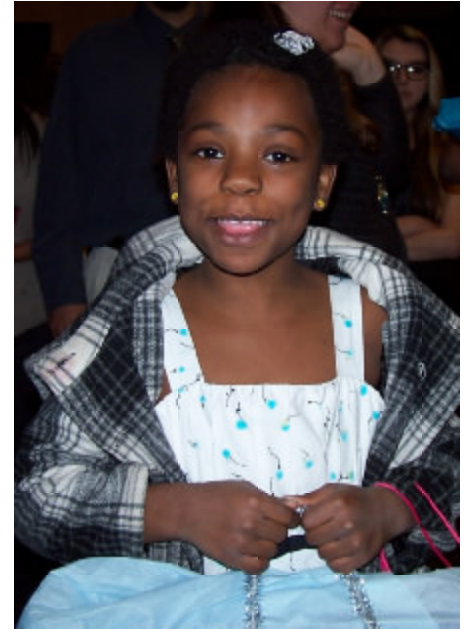
### Family Life Education.

Bolstered by a new facility and significant grant support, the Family Life Education program has continued to grow. In June COBYS received a second \$200,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to expand Incredible Years programs into the School District of Lancaster, beginning this fall. COBYS had received an initial PCCD grant in 2013 to initiate Incredible Years programs, including Dina Small Group Therapy for young children with difficult behaviors and accompanying classes to teach

parents how to deal with these behaviors through positive parenting.

All told, during the past fiscal year COBYS educators led 45 courses and 16 workshops, providing 740 classroom hours and serving 910 adults, youth, and children.

Classroom hours



grew by 17 percent from the previous year. Programs were offered at 24 different sites including the Family Life Center, community locations, schools, and churches.

**Foster Care.** The foster care program provides temporary care for abused and neglected children until they can safely return home or be adopted. Foster care staff facilitated 19,146 days of care for 96 foster children, down from 19,953 days of care for 101 foster children the previous year.

Intentional efforts are made to place brothers and sisters together in the same home. COBYS families cared for a total of 30 sibling groups, including one group of four, and two groups of five. Also receiving care were six children with special medical needs, including brain trauma, prenatal drug addiction, and congenital defects.

Of the 48 children discharged from care, 19 were reunited with their birth parents or relatives, 24 were adopted by their COBYS foster family, and the rest went to other placements. Among those adopted were eight sibling groups.

Approved were 18 new foster/adoptive resource families, bringing our total number of families at year-end to 66.



**Permanency Unit.** Permanency Unit staff served 104 children from 63 families, nearly a 50 percent increase in children from the previous year. During the year 18 children returned home to a parent/guardian, while parental rights were terminated for 19 children in order to help them achieve permanency through adoption. One youth turned 18 and signed out of care to live independently.

Based in Lancaster and operated in partnership with the Lancaster County Children & Youth Social Service Agency, the Permanency Unit seeks to find safe, permanent homes for foster children. Staff monitor the well-being of foster children, support foster parents, and assist birth parents to overcome the issues that led to their children's placement in care.

**Community Connections.**

Through Community Connections, COBYS provides case management services to help local churches link

families with needs to services in the community. As their support network widens, families' financial dependence on the church lessens.

COBYS partnered with five churches to help them meet the needs of seven families. Churches served were Elizabethtown and Little Swatara COBs, Ephrata Church of the Nazarene, Living Hope Assembly, and Petra Christian Fellowship.



**Financial Support**

COBYS Family Services' annual budget of \$2.9 million is supported by public funding, grants, fees for services, and private donations. This report focuses on private giving, which accounts for nearly one fifth of COBYS' income.

Thanks in part to two record fundraisers and extra income generated by the Work for the Well-Being of the City capital campaign, total private giving of \$741,950.01 set a new record. The previous best was \$667,963.91 in 2007/2008.

Giving to the general fund grew by seven percent to \$580,622.65, marking the fourth consecutive year of

growth. A strong year in bequests further strengthened COBYS' financial position.

