

One More Milly

Family Honors Foster Mom with Special Name

The number of little girls named Milly isn't as great as it once was, but on April 18 the world got one more. And COBYS foster mom Milly Zeiset couldn't be more pleased about her namesake, Belle Milly Hartman.

"I knew the instant I met Milly what connection Belle and her had," recalls Belle's new adoptive mother, Nicole Hartman. "I knew that Milly would always be a part of our lives, and I wanted to keep that. I knew right away that was going to be her name."

Last fall we told the story of the exceptional love and care that Milly & Ervin Zeiset provided for Belle, now 8, over a period of five years. (Read "It's All About Abby" in the Fall 2016 issue of *Fostering Hope*, available on the Newsletters page at cobys.org. For privacy reasons we called Belle "Abby" in that article.)

When Belle suffered a traumatic

brain injury, the Zeisets welcomed their former foster daughter back into their lives and dedicated themselves to round-the-clock care, focused on helping Belle recover to the greatest extent possible.

After three-and-a-half years, last July Belle went to live with her new pre-adoptive family, Nicole & Jason Hartman, their three teenage birth children, and some additional foster children with special needs. (The Hartmans currently are a four-wheelchair family.) On April 18, Belle officially became a Hartman.

Adoption Day for Belle was special. "It was just such a fabulous day," says Nicole. "Just unity and family and finally permanency for Belle."

Sheriffs manning security marveled as people kept streaming into the tiny Union County Courthouse in Lewisburg for the adoption finalization. Among them were family members, friends, caseworkers and other professionals, two of Belle's siblings and their



COBYS foster mom Milly Zeiset and Belle Milly Hartman on Belle's April 18 adoption day. Belle's adoptive parents recognized the extraordinary love and care that Milly had shown by giving Belle a new middle name.

adoptive family, Milly, and others who had assisted in caring for Belle. The sheriffs later poked their heads into the building's single courtroom to see what all the fuss was about.

"I don't even know how many people were there," says Nicole, "but it was a ton." COBYS caseworker

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Mission Statement

Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS Family Services educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential.

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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.

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Plant and Water

I have four plants in my office. One is a fake tree in the corner that desperately needs to be dusted. One is a gift that Paul and Evy Brubaker gave me more than seven years ago when I became executive director. The other two are from our resident plant expert, controller Cindy Umberger.

I don't fancy myself as having a green thumb, yet somehow the live plants in my office are surviving. Not thriving, but surviving. My sole responsibility is watering the plants. I didn't plant them. I didn't purchase them. Sometimes I pick off some of the dead leaves but, more often than not, Cindy does that when she comes into my office. I water the plants. That's what I do.

But somebody planted them. Somebody cared for them until they were given to me. Somebody saw to it that they had the right mixture of soil, the right amount of water, the right amount of fertilizer, and the right amount of light to get them off to a good start.

For me, there is a clear relationship between the plants in my office and the children and families that we serve. Sometimes our work is frustrating. We don't always see the improvements in behaviors and actions that we desire. When it seems like we aren't getting anywhere—or even are going backwards—I think of some familiar words from 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

There was a division in the church at Corinth. Some members were loyal to Apollos while others thought Paul was more important. Paul addresses this issue by writing, "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

So our job is to plant like Paul and water like Apollos. Plant and water.
Our job is to love and care about those we serve. Plant and water.
Our job is to help those we serve get the help they need. Plant and water.
Our job is to be the voice for those who have no voice. Plant and water.
Our job is to believe in them when most of society doesn't. Plant and water.

When we don't see improvements? Plant and water.
When we are frustrated with the system? Plant and water.
When things seem hopeless? Plant and water.

If we keep planting and watering, we are being faithful to our calling. We won't always see the growth we want to see when we want to see it, but we plant and water. And we trust that God will see to the growth in his timing.

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director



(continued from page one)

Stacy Bashore-Steury, who supported Belle and the Zeisets during their years with COBYS, estimated the crowd at more than 30.

