

Fortunate Enough to Have Two Families



The Bucher family recently gathered to celebrate a birthday and to reflect on how twin foster daughters became cherished members of the family some 25 years ago. Pictured (from left) are Matthew, Rachel, Stan, Cindy (holding granddaughter, Annika), Jenni, and Jessi. Below are Matthew, Jenni, Jessi, and Rachel in 1990.

Children placed in foster care often experience a deep sense of loss, as they are separated from parents, siblings, and familiar surroundings. That was the situation back in 1988 when two-year-old twins Jessi & Jenni came to live with early COBYS foster parents Stan & Cindy Bucher on their Lebanon County farm.

The girls' father had died before they turned one, and when their mother was incarcerated on drug-related charges, they were separated from older siblings and placed with the Buchers. But eventually that loss turned into gain, as they were able to

return home to their birth mother, while still remaining much-loved members of the Bucher family.

"We're fortunate enough to have two families," says Jenni, now 28. "[Foster care] is probably the best thing that ever happened to us," adds Jessi.

COBYS Family Services (Church of the Brethren Youth Services back then) began caring for foster children in 1980, and Stan & Cindy were some of the first COBYS foster parents. Stan remembers being at the Church of the Brethren's Atlantic Northeast District Conference and hearing of the need

for foster parents. "We thought we should do that," he recalls.

The Buchers' daughter, Rachel (Swank), was born in November 1980, and the following year Stan & Cindy began taking in teens. Their son, Matthew, was born in 1984 and grew up in a house where foster siblings came and went.

Stan still remembers their first foster son—a street-smart 15-year-old boy. Stan recalls with a laugh that as they drove over the mountain on Route 72 north into the Lebanon County countryside, the teen grew more and more anxious. "I think he thought he was in Indian Territory," says Stan. "I thought he would be a tough guy, but he was petrified of the isolation."

They took in several more teens over the next few years, using their dairy farm as a place to give kids some responsibility and a place to belong. "I don't think we were the

(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.

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

I Hate Those Meeces to Pieces!

There are many advantages to having my office located in a beautiful historic mill. I have a nice view of picturesque Lititz Run through my window. The thick stone walls, deep window sills, exposed beams, and crooked window headers lend a unique character to the building. The old mill is a historic landmark that is easy for visitors to find.

But a building like this also has its disadvantages, one of which is that small creatures can more easily enter. Spiders don't bother me so much, and we have very few of these in the building anyway, thanks to the stellar efforts of our pest control company. Snakes don't bother me at all. I gladly caught that two-foot-long water snake hiding behind the file cabinet on the garden level several years ago while others covered in fear. But mice are a different story. I have an unnatural fear of mice. To borrow the famous line from the cartoon cat Mr. Jinks, "I hate those meeces to pieces!"

I recently came into my office and found that a young mouse had



died prematurely and chose the lens of the florescent light fixture right above my desk as his semi-final resting place. I would like to tell you that I lowered the cover, removed the mouse, and got on with my work for the day. What actually happened was that I kept staring at the mouse to make sure it wasn't moving while waiting impatiently for Don Fitzkee to show up.

When Don arrived, I immediately asked him to come to my office and showed him the mouse. I then watched from the safety of the hallway while Don very bravely disposed of the vermin.

I don't know why I am afraid of mice. I can't recall anything traumatic in my past that would help me to understand this fear. But I do know that my fear kept me from doing what I was supposed to be doing when I got to work that morning.

Which led me to wonder what else I fear—perhaps things that I'm not even aware of. And what are those fears keeping me from accomplishing? What is God calling me to do that I am not doing because of a fear I have inside me?

In the book *Who Moved My Cheese* (which ironically features mice in a maze), author Spencer Johnson asks, "What would you do if you weren't afraid?" Good question.

In John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Great statement. With the peace that Jesus promises, we have no reason to fear. We can attempt anything God calls us to do without being afraid.

