

Filling a Void

New Course Supports Parents of Kids on the Spectrum



Dan & Melissa Hinnebusch, pictured with sons Eddie & Andy, appreciate the ideas for real life situations they are receiving from COBYS educators, along with the support that comes from being in class with other parents who understand their challenges.

In some ways it was a relief for Melissa and Dan Hinnebusch when their son, Eddie, was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum two years ago at age four. Melissa had been suspecting for some time that something was up. When mental health professionals confirmed her suspicions she was relieved to know, "It's not just me overreacting."

The diagnosis also opened the door to receiving services, but Melissa and Dan quickly learned that demand for such services is great and waiting lists are long. And most of the services that are available are for the child, with little support for parents.

COBYS Family Services is helping to fill the void. COBYS is wrapping up its first Incredible Years Autism and

Language Delays Program this month. The 11-week course has been meeting Sunday afternoons from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the COBYS Family Life Center in Lancaster. About 10 parents and caregivers—including Dan & Melissa—have been attending.

"There's nothing intensive like this in the county for parents in their situation," says COBYS Director of Family Life Services Abby Keiser, who is co-teaching the program with educator Lisa Stoltzfus. Lisa received training from Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, the founder of the evidence-based Incredible Years® Series curricula.

Within a week of advertising the course via an e-mail to partner agencies, says Abby, the first

program was filled. Upcoming classes in Akron and Manheim (beginning in January) and Lancaster (April) are accepting registrants now.

All of the scheduled programs are free to participants, with costs covered by funding received from the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission this fall. "I was shocked that it's free," said Melissa.

Designed for parents of children ages 2-6, who either are on the autism spectrum or have language delays, the course promotes children's emotional regulation, social competence, language skills, school readiness, and relationships with others.

Melissa says she appreciates that the course and accompanying Incredible Years book goes beyond the theoretical and "gives you 'real life' how to do something." The material includes specific approaches for dealing with common issues.

Eddie, who also has ADHD, is high functioning and verbal—sometimes a little too verbal! The Hinnebusches currently are using ideas gleaned from the COBYS course to help Eddie curb impulsiveness and learn to take turns talking at the dinner table, so mom, dad, and younger brother,

(continued on back page)

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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Justifiably Frustrated

Sometimes I get frustrated at things that really aren't all that important. I know this about myself. I asked my kids and some co-workers for their thoughts about what some of those things are. I was a bit dismayed at how quickly my kids responded and the lengthy list they were so willing to provide.

They are right when they say that I get frustrated when they fall asleep on the couch and let the TV turned on all night. Or when other people's money is not organized properly in their wallet or purse. (Large bills in the back, small bills in the front. All heads facing the same direction.) Or when the dishwasher is loaded in such a way that one dish takes up two spaces.



My son also correctly notes that I get frustrated when he leaves his shoes in the middle of the floor. Although in my defense, he wears size 13 basketball sneakers, so can we all agree that they do represent a significant safety hazard?

I was relieved that the staff seemed to find this task a bit more challenging but, then again, they may have ulterior motives for not pointing out my idiosyncrasies.

You can debate whether my frustration over some of these little things (or big things in the case of my son's shoes) is merited, but my frustration about the Pennsylvania state

budget impasse is real and justified.

By law, the state budget is to be passed by June 30, but at this writing it has not been passed. And what that means for COBYS is that we haven't received reimbursement for much of the work we have been doing for the past five months, amounting to more than \$750,000 so far. While we will be paid retroactively when (if?) an agreement is reached, the uncertainty created by the impasse has been an obstacle for us and a serious threat to many other organizations.

But here's where my real frustration is: Pa.gov, the state government website, assures us that during the impasse "the Commonwealth will continue operations for all critical functions that impact the health, safety and/or welfare of the citizens of Pennsylvania."

Well, that's a relief. Except it isn't true. I am glad that the state continues to pay for things like transportation to medical appointments; support for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and early intervention, autism, and intellectual disability services during the impasse. I agree that these services are essential.

But I don't believe for a moment that they are more important than the foster care and adoption services that COBYS provides, which are considered nonessential.

I am frustrated, and I believe justifiably so. I am especially frustrated that government leaders decided to keep the state parks and state stores running and yet they are not willing to release money to care for children who have been abused or neglected. And you know what gets me the most frustrated? The state continues to fund lottery winners, but not organizations like COBYS. Seriously? Lottery winners?

