

## New Programs Offer 'Incredible' Support to Families



*The Reiff family—Junior & Jen and their three active boys—have appreciated the support they have been receiving through two new COBYS Family Life Education programs. (Below from left) Karen Herr and Landon Miller are teaching the Dina program for children while Jen Linder and Melanie Stoltzfus are working with parents.*

"We have three very active boys," says Junior Reiff of Leola. Pausing to reflect on his statement, he proposes a slight edit: "I probably should add another 'very' in there."

Got it. "Very, very active boys." Ages 7, 4, and seven months.

Junior and his wife, Jen, who attend the Hinkletown Mennonite Church, were looking for some help managing the disruptive behaviors of oldest son, Jaden, who displays symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A COBYS therapist recommended they try a new therapeutic Family Life Education program that includes both a class for parents and "Dinosaur

School" (named after a puppet, Dina the Dinosaur) for children. Both are being funded by a two-year \$193,000 grant that COBYS received from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency last summer.

When I visited with Junior and Jen in late November, prior to session 13 of the 18-week Incredible Years class, they were glad they had given up Monday evenings since August to participate in the intensive 36-hour program at the COBYS Family Life Center in Lancaster. (To help make it more manageable for families, the program includes a light supper and childcare for younger children.)

While parents are in class with instructors Jen Linder and Melanie Stoltzfus, learning how to encourage positive behaviors, children are in

Dina School, led by Karen Herr and Landon Miller, learning how to understand and control their emotions and behaviors and to make friends with other kids.

Ten parents from six families are enrolled in the parent class, and eight children, ages 4-8, are attending Dina School, which serves kids who need to strengthen social, emotional, and behavioral competencies.

The eight children enrolled in the class are joined by Wally, a puppet brought to life by Landon. "Wally is part of the class," explains Landon. "He is one of the children. He generally is modeling positive behavior. He does a lot of explaining of the content and problems he has had and how he dealt with them."

Wally's sister, Molly, also joins the class occasionally, and Dina Dinosaur, animated by Karen Herr's impeccable British accent, is school principal.

"The kids respond really well to the puppets," says Landon. "Sometimes it's easier to hear something from a puppet than from an adult."

There are no puppets in the adult class, but parents are examining some of the same concepts as the 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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COBYS Family Services  
1417 Oregon Road  
Leola, PA 17540  
Phone: 717-656-6580  
800-452-6517  
Fax: 717-656-3056  
www.cobys.org

## Caring More Than Others Think Is Wise

This past August my wife, Mari, and I took our son, Jordan, to Messiah College to begin his college education. Jordan, the first of our three children to leave the nest, was prepared to go. He did well both academically and athletically in high school. He had a strong group of friends. It was time. He was ready for this next step.

Taking him to college was an all-day affair. The most meaningful part of the day was the worship service that included a time of dedication for staff, students, and parents. It was a very emotional time for Mari and me.

We knew Jordan was ready to be in college. We knew that Messiah was the right place for him. And yet leaving him there was difficult. We would miss him greatly, but knew it was right. Mari took this event, which was both incredibly joyous and exceptionally sad, and summed up what I was feeling perfectly when, through the tears (hers and mine), she asked, "Where else would you rather him be?" And the answer was "nowhere."



I admire people like my wife, who can succinctly summarize things that I believe or am feeling, but have a hard time stating myself.

That happened recently when I heard a sermon that had as one of its main points, "Care more than others think is wise." As soon as I heard that, I immediately thought of COBYS employees. (I probably should have thought of Jesus. After all, we were in church. But I thought of our staff!)

Our caseworkers consistently behave graciously as they work with children who display difficult behaviors and with birth parents who have done things that have led to their children being removed from their care. Caseworkers regularly champion the cause of people who society says are "the least of these."

Our Family Life Education staff works with families who need significant help. Many parents are required to attend our programs and aren't necessarily thrilled about being there. But our educators and child care workers are so welcoming and caring that sometimes mandated participants end up as willing participants, looking forward to coming back each week.

Our therapists work with individuals and families who are struggling with any number of issues: depression, anxiety, strained relationships, deep family conflicts, struggling teens, and heart-breaking cases of children scarred by abuse. Constant caring in some of these situations takes a toll on the caregiver. It would be easier not to care so much.

Maybe it's our first core value, Life Is Sacred, that makes us care more than some think we should. We flesh out that value like this: "Believing that all people are created in the image of God, we recognize the inherent worth of each client by exhibiting empathy, compassion, and respect."