That definitely includes dealing with the "spiders and snakes" in our lives. It may even apply to mice.

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director

(continued from page one)

best farmers in the world,” says Stan, “but we used the farm as a positive influence.”

After several years of caring for teens, Stan & Cindy received a call for a different kind of placement. This time it was for a sibling group of five, ranging in age from late teens to two-year-old twins. With their own children—then ages 8 and 4—to care for, Stan & Cindy felt they could only take the two little girls. The twins arrived later the same day, but because Stan & Cindy had plans, the girls were greeted by Grandma Sara Koser and Rachel and Matthew. “We spent the whole night running and jumping on the couch,” Matthew recalls.

When they wound down, Grandma put all the kids to bed. The next morning Jessi & Jenni woke up in a strange house and for the first time met the people who would become a huge positive influence in their lives. For the next four years the girls would be in foster care with the Buchers. A quarter century later they still haven’t really left.

The twins quickly took to calves and kittens, porch swings and puppies, and felt at home in the 19th century farmhouse, situated in an idyllic setting with a stone arch bridge spanning the trout stream that bisects the property.

The Buchers took them along to church at the Mt. Wilson Church of the Brethren, and everywhere they went the blond-haired, blue-eyed twins attracted attention. “It was like walking around with a puppy or a little baby,” Stan recalls with a smile.

“We had a lot of neighbors who used to like to babysit them,” adds Cindy.

Cindy began building a

relationship with Marian, the girls’ mother, providing occasional updates during the time the children were with the Buchers. (Marian eventually turned her life around and became a social worker.) When the girls returned home in 1992, the Buchers continued to reach out to their birth family who, understandably, at first were reluctant to have the girls continue ties. But Stan & Cindy soon earned the family’s trust, and before long the twins were spending some weekends and then whole weeks in the summer on the farm. “And now we can’t get rid of them,” Stan jokes.

From the time they left the Buchers’ care at age six until the girls turned 18, Cindy faithfully wrote them, dropping a letter in the mail each Monday. These days they keep in touch by phone, Facebook, and e-mail. Jessi is exaggerating only slightly when she says, “I probably e-mail Cindy about every day.”

There were some challenging times. “We were little rebels in high school,” Jenni confesses, and Jessi adds that they tended to gravitate toward unhealthy relationships with boys. Jessi, who married this fall, is mother to seven-year-old Jocelyn and also is helping to parent her husband’s 14-year-old son.

Rachel remembers a time when

the twins were giving their mother a run for her money, and she called Stan and Cindy for advice. “I thought it was neat that Marian trusted [my parents] enough to reach out.”

Today both girls are licensed practical nurses—Jessi at a medical practice in York and Jenni at a Philadelphia-area pediatric facility. Jenni is working toward becoming a Registered Nurse.

“They have been working since they were 14,” observes Cindy like a proud mother, “and worked their way through nursing school.”

But as busy as life has become, they still find time to come “home” to the Buchers, like they did on a November Saturday to celebrate their sister, Rachel’s birthday. Sitting around the kitchen table with the family, Jenni observed, “It’s always so warm and welcoming here. It’s our safe place.”

This fall the Bucher family went away for a week together at a chalet in West Virginia, Jessi and Jenni and company included. “It was pretty amazing that everyone was there,” says Cindy with satisfaction. Chances are a picture taken during that week will end up on the Bucher Christmas card—the twins are always included in the annual family picture.

And now Jenni is enjoying introducing her daughter to some of the same pleasures that she has treasured for more than two decades with her second family. Jocelyn

swings on the same tree swing that her mother did and plays with kittens just like her mom did.

And, Cindy adds, Jocelyn is a spitting image of the two little girls who first came into the Buchers’ lives more than two decades ago. Everybody seems to be glad they came and more or less stayed.



The Buchers’ 19th century farmhouse holds many fond memories and remains a welcoming place.

Another Record!