"Somebody made the comment that they had never seen so many people come there for an adoption," says COBYS foster care caseworker Allison Huber.

Excitement and emotion filled the room. Nicole had Belle decked out in a lavender dress and her hair fixed just right for the proceeding. Tears flowed at several points, but never more than when Belle's new name was announced.

Nicole had gotten the attorney's permission to announce the name herself as a special surprise for Milly, but when the time came, she struggled to speak.

"When it was time to say the name I couldn't get it out because I was crying so hard," Nicole recalls.

Milly, who was caring for one of Belle's siblings in the gallery, at first wasn't sure she had heard right.

"I think it was a little overwhelming for Milly," says Stacy, "since she didn't know it until it was said. Milly tends to put her hands over her mouth when she is surprised and she did that and the tears were coming down her face."

They then unveiled a sign made for the occasion proclaiming, "Belle Millie [sic] Hartman. I was in foster care for 2,118 days, but today I was adopted."

"When they had her up front and showed the sign everyone started crying," says Allison,



(Above) Adoptive parents Nicole & Jason have taken over primary responsibility for Belle's care, but expect Milly to stay involved. (Below from left) COBYS staff Allison Huber, Stacy Bashore-Steury, and Sheryl Bernot supported Belle and the Zeisets and worked to bring the Hartmans and Belle together.



"because people there knew Milly and all she had done for Belle."

Other than tears, Milly's initial reaction was to question whether Belle's new parents really wanted to name their daughter "Belle Milly," which some might consider an unusual combination. Then again, Milly showed Belle unusual love, so why not an unusual name? And at that point the deed was done.

Nicole says she will always consider Milly to be Belle's second mom and expects her to stay involved in their lives.

"We love Milly," she says. "She is just an amazing person. She is filled with nothing but love, and it just radiates from her."

With some distance separating them, the two families continue to stay in touch by phone and via Facebook.

As an expression of the commitment to ongoing involvement, Jason & Nicole checked the Zeisets' schedule before booking Belle's adoption party on Mother's Day at Knoebel's Amusement Resort. Ervin & Milly and four of Belle's former nurses were among the 70 or more well-wishers at the May 14 party.

And after having some time to reflect, Milly now couldn't be more pleased to have a namesake. "We love that little girl," she says, "and anything to stay connected to her. In my mind, if anyone asks why her name is 'Belle Milly' they can tell the story about the person who loved her very much and took care of her. . . ."

Fun Walk Weathers Showers, Raises \$11,000+



Participants in the 23rd annual COBYS Family Fun Walk walked in the sun . . . and in the rain. They ate ice cream . . . and drank hot chocolate. But at the end of the day 90 walkers at the May 7 event at Peter Becker Community in Harleysville had a good time and raised more than \$11,000 for COBYS ministries.

Despite cool, dreary weather for the second year in a row, attendance grew by 20 from the previous year. Income is expected to come short of 2016's record amount, which was boosted by a matching donor for the top fundraiser.

Top fundraisers this year were Joan Kabakjian, who raised \$1,330, and Donna Parcell, \$580. Two youth groups—Coventry and Quakertown Churches of the Brethren—earned a gym and pizza night by raising \$1,485 and \$1,020, respectively.

COBYS Director of Development Don Fitzkee parted with tradition and actually walked most of the route this year. Don had attended 14 previous Fun Walks without walking and decided to check out the route. "It was nice," he said, "but the rain did a number on my hair."

Executive Director Mark

(From left) The Oldham sisters sport COBYS t-shirts & temporary tattoos on their hands; top fundraisers Joan Kabakjian (right) and Donna Parcell; and enthusiasm at the walk's halfway point.

Cunningham kept intact his 20-year streak without walking.

A dozen businesses (see below) supported the event as sponsors or donors of prizes. Peter Becker

Community donated use of its facilities.

Additional photos from the event can be viewed in an album on the COBYS Facebook page.