I am so happy to be part of an organization that has a staff that genuinely cares about the people we serve. I am glad that when I hear that people should "care more than others think is wise," I think of our staff.

*Mark Cunningham, Executive Director*

*(continued from page one)*

“The program really focuses on encouraging them when they are doing good,” observes Junior, “rather than yelling when they are doing bad.”

So while parents are being taught to notice things that their children are doing well and praise their children for those things, children are being taught to get attention in positive ways. Throughout Dina School, one of the two instructors is constantly on the prowl for positive behaviors that can be rewarded with praise and prizes.

“A lot of times kids try to get power by controlling their parents’ emotions with negative behaviors,” explains Landon. “The class turns that around and teaches kids to get attention by behaving, rather than misbehaving. So it’s very much strengths-based.”

While the evidence-based course content is sound, it may not be as important as the mutual support that parents provide for each other.

Already the parents of four children, ages 5 to 10, Steve & Valerie Kauffman, of Ronks, unexpectedly were called upon to take a niece into their family. Six-year-old Sierra came with a diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder and a host of disruptive behaviors. The Kauffmans needed help. They found it with COBYS.

“We like the atmosphere with the other parents,” says Valerie. “That’s a huge benefit when we come here—it’s a huge support group.”

Educator Jen Linder agrees: “Just being in a circle and sharing together, it feels really intimate and comfortable. It feels as much like small group support as teaching and practicing



strategies for parenting.

“Most of the kids [in Dina],” she observes, “have similar patterns of behavior. Parents sometimes feel alone in their struggles with their kids, or feel like they are the only family whose kids act certain ways.”

Mutual support is actually structured into the program. After the first few sessions, families are paired with other families and encouraged to contact each other at least once during the week. Each class session begins with a time of sharing experiences from the previous week—what they tried, how the children responded, how they responded.

“The wisdom of the group,” says Jen Linder, “is the most meaningful part of the whole thing.” Class members, she says, have been plotting for weeks about how to continue to support each other after the classes end later this month.

Of course, the bottom line for most participants is whether their children’s behavior is improving. According to Family Life Education Supervisor Abby Keiser, it is. Parents have been reporting a decrease in disruptive behaviors at home and, in some cases, also at school.

Landon tells of one family that was leaving nearly every meal with a bad taste in their mouth, due to their children’s disruptive behaviors. They decided to pay attention to what their

*Steve & Valerie Kauffman appreciate the support of other parents as they work to incorporate niece Sierra into their family.*

kids were doing well at the table and serve up generous helpings of praise. “They noticed almost immediate change,” says Landon, “and mealtimes became much more enjoyable.”

To celebrate, the family ate out—something they had been afraid to do. The children behaved and a good time was had by all.

Another mother shared that her children are no longer hitting each other and she is doing better dealing with her anger “when the children get on my nerves.”

Jen Linder tells of a mother who took the Incredible Years parent program last fall (before COBYS had funding for the child program). “That class” she says, “revolutionized her relationship with her daughter.” Jen adds, “She is careful to say that her daughter’s behaviors didn’t miraculously improve, but what changed was how she understood her daughter’s behaviors and reacted to them.”

The mother was so encouraged that she enrolled her daughter in Dina School this fall and is repeating the adult class herself.

And it isn’t just the class participants who are learning. Jen says she has enjoyed being part of the group as an educator and has learned many concepts that are bearing fruit in her own family.

Junior notes that one of the things that makes the class work for him is that the instructors have young children of their own and can share from their own personal experiences. “These teachers are actually using the stuff,” he says approvingly.

And it seems to be working—for the teachers and program participants.

# We Did It!

## Bike & Hike Giving Tops \$100,000

With more than a little help from our friends COBYS Family Services achieved a milestone by having its first \$100,000 fundraiser ever. A total of 538 people participated in the September 8 Bike & Hike at Lititz Church of the Brethren, raising about \$104,000 to support COBYS ministries.

In comparison, last year's Bike & Hike attracted 514 participants and raised \$94,500.

"We are thrilled with the results," said COBYS Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "We have been working toward this goal the past few years, and people really pitched in to make it happen."

The income growth was across the board. Income from business sponsors grew by nearly \$5,000 over the previous year. And income from participants and their sponsors also reached a record high.

"Some of our perennial big fundraisers raised more than usual," said Don, "and some of our regular strong givers gave even more. We also picked up some new participants,

who gave really generously."