Bike & Hike Grosses \$100,000+ for Second Year

The 18th annual COBYS Bike & Hike, held Sunday, September 7, at the Lititz Church of the Brethren, established a new income record, marking the 15th consecutive year that income from the event has grown.

With some pledges still to collect, income is expected to reach \$108,000, up from last year's figure of \$104,355.

"After making a big push last year to reach \$100,000 for the first time, we wondered if we would be able to do it again," said Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "So we are thrilled that giving increased again this year!"

Contributing to the income growth was the addition of a Silent Auction, which featured 35 donated items and raised nearly \$3,000. "People seemed to be enjoying themselves at the auction," said Don, "and we think this will add a growing edge to the event in coming years."

Bike & Hike participants choose between a three-mile walk, 10- and 25-mile bicycle rides, and a 65-mile motorcycle ride, and then pay a



registration fee, enlist support from sponsors, or both. More than 500 people participated in the event, including 213 walkers, 153 motorcyclists on 93 cycles, and 87 bicyclists, along with some friends who stopped in to visit and participate in the auction.

Top fundraisers were Floy Fitzkee, Manheim, \$6,185; Londa Brandt, Manheim, \$6,118; Mari Cunningham, Lancaster, \$5,851; and Lucy de Perrot, Lititz, \$3,780. More than 20 individuals or families gave or raised at least \$1,000 for COBYS ministries.

Three Church of the Brethren (COB) youth groups earned a gym and pizza night by raising at least \$1,500. Top youth groups were: Little Swatara, Rehrersburg, \$4,585; Midway, Lebanon, \$4,295; and Chiques Junior High, Manheim, \$1,623.79. Other participating youth groups included Mohrsville and Mt. Zion Road COBs.

Top selling auction items included a night's stay at the Presidential Suite of the Lancaster Marriott and Breakfast for Two at the Penn Square Grille, donated by Thomas Connelly; a three-night stay at a Potter County Chalet, donated by Jim & Pam Ament; and a patio heater with gas canister donated by Good's Store and Amerigas. A wagonful of toys donated by Outback Toys and some five pound bags of gummi candy attracted attention from young bidders.

About 90 businesses supported the Bike & Hike with cash or in kind donations (see facing page). WJTL FM 90.3 radio broadcast live from the event and LititzDaily.com reporter Lynn Rebeck covered it. Her article is available online at



1) It was a perfect day for a walk; 2) Top fundraisers (from left) Lucy de Perrot, Mari Cunningham, Floy Fitzkee, Londa Brandt; 3) The new COBYS golf umbrella, displayed by Josh & Stacy Bashore-Steury, was a popular prize; 4) Good seats were hard to find; 5) The first ever Silent Auction drew interest and raised funds; 6) Hold hands, stick together; and 7) Walker Jim Gibbel (left) sports a vintage COBYS Roll & Stroll t-shirt from the 1990s while Executive Director Mark Cunningham wears the 2014 model.

<http://lititzdailynews.com/?s=COBYS+Family+Services>

A photo gallery from the Bike & Hike is available on the COBYS Facebook page.

Next year's Bike & Hike is slated for Sunday, September 13. The event is held each year on the Sunday after Labor Day.





Special Thanks to Our Business Supporters!

Some 90 businesses supported the event by donating cash, grand prizes, auction items, food and supplies, door prizes, and facilities. We couldn't have set our new record without them! Thanks! If you would like to receive information on serving as a business sponsor or donating items for next year's Silent Auction, please contact Don Fitzkee at don@cobys.org or 717-656-6580.

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Camp Swatara

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Herr Foods
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Oregon Dairy
Smith's Candies
Turkey Hill Dairy, Inc.

Door Prizes

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Halo Branded Solutions-Rick Bridgman
Harrisburg Senators Baseball Club
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Zig's Bakery & Deli LLC



ExtraOrdinary Generosity

COBYS Earns \$40,000+ in Online Giving Campaign

The third annual ExtraOrdinary Give lived up to its name, as donors gave more than \$4 million to participating organizations. Sponsored by the Lancaster County Community Foundation and Presenting Sponsors



Rodgers & Associates and the Martin H. Baer Charitable Trust, the 24-hour online giving campaign took place Friday, November 21.

