



# Fostering Hope

SPRING 2015

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1

## No Silos in Solanco COBYS Spurs Collaboration on Youth Issues



*COBYS Community Mobilizer Rithy "T" Ung, pictured at left with Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren Associate Pastor Misty Wintsch, is spearheading an effort to form a Communities That Care Coalition in southern Lancaster County. Offering comments at the March 19 Kickoff Event were (bottom from left) former and present Solanco School District Superintendents Dr. Marty Hudacs and Dr. Brian Bliss; Phyllis Law, from the Penn State EpisCenter; and Elder Joe Bernotsky.*

For an area of Lancaster County that is largely rural and agricultural, there sure were a lot of people opposed to silos at the Solanco Communities That Care (CTC) Kickoff Event, held March 19 at Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church in Quarryville.

"The idea is that we don't want silos," said recently retired Solanco School District Superintendent Dr. Marty Hudacs. Dr. Hudacs wasn't speaking against those tall animal-feed storing structures that dot the southern Lancaster County countryside. Instead, he was referring to the tendency of church and community

groups to work in isolation from each other to solve common problems.

COBYS Family Services is spearheading an effort to eliminate this siloing effect and bring together leaders from church, school, law enforcement, business, social services, parents groups, and others to address problems in the Solanco community.

Funded by a \$125,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), COBYS is helping local leaders to come together to form a Communities That Care Coalition. Heading the effort is

COBYS Solanco Community Mobilizer Rithy "T" Ung, who has been pounding the pavement since mid-January, meeting with school officials, pastors, judges, government leaders, the Quarryville mayor and police chief, social service organizations in the southern end, and others to promote their participation.

CTC is a coalition-based community prevention operating system that uses a public health approach to prevent youth problem behaviors, including underage drinking, tobacco use, violence, delinquency, school dropout, and substance abuse. High truancy and the related issue of lower than average high school graduation rate, along with drug and alcohol use are specific areas of concern that have been identified for Solanco.

It has 18 months to identify key community leaders and enlist their participation in the five-step process to address problems. He was encouraged by the 35 or so people who attended the Kickoff Event. Among them were Court of Common Pleas Judge Leonard Brown Jr., District Magisterial Justice Stuart Mylin, Hudacs and current Solanco Superintendent Dr.

*(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.*

## Board of Directors

Rose Walmer, President  
 Fred Keller, Vice-President  
 Pamela Ament, Secretary  
 Brenda Spence, Treasurer  
 Steve Echternach    Beth Roland  
 Wendy Egolf        Suzanne Schaudel  
 Kent Rice            Robert Wintsch  
 Wilbur Rohrer

## Administrative Staff

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director  
 Donald Fitzkee, Director of  
   Development  
 Abby Keiser, Director of Family Life  
   Services  
 Mary Sourber, Director of Placement  
   Services  
 Cynthia Umberger, Controller  
 Bethany Kauffman-Raub, Office Manager  
 Michele Romeo Martin, Supervisor of  
   Counseling Services  
 Holly Hardin, Family Life Education  
   Supervisor  
 Sharon Kingsley, Foster Care Supervisor  
 Nicole Lauzus, Permanency Unit  
   Supervisor

*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.

COBYS Family Services  
 1417 Oregon Road  
 Leola, PA 17540  
 Phone: 717-656-6580 · 800-452-6517  
 Fax: 717-656-3056  
 www.cobys.org

## Making an Eternal Difference

I first met Christopher in 2004 in the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). At that time he was a three-year old foster child who, because he was born with a complex heart condition, had endured three surgeries. Following the third, Christopher's incision became infected and he was



readmitted to the hospital, where he stayed for about a month.

I (and then COBYS Board President David Stauffer) traveled to CHOP to visit Christopher and his COBYS resource parents Kent and Deb Sell, who had welcomed him into their home in November 2003. During the hospitalization it was our goal to have a COBYS staff member visit Christopher and the Sells each day.

I still remember sitting with Christopher as Kent and Deb took a break to get something to eat. I had a toy car that I was "driving" over the railings of Christopher's bed to try to distract him so he wouldn't notice Kent and Deb's absence. Christopher was, as best, mildly amused. And in short order it became abundantly clear that he would much prefer the company of Kent and Deb to David and me.