Bike & Hike participants choose from a three-mile walk, 10- and 25-mile bicycle rides, or a 60-mile motorcycle ride, and then gather together for a time of celebration, ice cream, and door prizes.

A record number of walkers and bicyclists participated, including eight-year old Noah Fitz and octogenarian Eunice Hess, both of whom biked 25 miles.

One regular motorcycle rider was released from the hospital at 3:30 p.m. and stopped at the event on his way home to drop off his sponsor sheet so his total could be counted. A walk participant struck up a conversation with an onlooker and collected a small donation from him on the spot.

Top fundraisers for the day were Mari Cunningham, \$6,000; Londa Brandt, \$5,715; Floy Fitzkee, \$5,625; and Lucy de Perrot, \$3,000. A total of 16 participants gave or raised \$1,000 or more.

Eight church youth groups participated, five of which raised \$1,500 or more to earn a gym and



**1) Top fundraisers (from left) Mari Cunningham, Lucy de Perrot, Floy Fitzkee, and Londa Brandt raised a combined total of more than \$20,000; 2) It's always safer to hold hands and wear neon shirts; 3) The Dupler kids were among a record number of 149 bicyclists; 4) Walking used to be simpler; 5) Frisbee anyone? 6) You can always dream; 7) 156 motorcyclists rode on 99 bikes. We could have used one more; 8) 233 walkers was a new record; 9) The Miller girls were pleased to receive a WJTL gift basket.**

pizza night. Top youth groups were Midway COB, \$4,030; Little Swatara COB, \$3,793; Chiques COB junior high, \$2,440; Middle Creek COB, \$1,750; and Mohrsville COB, \$1,500.25.

WJTL FM 90.3 radio broadcast live from the event and Lancaster newspapers covered it. A link to the Lancaster Newspapers article and a Facebook photo gallery are available on the News & Events page at cobys.org.

The Bike & Hike is held the Sunday after Labor Day. Next year's event is slated for September 7.





## Thanks for Your Help!

About 80 businesses supported the Bike & Hike, donating cash, grand prizes, door prizes, and supplies. Without their help, we would not have reached our goal. Thanks!



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# Our Hero

## Sourber Recognized for Serving Children

COBYS Director of Placement Services Mary Sourber was recognized by Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Lancaster County for a quarter century of service to children at CASA's 4th annual Heroes Gala, held November 1 at Casa di Fiori at the Inn at Leola Village.

The event is an evening devoted to raising awareness of child advocacy for the abused and neglected children of Lancaster County. WGAL new reporter Anne Shannon was emcee.

Mary was nominated for the "Hero in the Life of a Child" award by CASA volunteer Ray Powell, who is a member of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren and, along with his wife, Judy, learned to know Mary more than two decades ago when they served as COBYS foster parents. Mary was a young caseworker for the Powells' foster son, Benjamin.

In his presentation at the gala, Ray highlighted Mary's longevity and passion in serving many children over a quarter century, and the special focus she gave to one child. Mary and Benjamin bonded during his several years in foster care with COBYS, and when he "aged out" of foster care the Sourber family continued the relationship and Ben became their "adopted" son.

"Mary Sourber has provided 25 years of dedicated service to Lancaster County children and youth placed in foster care," Ray said in his presentation of the award. "Even more impressive than her longevity in a professional career that often



*Mary Sourber and her "adopted" son Benjamin (left) pose with Mary's CASA Hero Award. Ray Powell (above) nominated Mary for the honor, which recognized her long-time advocacy for abused and neglected children.*

finds individuals with job burnout is the enthusiasm she continues to show for helping to improve the lives of those in need of stable family support and love."

In a written comment provided in support of Mary's nomination, COBYS Executive Director Mark Cunningham observed: "Mary has consistently brought professionalism and expertise to a difficult job. And she has done it with an incredible amount of caring and grace. COBYS is blessed to have such a capable person who cares so much about the welfare of children."

In a Facebook post prior to the

gala, Benjamin thanked Mary for "bringing her work home with her" many years ago.

Mary joined COBYS as a foster care caseworker in 1989 and held various other roles before becoming Director of Placement Services in 2006. In her role, she oversees COBYS Adoption, Foster Care, and Permanency programs. She and husband Scott, are parents of three biological sons in addition to Ben.

CASA provides court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children with the belief that every child deserves a safe, nurturing, and permanent home.