But my frustration is tempered just a bit when I realize that many people do consider our services essential. Because of our many private donors, COBYS had set aside adequate reserves that are enabling us to weather this storm. We have continued to provide all of our services without interruption, and in fact, most of our programs are experiencing growth, despite the impasse.

I am thankful that you agree with us that caring for children and families is essential. We are blessed by your support!

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director

Volunteers Help with Permanency Renovations

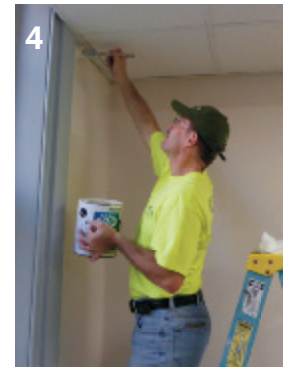
It took quite a few volunteers (and a good many donuts), but the main part of the remodeling project at the COBYS Permanency Unit is completed. Efforts now are underway to hire the first of eight new staff to utilize the new office space and double the number of children and families served.

In cooperation with the Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency, the Permanency Unit provides care for children in foster care and other out-of-home placements, while also supporting and monitoring the progress of birth families on their service plans. The program is funded by the county, but staffed and operated by COBYS.

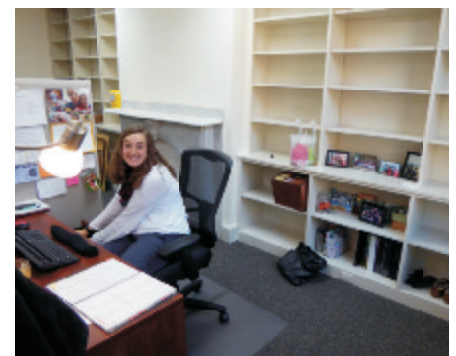
Since September, volunteers have logged more than 130 hours on the project, with most of their attention focused on painting. In addition, COBYS super volunteer maintenance worker J. Roy Kreider contributed dozens of hours to help move the project along.

Overseen by general contractor Ebersole Brothers Construction Inc., the project included creation of a kitchenette/work room, relocation of a wall to expand the reception area, new flooring and ceiling tiles in several areas, running hundreds of feet of new computer and phone wires to create new work stations, a total repaint of two office areas and two visiting rooms, and more.

The office remodeling is largely completed, with the exception of painting of visiting rooms.



An area previously used for storage was transformed into an office for four with the help of: 1) Trim man Gene Wampler; 2) Shelf painter Suzanne Schaudel; 3) Wall roller Brian Roten; 4) Edge cutter Kevin Bedell; and 5) Baseboard specialist Steve Faus. Caseworker Jade Landis (right) is the first staff member to claim a corner of "the quad."



2016 Dates of Interest

Annual Banquet, Middle Creek Church of the Brethren, Friday, March 4 (Weather date Sat., March 5), 6:30 p.m.

Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner, Lebanon Expo, Thursday, April 21, 6:00 p.m.

22nd Annual Family Fun Walk, Peter Becker Community, Sunday, May 1, 4:00 p.m.

20th Annual Bike & Hike, Lititz Church of the Brethren, Sunday, September 11, 1:00 p.m.

Bike & Hike Income Surges (And a Good Time Is Had by All)

The 19th annual COBYS Bike & Hike, held Sunday, September 13, at the Lititz Church of the Brethren (COB), raised a record amount of money to support the ministries of COBYS Family Services.



Final income from the event is expected to reach \$119,000, a jump of more than \$10,000 from last year's previous record amount. Event income increased for the 16th consecutive year.

Bike & Hike participants choose from a three-mile walk through Lititz, 10- and 25-mile bicycle rides, and a 60-mile motorcycle ride. They pay a registration fee, enlist support from sponsors, or both. A total of 469 people participated in the walk or rides, including 196 walkers, 143 bicyclists, and 130 motorcyclists on 84 cycles, along with some friends who stopped in to visit and participate in the silent auction that ran throughout the afternoon.



Mari Cunningham set a new record for individual fundraising, with her figure of \$10,665, more than \$4,000 higher than the previous best. Other top fundraisers were Floy Fitzkee, \$6,565; Londa Brandt, \$6,165; and Lucy de Perrot, \$3,795. About 20 individuals or families gave or raised at least \$1,000 for COBYS ministries.