After Kent and Deb returned to the room, David and I were preparing to leave and Christopher, through tears, looked at me and said, "Thank you for coming to visit me." So here is this little boy who had endured three heart surgeries, was in the hospital because of an infection, was still crying because Kent and Deb had been away, and yet still found a way to be unfailingly polite.

Christopher eventually recovered from the infection and later in 2004 Kent and Deb adopted him as their son, formalizing a commitment that they clearly had already established much earlier.



On Saturday, February 28, I attended a service celebrating the life of Christopher Sell. Christopher was 13 years old when he died suddenly as a result of his heart condition. At the service, I heard about how Christopher was an active member of his church. I heard about his playful and inquisitive nature. And I heard about his relationship with Jesus. Part of the service included a video of Christopher speaking to the congregation about his relationship with and desire to follow Jesus.

Kent and Deb fostered and adopted a child with significant health issues. They welcomed him into their home, providing a safe and nurturing environment. They told him about Jesus and showed him God's love by the way they lived their lives.

I would say that was a bold move for the kingdom. A very bold move. They took a risk, invited pain and sorrow (along with much joy) into their lives, and made an eternal difference in the life a little boy.

As I reflect upon the Sells' story I wonder: What am I doing to make an eternal difference in the lives of others? What bold moves have you made?

*Mark Cunningham, Executive Director*



*Community Mobilizer T Ung has been meeting with key Solanco leaders, including this group of pastors and spiritual leaders at Timberline Church, Strasburg, in late February. Pictured (from left) are Doug Hileman, Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church; Mike Anderson, Refton Brethren in Christ Church; Neil Uniake, New Hope Community Life Ministry; T Ung, COBYS; Shauna Ridge, Memorial United Methodist Church; Misty Wintsch, Mechanic Grove COB; and Joe Bernotsky, Encounter Church.*

*(continued from page one)*

Brian Bliss, a representative of state Senator Lloyd Smucker's office, a cross section of pastors and staff from area mental health and social service agencies, and others.

The five steps include 1) Getting Started; 2) Organizing, Introducing, and Involving; 3) Develop a Community Profile; 4) Create a Community Action Plan; and 5) Implementing & Evaluating the Community Action Plan. Through the process, key leaders are identified, a Community Board is formed, and task groups are appointed to address specific issues. The process currently is entering the second phase, says T, and will be making great progress if step four is reached by the second year.

Speaking at the Kickoff Event, Phyllis Law, a CTC Consultant from the Penn State University EpisCenter (Evidence-Based Prevention & Intervention Support Center), explained, "CTC operates like a business plan." But instead of a goal of making money, "we're here to have a social impact." The EpisCenter collaborates with PCCD and will provide expertise and support as the Solanco CTC takes shape over the next few years.

According to Law, since being adopted as a statewide initiative in 1994, the CTC process has been utilized in more than 130 communities in Pennsylvania. COBYS has previous

experience helping to organize a CTC in the New Holland area and has partnered with the Elizabethtown CTC to offer family life education programs to students and parents.

The process is data-driven and evidence-based. Data describing community needs was gathered through the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), which was administered by the school district in 2013. Solutions to the problems identified in the survey have been studied scientifically and proven to be effective.

"I'm excited about the resources that this grant can bring to our students and families," said Christina McLaughlin, Principal at Providence Elementary School and a key figure in the CTC process. "I'm also excited to use data to see where the 'holes' are" in our responses to community challenges.

"The ultimate results, if the processes are applied properly," says T, "are happier and more engaged children and youth, thriving families, and a healthier community."

COBYS involvement in the Solanco community began with an earlier Attendance Task Force called together by then superintendent Hudacs that COBYS Director of Family Life Services Abby Keiser participated in more than two years ago. That group sought to understand the issues related to truancy and led to the formation of a broader group called Community

Connectors. Hudacs expressed hope that the CTC process will build upon and expand the work begun by Community Connectors.

