



*COBYS counseling staff continue to serve clients at the Oregon and Palmyra Area Counseling Centers. From left: Tracy Bosis, LCSW; Henry Renn, M. Div., LMFT; Cindy Weaver, Secretary; Michele Romeo Martin, PsyD, Supervisor; Laura Miller, LCSW; and Michelle Sheaffer, MS, NCC, LPC.*

## A Continuing Partnership Despite Solanco Center Closure

COBYS Family Services closed a decades-old counseling center in January, but the partnership with the congregation that supported the center continues in a new form.

Since 1991 the Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, located four miles south of Quarryville, had hosted and supported the Solanco Counseling Center. One or more COBYS therapists has provided services there a day or two a week for clients from southern Lancaster County.

When the center opened its doors more than two decades ago, says Mechanic Grove Associate Pastor Misty Wintsch, there were few, if any, Christian therapists offering services in the area.

Members at Mechanic Grove, such as Amos Cunningham, Carol Trimble, and Ruth Ann Wood, thought something should be done about that and the church agreed.

“The people who started this thing,” says Misty, “asked why aren’t there any Christian counselors in the southern end?”

In addition to the need for Christian therapists, there also was a need for affordable care.

“You had a lot of low income people in the area,” says COBYS therapist Henry Renn, who has been counseling clients at Solanco since 1996. And many were reluctant to travel to Lancaster to get help.

The Solanco Center filled this need for affordable counseling by

trained Christian therapists by offering services in the church on a sliding scale fee. COBYS donors and the church covered the difference between what clients were able to pay and the actual cost of the service. In addition to its regular support of COBYS ministries, the church budgeted \$4,000 annually for the center, most of which helped pay for the uncompensated care.

But in recent years, social services in the southern end have expanded dramatically, says Misty, and therapy from a Christian perspective is widely available.

Due to a variety of factors, the Solanco Center has seen its clientele shrink in from 260 client hours in the 2008/2009 fiscal year to 123 last year. What’s more, since COBYS began accepting insurance payments early in 2011, the church was providing less funding for the clients who were being served.

“When we saw that taking place,” says Misty, “the Nurture Commission sought to find other ways to use the funds. This congregation has a heart

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## 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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COBYS Family Services  
 1417 Oregon Road  
 Leola, PA 17540  
 Phone: 717-656-6580  
 800-452-6517  
 Fax: 717-656-3056  
[www.cobys.org](http://www.cobys.org)

## Sphere of Influence

I find it a bit ironic that I am writing this article for the spring newsletter on a day when COBYS opened at 10:00 a.m. because of an ice storm. Schools were closed (again), a number of businesses took the day off, and the County employees we relate to stayed home.

The last two winters were mild and somehow lulled me into believing that I wouldn't really need my shovel again, except perhaps to push off an inch or two of light, fluffy snow a couple times a year. Well, my shovel has gotten more than its fair share of use this winter. And because of all the school cancellations, my kids will be sitting in school in June when we should be going on vacation. It would be fine with me if all this snow and ice would Stop! Right! Now! (But as I proofread this, they are calling for another foot of snow tomorrow. Sigh.)



*A sign of the times.*

Unfortunately, I can't do anything about the snow. The weather (along with many other things) is outside my sphere of influence. I can't do a thing to change it. It just is.

So here is what I try to do: Instead of wasting time thinking about those things that are beyond my control, I try to concentrate on things that I can do something about. I can maintain a sunny disposition when snowflakes are falling outside. I can treat others

warmly, even if temperatures outside are hovering around the zero mark.

At COBYS, while we can't control outcomes, we can positively influence what happens in the life of a child. We can help foster children understand their circumstances and process their feelings; give them a backpack stuffed with a Bible, games, and personal care items; make sure they are being appropriately cared for; and generally be a source of encouragement to them.

We can work with foster or adoptive families, giving them tools to help them help children grow and succeed, offering creative ways to discipline difficult behaviors, and walking with them through the peaks and valleys.