## Please Save These Dates

Calendar handy? Please save these dates for 2014 COBYS events:

Thursday, March 6, 6:30 p.m. — News Show Banquet, Middle Creek COB

Wednesday, April 16, 6 p.m. — Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner, Lebanon Expo

Sunday, May 4, 4 p.m. — 20th Annual Family Fun Walk, Peter Becker Community, Harleysville

Sunday, September 7, 1:00 p.m. — Bike & Hike, Lititz COB

## Top 20 in ExtraOrdinary Give

COBYS Family Services finished in the top 20 organizations in giving in the second ExtraOrdinary Give 24-hour online giving campaign on November 22. Donors gave more than \$3.2 million to some 260 non-profit organizations, including \$33,860 to COBYS. Top earner for the day was the Water Street Rescue Mission, with donations totaling \$113,252.

The day of giving was sponsored by the Lancaster County Community Foundation and presenting sponsor Rodgers & Associates, who together provided a \$250,000 stretch fund, \$50,000 in additional prizes, and resources to promote the event.

COBYS donations were nearly \$6,000 more than last year's total of \$28,006, but because the overall giving nearly doubled from last year, COBYS received a significantly smaller portion of the stretch fund.

Thanks to some committed night



owls, COBYS earned a \$1,000 Early Bird Prize by being the second organization to reach 50 donors. Another positive, said Director of Development Don Fitzkee, was the 20 donors who gave to COBYS for the first time.

Taking into account donations, the prize, and COBYS' portion of the stretch fund, minus fees, COBYS is expected to realize total income of about \$35,500 for the day—which is nearly \$3,000 more than last year, when COBYS was the fifth best out of 192 organizations.

## Frey Named COBYS Adoption Supervisor



Rebecca Frey was promoted to the position of COBYS Adoption Supervisor, effective October 1.

Becky has been employed for four years at COBYS, first as an Adoption Caseworker and more recently as a Permanency Unit Caseworker. She earned her BA in Criminal Justice from Utica College.

Becky lives in Lititz and attends Lititz Moravian Church. She currently is training for her first half-marathon.

## Echternach, Rice Join COBYS Board

Steve Echternach and Kent Rice recently began service on the COBYS Board of Directors.

Steve is Chief of the Strasburg Borough Police Department and a former COBYS board member. He was president of the COBYS Board from 2004 to 2005. A member of First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg, Steve is a current board member of CASA for Children and previously served on the board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (formerly MH/MR). He is a graduate of Eastern University.

Steve and his wife, Miriam, are former COBYS foster parents who adopted their son through COBYS.

Kent is Pastor for Special Ministries at Hempfield Church of the



*Steve Echternach*



*Kent Rice*

Brethren. He is a graduate of Mary Washington College. His association with COBYS began in 1990 as a Brethren Volunteer Service volunteer at the former COBYS boys group home and then as an employed youth care worker at the home.

Through COBYS he met his wife, Karen, a former caseworker. Kent, Karen, and their two teenage daughters live in East Petersburg.

## Stand By for News!

Plans are underway for the March 6 COBYS informational/fundraising banquet. This year's program will feature a News Show format that is sure to include some genuine COBYS news, some lighter features, and a word or two from our sponsors.

"It's a little early to tell what will be on the program," says Director of Development Don Fitzkee, "but we can promise an up-to-the-minute traffic report to help banquet attendees negotiate heavy traffic expected around Middle Creek Church of the Brethren that night."

The King's Strings will provide music for the Arts & Culture segment of the show. The group features adoptive parents John & Cindy King and some of their nine children playing various stringed instruments. (Learn more at [kingsstrings.com](http://kingsstrings.com).)

Invitations will be mailed in January. For now, save the date, consider bringing friends to fill a table of eight, and plan to attend.

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## 'Work for Well-Being' Campaign Is Off and Running

The Work for the Well-Being of the City financial campaign is off and running, with pledges exceeding \$133,000 as of December 2. Staff and board members on the Lead Gifts Team will continue to make contacts with potential lead donors through the end of the year.

This summer COBYS launched the \$300,000 financial 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 a new 5,400-square-foot facility at 171 E. King Street, Lancaster, to house Family Life



Education staff and programs. The first programs were held in January. 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.

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

Following the lead gifts portion of the campaign, a general invitation to participate will be issued early in 2014. Individuals are being asked to consider commitments above and beyond regular giving for 2014/15.

The church phase of the campaign will begin with visits to churches in spring 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.