Two major fundraisers established new records. For the first time, income from the annual Bike & Hike, held in September 2013 at the Lititz Church of the Brethren, exceeded \$100,000. The March "COBYS Nightly News Banquet" generated a standing room only crowd and raised more than \$50,000. In its 20th year, the Family Fun Walk, held each May at Peter Becker Community, generated \$10,000 in gifts.

We are grateful for the strong financial support that enables us to continue to serve children and families in Christ's name!

*A version of this report that includes a list of donors will be available soon on the News & Events page at [www.cobys.org](http://www.cobys.org). Audited financial statements are available upon request.*



**Private Giving Summary (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014)**

Year	Churches	Other General	Total General	Bequests	Campaigns '05 & '13	Endowment	Total Giving
2009/10	\$93,651.16	\$399,492.80	\$493,143.96	\$8,179.37	\$25,498.97	\$500.00	\$527,322.30
2010/11	\$94,608.62	\$412,235.84	\$506,844.46	\$0.00	\$12,053.85	\$500.00	\$519,398.31
2011/12	\$91,120.41	\$443,806.37	\$534,926.78	\$9,375.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$544,801.78
2012/13	\$81,685.04	\$459,946.47	\$541,631.51	\$33,196.96	\$650.00	\$500.00	\$575,978.47
2013/14	\$102,502.34*	\$478,120.31	\$580,622.65	\$31,912.67	\$129,964.44	\$0.00	\$742,499.76

*\*This category previously included only donations from Brethren congregations given through the Atlantic Northeast District. Beginning this year, we began tracking total church giving instead.*

## Keiser and Hardin Take On New Responsibilities

COBYS Family Services has promoted two staff. Abby L. Keiser has been named Director of Family Life Services and S. Holly Hardin has been promoted to replace Keiser as Family Life Education Supervisor. Changes took effect August 18.

Holly and Supervisor of Counseling Services Dr. Michele Romeo-Martin now report to Abby, who also is assuming additional responsibilities in grant writing and program development.

Abby had been Family Life Education Supervisor since October 2011. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology/ Music



*Abby Keiser*

Education from Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, Mass., and a Masters in Clinical Psychology from Millersville (Pa.) University. She has prior experience as a therapist and associate pastor in the Church of the Nazarene.

Abby attends the Ephrata campus of LCBC Church, where she and her husband, Darryl, serve as pre-marital mentors. The Keisers live in New Holland and are parents of two grown children.

Holly began work in the COBYS Family Life Education program in January 2008 and has been an educator and member of the program's leadership team. A

graduate of Millersville University with a BS in Secondary Education and Social Sciences, she has prior experience as a caseworker, teacher, and program director in a residential facility.



*Holly Hardin*

A resident of East Lampeter Township, Holly and her husband, Heath, attend Calvary Church, Lancaster, and are parents of

three school-age children.

In addition to these promotions, Education Specialist Lisa Stoltzfus increased to full-time employment.

## LCCF to Sponsor Third ExtraOrdinary Give

This ExtraOrdinary Give is getting to be a habit.

For the third year in a row the Lancaster County Community Foundation will be sponsoring a 24-hour online giving campaign.

This year's ExtraOrdinary Give is slated for Friday, November 21. More than 250 community benefit organizations are expected to participate. The logistics are the same as last year. With credit card in hand, donors simply need to visit [extragive.org](http://extragive.org) between 12:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. on Friday, November 21, choose COBYS from the list of organizations, and give a donation of \$25 or more.

The Foundation, with help from

Presenting Sponsors Rodgers & Associates and the Martin H. Baer Charitable Trust, is promoting the event, providing prize money, and offering a \$250,000 "stretch fund" that will be divided proportionately among participating organizations. The more our donors give, the greater COBYS' proportion of the

\$250,000. For example, if a total of \$3 million dollars is given to all organizations and COBYS receives \$30,000 from its donors, we would receive one percent or \$2,500 of the match.