We can support people who are required to attend one of our parenting programs by teaching the difference between appropriate and inappropriate parenting, challenging them to be the best parents they can be, giving them games and books so they can practice appropriate interaction with their children, and letting them know we understand.

And we can be a source of empathy and encouragement to help people cope with and overcome what may appear to be insurmountable challenges.

It is all too easy for me to think about those things that I can't control. When I find myself being frustrated with those things, I try to switch my focus to things that are within my sphere of influence.

My prayer is that you will work hard at those things that you can change. Make a positive difference in the life of someone who needs it!

*Mark Cunningham, Executive Director*

## COBYS Counseling: A Short History

While the Solanco Center opened in 1991, Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren's interest in counseling and COBYS goes back nearly two decades earlier—before COBYS even existed!

COBYS traces its roots back to the October 1972 Atlantic Northeast District Conference, when two churches brought queries related to the need for Christian social services. One of those queries was from Mechanic Grove; it asked the larger church to study the need for “more readily available counseling services . . . sympathetic to a Christian perspective.”

Mechanic Grove member Amos Cunningham was appointed to a study committee and, after many years of meetings and a few dead ends, Church of the Brethren Youth Services (COBYS) began offering foster care services to troubled teens in 1980. Amos became board President.

COBYS began as a teen foster care agency, but in 1984 added family counselor John Peffer Jr. to the staff. The counseling program gradually added therapists and centers and served people of all ages. (Because of the broadening client base, COBYS changed its name in 1992 to COBYS Family Services.)

A common pattern was for a Church of the Brethren congregation to establish a “Family Life Center” with local control that contracted with COBYS to provide part-time counseling services. Over the years several Brethren congregations hosted COBYS therapists for a time, including Green Tree, in Oaks; Indian Creek, Harleysville; Mountville; and Germantown.

COBYS opened the Solanco and

*(continued from page one)*

and a desire to support counseling services,” she says, “but it doesn't have to be in our backyard.”

In fact, the congregation was interested in exploring options for meeting needs in Lancaster City. At the same time COBYS also was sharpening its focus on the city through the purchase of a new Family Life Center building at 171 East King Street.

“The timing was providential,” says COBYS Supervisor of Counseling Services Dr. Michele Romeo Martin.

After conversations with COBYS leaders, Mechanic Grove decided to shift support from the counseling center to the Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur Child

Training Program, a new group therapy program for young children with challenging behaviors that COBYS began offering last fall. (See cover story of Winter 2014 *Fostering Hope* at [cobys.org/news.htm](http://cobys.org/news.htm).) The Dina program was launched with funding from a major grant, but will need new streams of revenue to continue.

The “Solanco Counseling Center” line item in Mechanic Grove's budget now reads “COBYS Counseling Services” and the partnership between COBYS and Mechanic Grove continues.

“While we feel some sadness at the closing of the Solanco Center,” says Mark, “we are excited to continue the partnership with Mechanic Grove.”



*And They Lived Happily Ever After...*

Adoptions don't always come with fairy tale endings. COBYS Family Services supports families beyond adoption day to achieve the best outcomes possible.

**COBYS**  
FAMILY SERVICES

**Free post permanency services to any Pennsylvania family who has adopted any child anywhere through any organization. Contact Adoption Supervisor Becky Frey at [rebecca@cobys.org](mailto:rebecca@cobys.org) or 800-452-6517.**

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# Halfway There

## Campaign Pledges Near \$160,000



With the Lead Gifts phase nearing its conclusion, the Work for the Well-Being of the City financial campaign is more than halfway to its \$300,000 goal. Pledges as of February 10 totaled \$155,921.

“We feel like we are in a good place at this point,” says Director of Development Don Fitzkee. “We’re still expecting some additional lead gifts and then look forward to broadening the campaign appeal to others.”

Last summer COBYS launched the two-year campaign to pay for a

*The Family Life Center includes a safe, well-equipped play area, where children are cared for while parents learn new skills to strengthen their family.*



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 a new 5,400-square-foot facility at 171 E. King Street, Lancaster, to house Family Life Education staff and programs. The first programs began in the new

Family Life Center last January (see article below). 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 programs live in the city.