Speaking at the Kickoff Event Superintendent Bliss, who is in his first year in his role, highlighted the struggles that students and their families face. "It's almost overwhelming to see the depth of problems some families are facing," he said. "For some families just getting their kids to school on Monday morning is a major accomplishment." He is excited about the prospects of "strategic" and "coordinated" services to help struggling families achieve their dreams.

Joe Bernotsky, an Elder at Encounter Church, Quarryville, and organizer of the prayer and service ministry First Tuesday, highlighted positive developments in the community in recent years, noting, "What has happened is just a taste of what can happen." He encouraged church leaders to join hands in the CTC process. "This community is not ours," he said. "It's [God's]. If we focus on Him and use these awesome tools. . . good things will happen."

Asked what he saw as strengths of CTC, Justice Mylin observed, "It allows anyone in the community that has exposure to problem areas a chance to network with other agencies to solve those problems." He added, "Looking around the room, I see a lot of familiar faces. That's encouraging."



# The Show Must Go On

## 'COBYS Has Talent' Banquet Sets Income Record Despite Snow Postponement

Despite a late postponement due to snow, the COBYS Has Talent Banquet set a new income record. Income as of March 26 was \$52,917.58, up from last year's amount of \$51,183.50.

Slated for Thursday, March 5, at the Middle Creek Church of the Brethren, the banquet had to be pushed back one night due to the 10 or so inches of snow that blanketed the area. More than 580 people had been signed up for the banquet and the related livestream to the church sanctuary. With the bad weather, the livestream was cancelled and all guests were welcomed into the main hall. Attendance was 520.

"We knew we would lose some people by rescheduling," said Director of Development Don Fitzkee, "but we really didn't end up having a choice. We were thrilled that we still had nearly a full house. It made us feel really good that so many people rearranged their schedules to be there."

A number of table sponsors invited new guests to fill spots of those who were unable to attend because of the



date change.

"Perhaps even more amazing than the strong attendance and giving," said Don, "was the fact that Middle Creek was able to switch nights and that nearly everyone on the program could make it work. We really appreciated all the people who worked with us so we still could hold the event."

After enjoying a family style meal, banquet attendees settled in for COBYS Has Talent—COBYS' take on the many

talent shows popular on television. Executive Director Mark Cunningham hosted the show (and also managed to make his leg disappear and balance a chair on the bridge of his nose). COBYS staff Rachel Eshbach, Krista Rankin, and Don Fitzkee played a nice, glamorous, and mean judge, respectively, and kept the evening light with their comments and critiques of performers.

The program included a mix of fun and serious acts, with some presenters providing updates on COBYS programs or testifying to the effectiveness of COBYS ministries.

Solanco Community Mobilizer Rithy "T" Ung, gave a brief update on his grant-funded work to organize community partners in Southern Lancaster County to form a Communities That Care Coalition (see cover story).

Former Elementary School Principal and current COBYS Adoption Case-worker Drew Scheffey shared via video how he is continuing his lifelong service of children in a new setting.

Court of Common Pleas Judge Leslie Gorbey put "mean judge" Don Fitzkee in his place and spoke of her interactions with COBYS through her work in Family and Juvenile Court, specifically highlighting the professionalism and caring of COBYS staff. Speaking of COBYS foster care and permanency unit staff, Judge Gorbey

*Judge Leslie Gorbey (top) said she sleeps better at night when she knows COBYS is on a foster care case; (bottom from left) Don Fitzkee, Krista Rankin, and Rachel Eshbach played mean, glamorous, and nice judges for the talent show; Ryan Rutt told his family's adoption story. His mother, Erla was on hand to help keep watch over Kaylin & Paxton; and in character Mean Judge Don Fitzkee extended a threatening fundraising appeal with the assistance of enforcers Wally & Jake Walmer. People gave generously anyway.*



## Monville, The Browns to Headline 20th Annual Wenger Praise Dinner

said, "I am able to sleep better at night because I know that they are on the case. And they're making sure that all the children that they supervise are in a safe and sound situation."

She also touted the effectiveness of COBYS' Cooperative Parenting class, which she has seen reduce conflict between divorcing parents so that they can better co-parent their children.