Thanks to Our Fun Walk Sponsors



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Freddy's Family Fun Center

Grand Theater
Hatfield Quality Meats
Rick & Deb Houck
Rita's of Harleysville

Praise Dinner Giving to COBYS Tops \$27,000 for First Time

COBYS Family Services received gifts totaling \$27,061 from about 180 donors through the May 4 Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner, a record amount for COBYS through this event. The previous record was established in 1999, COBYS' first year participating in the event.

"We were thrilled with the level of support we received," said COBYS Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "We continue to be blessed through the Praise Dinner year after year."

COBYS has now received more than \$383,000 through the event since becoming a beneficiary.

All told, about 750 people attended the dinner at the Lebanon Expo Center, and total giving for the four ministries who benefit was more than \$114,000—the third best income figure ever, despite a somewhat lower than usual attendance due in part to a conflict with National Day of Prayer events.

Since being initiated in 1996 in response to a family tragedy, the dinner has generated more than \$1.83 million for six different ministries.

In addition to a meal, the program included an inspirational message from Dr. David Uth of First Baptist Church in Orlando, and the southern gospel harmonies of the Ball Brothers.

Underwriting the more than \$40,000 it takes to stage the event were The Wenger Foundation, Inc., along with Ambassador Advisors; Brightbill Body Works; the John & Judy Byler Charitable Foundation; Dutch Valley Food Distributors; Good's Disposal Service; Kline, Kreider & Good Auctioneers; Tom B. Morrissey TV & Appliance; Roger &



(Clockwise from left) Dr. David Uth preached an inspirational message; every table had a cake to celebrate Wenger Foundation founder Carl Wenger's 85th birthday a few weeks early; and the large crowd enjoyed the music of the Ball Brothers.



Carolyn North, North Group Consultants; Sight & Sound Ministries, Inc.; Bill & Nancy Smeltzer; Jim & JoAnne Speers; Gene Wenger's Meats & Fine Foods; and others.

Also benefitting from the event were Evangelical Seminary, Friendship Community, and On Fire Youth Ministries.

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Saylors Recognized for Three Decades of Service at Appreciation Dinner

COBYS Family Services recognized foster parents Dennis & Ann Saylor for three decades of service at its annual Resource Parent Appreciation Banquet, held May 1 at Casa di Fiori, The Inn at Leola Village.

About 125 COBYS foster and adoptive parents, staff, and board members enjoyed an elegant meal and entertainment by comedian Sandy Joy. The event is held in conjunction with National Foster Care Month.

The Saylors are COBYS' longest serving foster/adoptive resource parents ever, and have cared for 72 foster children, most of them pre-

schoolers. They are adoptive parents of one grown daughter.

In addition to the Saylors, eight other families were honored, including Donald & Sarah Beiler for 10 years.

Each family who attended had opportunity to win gift cards to family-friendly venues donated by 14 area businesses.

The décor and appreciation gifts given to each family attending were based on a starfish theme. Emcee Terrie Stauffer recounted the familiar story of the boy who was returning a few out of thousands of starfish stranded on a beach. When



Comedian Sandy Joy provided some light-hearted entertainment.

a scoffer questioned the difference the boy could make, he declared that he was making a difference to the one starfish that he held in his hand.

Similarly, said Stauffer, foster and adoptive families make a huge difference in the lives of the children they care for.

Currently COBYS has 95 approved resource families caring

for 75 foster children from Lancaster, Berks, and York Counties. COBYS has an ongoing need for new resource families. The first step to explore becoming a foster/adoptive family is attending a free semi-monthly informational meeting at the COBYS main office.

Upcoming orientations are scheduled for July 11 and August 1 and 15.

(Right, from left): Dennis & Ann Saylor and Sarah & Donald Beiler were recognized for 30 and 10 years of service, respectively. (Below, from left) Recognized for five years of service were Ron & Mary Olenhouse, Dave & Marj Stoddard, Scott & Vickie Byler, Chad & Nicole Hurst, Donny & Lorene Zimmerman, Brian & Angie Zimmerman, and Kevin & Genevieve Imbrogno (Kevin not pictured). Collectively, these families have provided foster care for more than 169 children, through fostering, adopting, and providing short-term respite care.