In concert with the education theme, the campaign goals can be summarized in three R’s: Retire remaining debt on the Family Life

# A Year’s Worth of Learning

A lot can happen in a year, and during the past year a lot *has* happened at the COBYS Family Life Center. In January, COBYS celebrated one year of offering services in the new facility, which is being paid for through the Work for the Well-Being of the City campaign.

The first class began on January 15, 2013. Since then, 27 classes have been held, providing 440 total hours of instruction for 249 adults and care or instruction for 193 children and youth. And those numbers don’t include the additional 37 classes and workshops, representing over 221 hours, that were hosted by churches, schools, community organizations,

and Lancaster County Prison.

The largest number of people (124 adults and 112 children) were served through six *Family Nurturing* programs at the Family Life Center. This long-running flagship program for COBYS provides the most intensive training. Participants attend two, two-hour sessions per week for eight weeks to learn nurturing, sensitive, and competent parenting strategies. The program is approved by the Lancaster County Children and Youth Social Service Agency (LCCYSSA), which also refers participants to the program. Childcare and a healthy snack are provided for each session.

*Three R’s: Parenting Wisely*, an anti-truancy program, served 100 adults and youth, helping them to build stronger parent/child relationships with the central goal of helping parents to keep their kids in school. The 12-hour program is a court-approved alternative adjudication program in Lancaster County that receives referrals from District Magisterial Judges and funding from the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission and LCCYSSA.

One 3R’s parent wrote on an evaluation that the program “changed my whole perspective on raising my teenage kids.” It taught her how to listen to and respect her kids and not yell so much. A teen enrolled in the program reported gaining an understanding that

Center (\$185,000); Recoup a portion of costs for furnishing the building (\$45,000); and Raise new funds to support Family Life Education programs (\$70,000). Any giving above the \$300,000 goal will support additional Family Life Education programming.

"With the nearly \$81,000 received so far, we already have made significant progress toward retiring the debt on the building," Don says.

Following the Lead Gifts portion of the campaign, a general invitation will be issued this spring in the Individual Gifts phase. Individuals are being asked to consider commitments for 2014 and 2015.

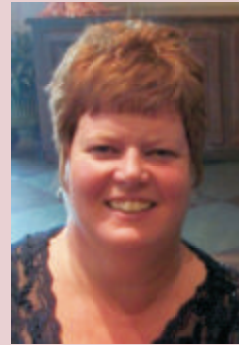
The church phase of the campaign will begin with visits to churches in spring and summer 2014. Churches will be invited to support in 2015 and 2016, with a suggested giving amount of \$10.00 per attendee per year for the two years.

## Roland, Keller Join COBYS Board

Fred Keller and Beth Roland joined the COBYS Board of Directors in January.

Fred is co-owner of K & K Feeds in Richland and a deacon in the Midway Church of the Brethren, Lebanon. Fred and his wife, Pat, of Manheim, are parents of two grown children.

Beth is employed part-time as a social worker for the Lancaster County Office of Aging and is active in the East Fairview Church of the



*Rose Walmer*

Brethren, where her husband, Jimm, is pastor. Beth and Jimm live in Manheim. They have two children, including a son that they

adopted through COBYS.

At its January meeting, the board re-elected President Rose Walmer, Vice-President Tom Weber, and Secretary Deb Krantz. Brenda Spence was called to serve as Treasurer, replacing John Wise who, along with Art Kreider, completed service on the board.

All COBYS board members are listed on page two.



*Beth Roland*



*Fred Keller*



*Educator  
Melanie  
Stoltzfus  
prepares to  
lead a  
parenting  
program.*

equips participants to make positive changes that shield their children from parental conflict and guide them toward establishing a long-term relationship with the child's other parent(s). Ten of these programs served 31 parents.

But the programs that continue to receive the most positive feedback are the Dina Dinosaur Child Training Program for challenging children, ages four to eight, and the accompanying Incredible Years class for their parents.