COBYS Family Services had another extraordinary day, finishing 25th in dollars raised out of 306 organizations. COBYS donors gave \$38,915. Included in that figure was nearly \$3,000 from first time donors.

“One of the real values of the event,” said Director of Development Don Fitzkee, “is that it attracts new donors and motivates others who haven’t given in a while to renew their support.”

COBYS earned a \$1,000 Early Bird prize by being the second organization to reach 50 unique donations. It took just 12 minutes for COBYS supporters to earn the prize.

“We think it says something really positive about the commit-

ment of our donors that they are willing to lose some sleep to help us win an extra thousand dollars,” said Don.

COBYS was not fortunate enough to win any of the 35 \$1,000 random prizes, even though several donors gave repeatedly to increase the odds. The LCCF and partners offer \$50,000 in prizes, along with a “stretch fund” that grew to \$326,000 this year and was divided proportionately among participants.

COBYS’ total earnings for the day—gifts, plus prize, plus a percentage of the “stretch fund,” minus fees—is expected to be \$40,676, up more than \$5,000 from last year.

For the first time, COBYS

sponsored an event related to the ExtraOrdinary Give, offering a free whoopie pie, compliments of Zig’s Bakery & Deli, to anyone who stopped in at the COBYS Family Life Center in Lancaster to give. While traffic at The ExtraOrdinary Whoopie Pie Event was light, it did attract some media attention from LNP, the Lancaster newspaper.

Top earner for the day was the Water Street Rescue Mission, with more than \$195,000 in donations. The Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue Inc. received the most gifts at 1,323, totaling more than \$140,000. Taking into account giving by all donors plus the prize and stretch dollars, total giving for the day to all organizations was more than \$4.47 million. Complete results are available at ExtraGive.org.

Campaign Pledges Top \$255,000

Pledges to the Work for the Well-Being of the City capital campaign continue to rise, but more will be needed to reach the campaign’s \$300,000 goal.

As of December 1, pledges exceeded \$255,000 and of that amount more than \$165,000 had been received. The large majority of new pledges now are coming from churches who received visits during the summer and fall months. Churches are being asked to consider giving \$10 per regular attendee per year during 2015 and 2016.

In October 2012 COBYS purchased its Family Life Center building in Lancaster to expand Family Life Education programming in the city and beyond.

The goals of the education-



related campaign are three R’s: **R**etire debt on the facility; **R**ecoup start-up costs; and **R**aise funds for additional programming.

Last 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. A list of programs and workshop topics can be viewed at cobys.org/education.

Three to Join COBYS Board of Directors

Wilbur Rohrer, Suzanne Schaudel, and Bob Wintsch were affirmed by the Atlantic Northeast District Conference in October to serve on the COBYS Family Services Board of Directors, effective January 1.

Wilbur retired in April after serving 52 years as owner and operator of Rohrer's Quarry, Inc., and also serves as an ordained member of the ministry team at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren, Lititz. He served 34 years on the Board of Directors at Brethren Village and also chaired the Church Development Commission for the Atlantic Northeast District Board. Wilbur and his wife, Judy, live near Lititz.

Suzanne is a retired German teacher who taught for 27 years, primarily in the Hempfield School District. She is active at Lancaster Church of the Brethren where she plays in the Bell Choir and

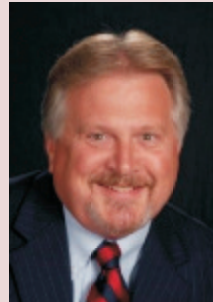
sings in the Chancel Choir. Currently Suzanne serves as secretary of the Lancaster COB Board and previously served on the board of the Alpha & Omega Community Center in Lancaster.