"COBYS Family Life Education programs are a godsend to me," said the Judge. "I frequently will order parents to go to these educational classes."

While his toddlers Paxton and Kaylin entertained the crowd, Ryan Rutt told how he and his wife, Sarah (who was unable to attend due to illness), were given the support they needed to provide foster care and adopt Kaylin in December 2014.

"Our story is one of a thousand little steps," said Ryan. "And at each step we saw God working. And at each step COBYS was there to support us and show us how to take that step."

Mindy Nolt & Jared Hankee were the featured musical act. Other musicians included COBYS Board member Kent Rice, who sang his original "Foster Care Blues;" Permanency Unit receptionist Leonida Gonzalez; and Jon Landis, who got disqualified for being a judge's brother.

After the three judges deadlocked, Judge Gorbey declared COBYS Family Services the evening's winner.

Video of the program is available on YouTube and a photo gallery is posted on Facebook. Both can be accessed from the News & Events page of [cobys.org](http://cobys.org).



Speaker Marie Monville and gospel artists The Browns will provide inspiration and entertainment at the 20th annual Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner on Thursday, April 16, at 6:00 p.m., at the Lebanon Expo Center. The event will benefit COBYS Family Services and three other ministries.

Monville is an inspirational speaker and author of *One Light Still Shines*, which shares her testimony of how God has been faithful in the aftermath of her husband's role in the Nickel Mines Amish schoolhouse shootings.

The Browns are a family of award-winning gospel musicians from Iowa, comprised of Shelly Brown and her grown children Adam, Andrew, and Michaela. Their music prominently features vocal harmonies and violins. Learn more at [thebrownsmusic.com](http://thebrownsmusic.com).

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 \$125 per

person or \$1,250 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; Tom B. Morrissey TV & Appliance; Roger & Carolyn North, North Group Consultants; Gene Wenger's Meats & Fine Foods; Sight & Sound Ministries, Inc.; Jim & JoAnne Speers; Kline, Kreider & Good Auctioneers; Brightbill Body Works; and Wengers of Myerstown.

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 \$305,761 to COBYS, which first became a beneficiary of the Praise Dinner in 1999.

Last year's Praise Dinner attracted more than 800 people, and raised more than \$100,000, including \$18,652.50 for COBYS.

For more information, please contact the Wenger Foundation at 717-866-2130 or [rwalmer@wengers.com](mailto:rwalmer@wengers.com).







## 21st Family Fun Walk Set for May 3



COBYS Family Services will host the 21st annual Family Fun Walk on Sunday, May 3, at Peter Becker Community, 800 Maple Ave., Harleysville. The walk begins at 4

p.m., with registration beginning at 3:30.

The event consists of a three-mile walk, followed by ice cream,

*Last year's Family Fun Walk was held on a pleasant spring day. Despite evidence to the contrary, we're fairly confident that spring will arrive in time for this year's walk.*

refreshments, and awarding of door prizes. Walkers donate, enlist sponsors to benefit COBYS ministries to children and families, or both. Some 75 participants raised nearly \$10,000 at last year's walk.



Top fundraisers can choose between grand prizes of two tickets to *Joseph*, donated by Sight & Sound Theatres, Lancaster, or a pair of COBYS

logo canvas folding chairs. All participants receive a free t-shirt, ice cream and refreshments, and a chance to win a door prize. Additional prizes are available for those who reach certain levels of support. 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, and Gouldey Welding & Fabrication, Inc., Souderton. Additional business supporters are being sought. The event will be held rain or shine.

More information, including a printable brochure, is available at the News & Events page of [cobys.org](http://cobys.org). Or contact Don Fitzkee at 800-452-6517 or [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org).

*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.




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

## *No Such Thing as Coincidences*

One of COBYS Director of Placement Services Mary Sourber's favorite sayings is "There's no such thing as coincidences." A recent case lent some credibility to that view.

Staff learned that birth parents who already had a child in foster care through the COBYS Permanency Unit unexpectedly gave birth in February. The new baby girl also would need to be placed in care, but the county



resource family caring for the older sibling wasn't prepared to take in a baby. Mary asked me if COBYS had any resource families in the East Earl area who might be a match. We had two.