One Incredible Years parent began the program convinced that the concepts that were being taught wouldn't work for her child. Given a homework assignment one week to play with her child, the parent was in tears, feeling hopeless and unworthy

as a parent. Reluctantly, she chose a game and took it home to play. (COBYS regularly requests board and card games from donors for this purpose.) And she found that she could enjoy playing with her child. By the end of the program, the tools she was learning had infused her with hope as she witnessed the improvements in her child's behavior and in their relationship.

Another group that completed Incredible Years in December scheduled a reunion with fellow classmates in February at the Family Life Center so that they could continue to support each other. At this writing, they are looking forward to a pizza and movie night with other parents who understand the challenges that they face.

parents "aren't disciplining us to be mean, but because they care."

Another program with wide impact was *Cooperative Parenting & Divorce*. The eight-hour program for separating or divorced parents



*The Arts & Culture segment of the 'News Banquet' will feature a performance by The King's Strings, of Mechanicsburg. Comprised of adoptive parents John & Cindy King and some of their eight children, the group specializes in fiddling.*

## COBYS Banquet to Follow 'Nightly News' Format

Have you heard the news? COBYS Family Services is branching out into television news at its annual banquet on Thursday, March 6, at 6:30 p.m. at the Middle Creek Church of the Brethren. You may still have time to tune in. The registration deadline is February 28. Seating is limited.

"The COBYS Nightly News Banquet" will feature aspiring anchormen Mark Cunningham and Don Fitzkee (who haven't quit their day jobs as COBYS Executive Director and Director of Development) delivering "all the news, real and imagined" on the WCOBys evening newscast.

WCOBys Nightly News will feature some real news about COBYS ministries to children and families, including a feature on the partnership between adoptive parents Gary & Dawn Dupler and respite parents Dave & Marj Stoddard and a live look-in at the COBYS Family Life Center.

In addition, expect some more whimsical fare, including up-to-the-minute traffic from COBYS

Permanency Unit Supervisor Nicole Lauzus; a therapeutic weather report from therapist Laura Miller that not only predicts the weather but also how it will make you feel; and a word from our sponsor, Gene Wenger's Meats & Fine Foods.

There is no charge to attend, but reservations are required and the event will include an opportunity to give.

Those unable to attend can support COBYS ministries by sending a check designated for the banquet to COBYS Family Services, 1417 Oregon Rd., Leola, PA 17540. Or give online at [cobys.org](http://cobys.org).

Last year's banquet attracted 549 people and resulted in donations totaling \$44,132.

More information and a printable invitation with directions to the church is available at [cobys.org/news.htm](http://cobys.org/news.htm). Register by contacting Don Fitzkee at 717-656-6580 or [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org).

## Praise Dinner to Feature Choir

The Penn View Bible Institute Choir and Instrumental Ensemble will provide a program of inspirational music at the 19th annual Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner on Wednesday, April 16, at 6:00 p.m., at the Lebanon Expo Center. The event will benefit COBYS Family Services and three other ministries.

The 60-voice choir and instrumental ensemble are touring groups from Penn View Bible Institute. Located in Penn's Creek, Pa., the school offers Christian education from kindergarten through postsecondary level in the conservative Wesleyan-Arminian persuasion. The Institute prepares men and women, at the postsecondary level, for the pastoral ministry, missions, the Christian music ministry, Christian school teaching, Bible teaching, and other church ministries.

In addition to music, the Praise Dinner will include a buffet meal catered by Country Home Catering. Other ministries benefitting from the event are Evangelical Seminary, Friendship Community, and On Fire Youth Ministries.

The cost to attend is \$100 per person or \$1,000 per table of 10 guests. All donations support the designated ministries. Underwriting all of the event's expenses are: John Byler; Country Fare Restaurant; Roger & Marjorie Gerhart; Good's Disposal Services; Bud & Joyce Mitstifer; Tom B. Morrissey TV & Appliance; Roger & Carolyn North, North Group Consultants; Reedy Diesel Service; Bill & Nancy Smeltzer; Gene Wenger's Meats & Fine Foods; Sight & Sound Ministries, Inc.; and Wengers of Myerstown.