Suzanne Schaudel



Wilbur Rohrer



Bob Wintsch

Suzanne and her husband, Otto, are residents of Landis Homes, Lititz.

Bob is an Employee Benefits Specialist Consultant for Wells Fargo Insurance and a member of the Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, Quarryville. He served as Atlantic Northeast District Moderator and a member of the District Board, chairing the Stewards Commission. He recently completed service on the board of the Brethren Housing Association in Harrisburg. Bob and his wife, Misty, live in Quarryville.

At its November meeting the board reorganized. Rose Walmer and Brenda Spence continue as President and Treasurer, respectively. Fred Keller was elected Vice-President and Pam Ament Secretary.

Concluding service are Nancy Fittery, Deb Krantz, and Tom Weber.

New Child Welfare Laws Require More of Churches

Sweeping changes to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law taking effect on December 31 are placing new requirements on churches and other voluntary organizations that work with kids. Growing out of the Jerry Sandusky child abuse scandal, House Bill #435 was passed by Pennsylvania legislators and signed into law by Governor Tom Corbett in April.

Among changes are an expansion of who is considered a mandated reporter, a revised definition of child abuse that lowers the threshold for what is considered abuse, and required training for mandated reporters, including church staff and volunteers who work with children.

While anyone may report suspected abuse, mandated reporters are those people who are required by law to report suspected child abuse. Mandated reporters are held to a higher standard of responsibility and may receive serious consequences for not reporting suspected abuse.

In addition to healthcare workers,

employees of schools and social services agencies, clergy, and others who previously were mandated reporters, the list now includes "an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of their role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child." This includes church volunteers.

While in the past a church volunteer who suspected abuse or neglect could merely report their suspicions to a pastor, who was a mandated reporter; now the church volunteer is required to contact authorities directly. This would include Sunday school teachers, childcare providers, youth advisors, and other church volunteers who work with children, says COBYS Director of Placement Services Mary Sourber.

All church-related mandatory reporters who do not currently have Childline and State Police background checks are required to receive these clearances by January 30, 2015, and must sign a disclosure statement to cover the interim period between

December 31 and when clearances are received. Those who have clearances that are older than 36 months have until December 31, 2015, to complete new ones. (FBI checks are required only for those who have been residents of Pennsylvania for less than 10 years.)

Mandated reporters also are required to complete three hours of state-approved training by June 30, 2015, to more fully understand definitions of child abuse and reporting requirements. A state-approved training appropriate for non-professionals is available for free online at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu. (Training requirements vary according to profession and licensure. For more information about additional training opportunities for various groups, visit http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/con_ed_providers/21920.)

To learn more about these changes in child welfare law and how they impact you or your church, contact Mary at mary@cobys.org or 717-656-6580.

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Because You Bless Us We Can Bless Others

COBYS Family Services has been blessed with strong support through the Bike & Hike and The ExtraOrdinary Give this fall. We also mailed our year-



end "Christmas letter" in mid-November and have been receiving gifts in response to that. Thank you!

If you haven't yet given a year-end gift, we welcome your support. A third or more of giving to the general fund to sustain our ministries typically comes in during the final six weeks of the year. As we said in our letter, "Some of the people we serve are making great strides, but more often positive change takes place in baby steps, or even one step forward and two steps back. We celebrate the forward steps. You can celebrate with us by supporting our ministries."

If time gets away and you are unable to mail in your gift by December 31, please consider giving via credit card at cobys.org. Because

people like you bless us with financial support during this Christmas season, we are able to bless children and families throughout the year!

Please Save These Dates!

Thursday, March 5, 6:30 p.m.
Informational/Fundraising Banquet
Middle Creek Church of the Brethren

Thursday, April 16, 6 p.m.
Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner
Lebanon Expo Center

Sunday, May 3, 4 p.m.
21st Annual Family Fun Walk
Peter Becker Community, Harleysville

Sunday, September 13, 1:00 p.m.
19th Annual Bike & Hike
Lititz Church of the Brethren