Less than five minutes later the foster mom from one of those two families called to report that her husband was working that day at a widow's home, and the widow

mentioned to him that her daughter-in-law had just given birth to an eight-pound baby girl. Amazingly, the mother of the baby hadn't even known she was pregnant. The widow mentioned that her son and daughter-in-law already had other children who were placed in foster care.

Although they had been thinking their next placement should be a boy, the COBYS foster parents felt led to contact COBYS with the information they had just learned and to volunteer to be a resource family for this new baby girl in the unlikely event that the child would be placed through COBYS. The foster mom said that she didn't expect that COBYS could do anything, but she and her husband felt that they were supposed to call anyway. I informed her that just minutes earlier I heard about an extremely similar case that indeed was connected to COBYS.

After doing some checking, we confirmed that the baby at the Permanency Unit was the same baby that our foster parents had learned about through what appeared to be a random conversation. The following day the little girl was placed with this family!

*Sharon Kingsley, Foster Care Supervisor*

## **Giving From IRA May Produce Tax Benefits**

For the past several years Congress has extended a provision that creates potential tax benefits for persons who support charities with funds given directly from their Individual Retirement Accounts. But this past year it took them until mid-December to get around to acting, after some potential donors already had taken their required distributions and after COBYS' year-end communications had gone out.

We don't know if the IRA provision will be extended for 2015, but here's what we suggest: Assume that it will and give accordingly. If it is extended, donors are positioned to realize the benefits. If it isn't, you haven't lost anything by giving from your IRA.

A reminder of how it has worked in the past: Individuals age 70½ or older can exclude up to \$100,000 from gross income for donations paid directly to a qualified charity from their IRA (excluding SEP or SIMPLE IRAs). COBYS is a qualified charity.

For example, 72-year-old Harold is required to withdraw \$10,000 from his IRA this year, even though he doesn't need the money for living expenses. Instead of withdrawing the money and paying income taxes on it, Harold can direct a \$10,000 transfer to COBYS and reduce his federal income tax liability.

To learn more about this provision, or other ways of supporting COBYS through planned giving, contact Director of Development Don Fitzkee at 800-452-6517 or [don@cobys.org](mailto:don@cobys.org). Please consult your own financial advisor to discuss how specific provisions affect you.

## **Don't Forget Employer Match**

If you support COBYS ministries, you may be able to double your gift with an employer match. Many employers will match all or a portion of their employees' charitable contributions. Armstrong World Industries, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, and GlaxoSmithKline are just a few examples of companies that we receive matching gifts from. If you support COBYS, please check to see if your employer will augment your gift.

COBYS Family Services  
1417 Oregon Road  
Leola, PA 17540

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 52  
Lancaster, PA

## Address Service Requested



Become our fan on Facebook.



## Adoptive Families Needed for Abby, Other Waiting Children

The Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) reports that approximately 2,500 children are waiting for adoption in the state of Pennsylvania. Some of these children will be adopted by the foster parents with whom they reside. However, many children remain who are legally free for adoption, but do not have an identified permanent home.

These children often are called "waiting children." COBYS Family Services adoption staff seek adoptive homes for these children through a service called Child Specific Recruitment. Many of these children are older youth or may be part of a sibling group; some have medical conditions.

Abby is one of these waiting



children with whom we are seeking an adoptive family. She is an adorable five-year-old girl with an endearing smile who loves being in the swimming pool,

listening to music, and having stories read to her. She also enjoys playing with toys that make noise.

Abby is in need of a family who would be committed to providing long-term care for her and would work with her to continue making progress in her development. Because of her many medical needs and appointments, Abby would do best in a two-parent family, with one parent staying home, and with few other children in the home. Abby has a very strong relationship with her current foster family, and we want this family to remain involved in her life when she moves to an adoptive home.

To learn more about Abby and the other waiting children in Pennsylvania, visit the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange at [www.adoptpakids.org](http://www.adoptpakids.org). To learn more about Abby you also can contact Sheryl Bernot at 717-656-6580 or [sheryl@cobys.org](mailto:sheryl@cobys.org).