# 20 Years of Walking

## Family Fun Walk Set for May 4

COBYS Family Services will host the 20th annual Family Fun Walk on Sunday, May 4, at Peter Becker Community, 800 Maple Ave., Harleysville. The walk begins at 4 p.m. with registration beginning at 3:15.

The event consists of a three-mile walk, followed by ice cream, refreshments, and awarding of door prizes. Walkers donate, enlist sponsors to benefit COBYS ministries to children and families, or both.

A total of 86 participants raised nearly \$9,000 at last year's walk. Over the past two decades the event has raised more than \$100,000 to support COBYS ministries. Goals of 100 participants and \$10,000 have been set for this year.

"We are hoping for a great turnout to help us celebrate the 20th anniversary of the walk," says



*Trees were in full bloom at last year's walk. Nature's colors were almost as bright at the event t-shirts!*

Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "We'll be planning a few special things for the occasion."

Top fundraisers receive grand prizes, and all participants receive a free t-shirt, ice cream and refreshments, and a chance to win a door prize. Youth groups who raise \$1,000 or more receive a free gym and pizza night.

Costs of the event are partially underwritten by Bauman Family Fruit Butters and Cider, Sassamansville. Additional business supporters are being sought. The event will be held rain or shine.

Brochures will be mailed to Greater Philadelphia Area COBYS supporters in late March and also will be available online at [cobys.org/news.htm](http://cobys.org/news.htm) and on the COBYS Facebook page.

For more information about the event, please contact Don Fitzkee at 800-452-6517 or [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org).



The Wenger Foundation, Inc., was established in 1996 as the charitable giving arm of the Wenger Family of Companies. Since then, the Foundation has awarded more than \$2 million to a variety of Christian and community

ministries, including \$287,109 to COBYS, which first became a beneficiary of the Praise Dinner in 1999.

Last year's Dinner attracted a record attendance of some 900 people, and raised more than \$100,000, including \$20,049 for COBYS. Invitations will be mailed in early March. For more information, please contact the Wenger Foundation at 717-866-2130 or [rwalmer@wengers.com](mailto:rwalmer@wengers.com).

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*(continued from page three)*

Palmyra Area Counseling Centers in 1991. Joy Thacker was the sole therapist at Solanco for the first several years, serving children, adolescents, and adults. Since the mid-1990s Henry Renn has been a consistent presence at Solanco, and at times was joined by an additional part-time therapist.

"I've always been impressed with Henry's commitment to the Solanco Center," says Supervisor of Counseling Services Dr. Michele Romeo Martin, "and with his desire to meet the needs of the underserved."

While the other congregation-based services that COBYS offered were discontinued, Solanco and Palmyra persisted in part because of strong partnerships that supported

them.

In his 17 years of counseling at Solanco, Henry not only found satisfaction in serving the needs of clients, but also valued the strong support he felt from the folks at Mechanic Grove. The church was supportive of the center and responsive to its needs, says Henry.

While Solanco has closed, the Palmyra Center continues as a joint ministry with the Palmyra Area Cooperating Churches, offering services at First United Methodist Church, 520 E. Birch St.

Palmyra remains active, but the large majority of COBYS counseling today takes place at the Oregon Counseling Center, located in the COBYS main office north of Lancaster. Currently, four part-time therapists serve adults, children, and families at Oregon, and one of those therapists

staffs the Palmyra Center.

And despite the closure of the Solanco Center, the counseling program as a whole has been growing. The growth has been fueled by two factors: Accepting insurance and a renewed emphasis on meeting the therapeutic needs of children and adolescents.

Since Dr. Martin began as Supervisor of Counseling Services in fall 2010, the program has forged or expanded relationships with several insurers, including Medical Assistance, which funds therapies for foster children.

While COBYS still serves many uninsured clients on a sliding scale and continues to serve adults and couples effectively, says Dr. Martin, growth has come primarily in serving insured clients and COBYS foster and adopted children.