Special Thanks

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Love Give Live Gallery & Gifts





1) Pete Frederick & Sharon Risser began the cycle ride with enthusiasm; 2) The Bike & Hike is a great place to make new friends; 3) Top fundraisers were (from left) Mari & Alyssa Cunningham, Lucy de Perrot, Floy Fitzkee, and Londa Brandt; 4) More than a few strollers were pushed for the three-mile walk; and 5) A game of gaga appealed to the younger crowd.

Four church youth groups earned a gym and pizza night by raising at least \$1,500, including Little Swatara COB, Rehrersburg, which raised a record amount of \$7,740. Others were West Green Tree COB, Elizabethtown, \$3,200; Midway COB, Lebanon, \$2,480; and Chiques COB Junior High, Manheim, \$1,650.

The second annual silent auction at the Bike & Hike raised more than \$3,100.

Some 90 businesses supported the event by donating more than \$23,000 in cash, along with in kind gifts of grand prizes, auction items, food and supplies, and door prizes (see below). Lititz COB donated use

of its facilities and Mt. Wilson COB, located near Colebrook, hosted the break stop for the motorcycle ride.

More than 50 volunteers staffed the event, including eight from Linden Hall in Lititz, which volunteered as part of the United Way Day of Caring that took place the weekend of the Bike & Hike.

A photo gallery from the Bike & Hike is available at <https://www.facebook.com/COBYSFS>.

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Fuchs, Reinhart to Join COBYS Board

Two new COBYS Family Services board members were affirmed by the Church of the Brethren (COB) Atlantic Northeast District Conference in October. Rebecca Fuchs and Lisa Reinhart will join the board in January.

Becky is pastor of the Mountville COB and a 2008 graduate of Lancaster Theological Seminary. She originally graduated from Gettysburg College



Lisa Reinhart



Rebecca Fuchs

and worked in the mental health field for several years before starting her family.

Prior to becoming pastor at Mountville, Becky was active in the Lancaster COB, serving in a variety of positions, including moderator, while also volunteering with Encounter, a counseling and child abuse prevention program of the Lancaster County Council of Churches.

She and her husband, Dr. David Fuchs, have four children and three grandchildren.

Lisa is Marketing Manager and Preservation Specialist at her family-owned business, Fillmore Container. She is a member of the Lampeter COB, where she teaches elementary children, is Memorial Garden Coordinator, and serves with her husband, Keith, as a deacon.

Lisa and Keith and their three school-age children live near Lampeter.

At its November meeting the board reorganized, calling Fred Keller to serve as president and Wilbur

Rohrer as vice-president.

Fred is co-owner of K & K Feeds in Richland and a deacon in the Midway COB, Lebanon. Wilbur retired as



Fred Keller

owner/operator of Rohrer's Quarry and is an ordained minister in the Middle Creek COB, Lititz.

Pam Ament and Brenda Spence continue as secretary and treasurer, respectively.

Concluding board service are Kent Rice and Rose Walmer, who served as president the past three years.

An ExtraOrdinary Day: COBYS Receives Nearly \$55,000

COBYS Family Services had an extraordinary day on November 20, receiving \$53,830 in donations through The ExtraOrdinary Give 24-hour online giving campaign. That figure was up by 38 percent from 2014, when COBYS donors gave \$38,915.

The event as a whole grew by about the same percentage, with a total of \$6.1 million going to 367 organizations.

The Lancaster County Community Foundation, Presenting Sponsor Rodgers and Associates, and other sponsors provided a \$315,000 stretch fund that was divided among participating organizations and an additional \$51,000 in prizes.

COBYS finished in the top 20 in dollars raised and also earned a \$1,000 Early Bird prize by being one of the first organizations to reach 50 unique gifts. COBYS' total earnings for the day (donations, prize, and stretch fund, minus fees) is expected to reach nearly \$55,000.

"One of the chief benefits of The Extraordinary Give for COBYS," says Director of Development Don Fitzkee, "is that it gives us some visibility and attracts new donors." This year



Brethren Village development staff (from left) Renny Magill, Teresa Rineer, and Samantha Rineer hosted a giving station with COBYS Director of Development Don Fitzkee.

COBYS received \$3,055 from 29 first-time donors, along with contributions from donors who hadn't given in the past few years.

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., COBYS partnered with Brethren Village Retirement Community to host a giving station at Chives American Grill on the BV campus. Friends stopped in to give or just say hello and pick up an appreciation gift. Zig's Bakery & Café and Keystone Pretzels provided snacks.