On top of the stretch, an additional \$50,000 will be awarded in prizes. During certain time periods, individual donations will be randomly selected. If a COBYS donor



**THE EXTRAORDINARY GIVE**

LANCASTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION | Rodgers & Associates THE RETIREMENT SPECIALISTS<sup>SM</sup> | NOVEMBER 21, 2014

MARTIN H. BAER CHARITABLE TRUST | [EXTRAGIVE.ORG](http://EXTRAGIVE.ORG)

## Campaign Pledges Reach Two-Thirds Mark

Pledges toward the Work for the Well-Being of the City Campaign have reached nearly two thirds of the \$300,000 campaign goal.

As of August 25, pledges totaled \$199,672. Of that amount, \$141,429 has been given so far. During the summer and fall months members of the Church Gifts Team are visiting congregations, asking them to consider giving \$10 per attendee per year during 2015 and 2016 beyond their regular giving to COBYS.

"We continue to receive some new pledges from individuals," says

### Goals at a Glance

Retire Family Life Center Debt	\$185,000
Recoup Startup Costs	\$45,000
Raise Funds for Education	\$70,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

is chosen, the foundation will add \$1,000 to that donation. The more individual donations COBYS receives, the greater our chance of winning one or more prizes.

Last year COBYS finished in the top 20 of 260 participating organizations and earned a \$1,000 Early Bird prize for being the second organization to reach 50 unique donors. COBYS' net income for the day exceeded \$35,000. We are seeking night owls again this year to give at the stroke of midnight to win a prize.

Please mark your calendar, tell your friends, and remember COBYS on November 21. Information is available at [extragive.org](http://extragive.org). If you don't have access to a computer or have questions, contact Don at 717-656-6580 or [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org).



Director of Development Don Fitzkee, "but most new pledges now will come from churches. We are hoping churches will be able to help us reach our goal."

In June 2013, COBYS launched the campaign to pay for a new facility in Lancaster and undergird Family Life Education programming. Based on Jeremiah 29:7, the campaign theme is "Work for the Well-Being of the City."

In October 2012 COBYS purchased the 5,400-square-foot facility at 171 E. King Street, Lancaster, to house Family Life Education staff and programs. The move was prompted by a need for

consistent, well-equipped facilities for education and childcare and a growing realization that many people served by COBYS education programs live in the city.

Contact Director of Development Don Fitzkee at [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org) or 717-656-6580 for more information about supporting COBYS through the campaign.



*Bill Spence (right) of William P. Spence Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc., Manheim, presented a \$750 campaign donation from the York Children's Foundation to Don Fitzkee this spring.*

## Good Joins Counseling Staff

Roseauna Good began work as a COBYS therapist in July, serving clients at the Oregon Counseling Center.

A Licensed Professional Counselor, Rosie earned a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology from Millersville University and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Lebanon Valley College.

She worked previously as a mobile therapist, behavioral specialist consultant, and outpatient therapist for TEAMCare Behavioral Health, Lancaster.

Rosie provides psychotherapy for children, adolescents, adults, and families who are struggling with a variety of mental health



*Rosie Good*

disorders or situational stressors.

Rosie and her husband live near Lititz with their two young daughters.

She is active

in the East Cocalico Church of the Brethren, Reamstown, where she serves on the Ministry & Music Team, sings in the praise band, and participates in puppet skits.

Learn more about Rosie and other COBYS therapists at <http://www.cobys.org/therapists/>.

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**Join Us This Sunday, September 7!**

# 18th Annual Bike & Hike

More info including  
brochure, routes, and  
silent auction items at  
[cobys.org/news.htm](http://cobys.org/news.htm).



Motorcycle Registration Begins	12:45
Motorcycle Ride	1:30
Walk and Bicycle Registration Begins	1:31
25-mile Bike Ride	2:00
Walk & 10-mile Bike Ride	2:30
Celebration, Food, Door Prizes	4:15
Silent Auction throughout day until	5:00

**T-shirts, ice cream, door prizes, silent auction, \$110,000 goal**



**Pre-registration not required. Just show up!**