Three Therapists Join Staff

COBYS Family Services recently hired three part-time therapists as part of a grant-funded expansion of the counseling program (see related article below). Hired were Michele Fry, MA; Landon Miller, LPC; and Amy Wittmaier, LPC.

Michele earned a Master's in Counseling from Asbury Theological Seminary. She currently is working toward the Licensed Professional Counselor credential in Pennsylvania.

She most recently was a therapist for the Family Resource and Counseling Center in Gap and also was a Bereavement Counselor for Hospice of Lancaster County. Michele, her husband, and two daughters live in Manheim and attend LCBC church.

Landon is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who the past four years

was a COBYS foster care caseworker and the last two years a child group therapist. He earned a Master's in Guidance and Counseling Education from the University of South Florida.

Landon previously served a three-year term with Mennonite Central Committee as an English as a Foreign Language Facilitator in Egypt. Landon, his wife, and two daughters live near Lancaster and attend Blossom Hill Mennonite Church.

Amy is a Licensed Professional Counselor and is certified by the National Board of Certified Counselors. She served as an elementary school



Michele Fry



Landon Miller



Amy Wittmaier

counselor for the Cocalico School District for 20 years and as adjunct professor at Lancaster Bible College for seven years. She earned a Master's in Counseling Education from Penn State University. Amy lives with her husband and daughter in Lititz and attends Lancaster Evangelical Free Church.

McDowell Named Adoption Supervisor

Jen McDowell began as COBYS Adoption Supervisor in September. A graduate of Messiah College with a degree in family studies, Jen previously worked for COBYS as a foster care caseworker and then initiated the COBYS adoption



program in 1997.

She served as adoption supervisor until 2005, before taking a break to start her family. She has worked part-

time for COBYS as an adoption contract worker since then.

Jen, her husband, and two boys live in Brownstown and are active at the Ephrata Campus of LCBC, where Jen is a member of the leadership team for the She Studies women's Bible study group. She also serves as a mentor with Good Samaritan Shelter in Ephrata.

Grant Helps Therapists Address Trauma

A \$126,000 two-year grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency (PCCD) to fund Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is helping to fuel the growth of the COBYS counseling program.

TF-CBT is an evidence-based treatment that helps children and adolescents recover after trauma. Both the child who as experienced trauma and an adult caregiver participate in up to 25 sessions with a therapist.

The desired outcomes vary with the nature of the trauma and the trauma-related symptoms that a child exhibits, says COBYS Supervisor of Counseling Services Dr. Michele Romeo-Martin. Reducing depression or anxiety, addressing flashbacks, and improving negative behaviors are examples of goals of therapy.

Types of trauma might include witnessing domestic violence or the traumatic death of a loved one, living through a natural disaster, suffering illness requiring multiple medical interventions, or being victimized by physical or sexual abuse.

In addition to addressing the traumatized child's symptoms and behaviors, TF-CBT also helps the parent or caregiver support the child and parent more effectively.

PCCD's interest in such treatment, says Dr. Martin, is that if we can treat trauma symptoms early, it prevents crime and delinquency later in life.

Referrals are coming from a variety of sources, and COBYS therapists expect to serve 35 or more families through the grant by June 2017. Five COBYS therapists currently are receiving training and providing TF-CBT to clients, and COBYS intends to hire one or more additional therapists in coming months.

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card inside!*



(continued from front page)

Andy, can share too.

As with many COBYS Family Life Education programs, the autism course is strengths-based, teaching parents to bring about desired changes by affirming positive behaviors more than sanctioning negative ones.

As important as the content, says Melissa, is the support that comes from being with other parents who face similar challenges. She observes that, while awareness of autism is growing, people in public sometimes react negatively to Eddie's behaviors. Other class members have had similar experiences.

"It's nice to be with people who

understand," she says. "You feel for the other person because you know your child does certain things too."

Melissa has felt the same support

Educator Lisa Stoltzfus brings both extensive training and personal experience with autism to her teaching role.



from the instructors, with Abby bringing her training as a therapist and Lisa sharing firsthand from her own experiences parenting a child on the spectrum. Melissa also has words of praise for the childcare workers: "Childcare staff do a really good job with the kids. The boys actually enjoy going."

"When your kid is diagnosed on the spectrum, Melissa sums up, "you don't really know where to go. There's just such a need for the parent education."

COBYS is helping to fill that void.

To learn more about upcoming COBYS autism programs, visit cobys.org/education or contact the Family Life Center at 717-435-8139.