Bike & Hike Seeks to Extend Streak

The 21st annual COBYS Bike & Hike will be held Sunday afternoon, September 10, at the Lititz Church of the Brethren. The event includes a three-mile walk, 10- and 25-mile bicycle rides, and the 60-mile Dutch Country Motorcycle Ride, which this year will travel into scenic "Amish Country" in eastern Lancaster County. A silent auction runs throughout the afternoon.

The Bike & Hike is COBYS' signature fundraiser, having raised more than \$1.2 million since its inception, with income increasing for 18 consecutive years. Last year, fueled by the event's 20th anniversary and unusually generous business support, the Bike & Hike grossed \$133,556, a nearly \$15,000 increase over the previous year. Participation also was up to 509, reversing a two-year decline in attendance.

"With the huge surge in giving that we experienced last year, it will be tough to keep our growth streak going" said Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "But I've learned not to underestimate the generosity of our supporters."

Walkers and bicyclists donate a \$25 registration fee, obtain support from sponsors, or both. Motorcycles are \$35 per cycle, plus \$25 for an additional passenger. Those who pre-register by September 5 may take a \$5 discount. Individuals who raise \$25 or more in pledges do not need to pay the registration fee.

Each participant receives a free t-shirt (purple this year), ice cream and refreshments, and a chance to win a door prize. Those who raise certain levels of support earn additional prizes. Junior and senior high youth groups who raise \$1,500 or more earn a gym and pizza night.

A WJTL radio personality will provide live reports from the event.

Information will be mailed and posted on the News & Events page at

www.cobys.org by mid-July. Online registration will be available for the first time. To learn more, contact Don Fitzkee at 717-656-6580 or don@cobys.org.

How You Can Help

Here are some ways you can help this year's Bike & Hike be the best yet:

- Donate an item for the silent auction. Practical items, gift cards for food or experiences, and vacation home rentals are especially good sellers.
- Serve as a business sponsor.
- Encourage your church's youth group to participate.
- Walk or ride and invite others to sponsor you.
- Invite friends and family to walk or ride with you.
- If you are unable to attend, sponsor someone else or make a donation.

Donations of door prizes and auction items will be welcomed until the week of the event. To arrange pick up for a silent auction or door prize donation, contact Development Associate Nicole Hurst at 717-656-6580 or nhurst@cobys.org.



Whackin' & a Rollin,' Carl & Pam

Pamela Bedell and Carl Pennell teamed up to win \$1,000 for COBYS at the June 3 Whack & Roll Croquet Tournament at the Mennonite Heritage Center in



Harleysville. The event is a major fundraiser for the center, but 26 additional nonprofits participated and benefited. Pam & Carl took first place in the new novice division.

COBYS Executive Director Mark Cunningham and Director of Development Don Fitzkee didn't fare as well in the open division. Bauman's Fruit Butters and Cider gave the COBYS registration fee and Bergey's Automotive donated \$500 to each participating nonprofit.

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COBYS to Offer July 28 Opioids Training at Calvary Church

COBYS Family Services is hosting a training event on opioid use and response for social service professionals, educators, foster/adoptive parents, and others on Friday, July 28, from 9 to 11 a.m. at Calvary Church, 1051 Landis Valley Rd., Lancaster.

David Fialko will lead the session on "Understanding Opioids and Narcan Response." Fialko is an International Certified Prevention Specialist with the Council of Southeast Pennsylvania. According to its website, the Council provides resources and opportunities to reduce the impact of addiction,

trauma, and other related health issues by offering prevention, consultation, education, advocacy,



assessment, intervention, and recovery support services. Fialko has more than 14 years' experience working in the Drug & Alcohol and Mental Health fields as an adventure-based counselor, educator, intensive outpatient counselor, and

prevention specialist.

Training objectives include understanding opioids and how they are abused, along with resources for combatting the problem.

The cost to attend is \$10 per person, or free for all current and former foster/adoptive families. A printable flyer and online registration is available on the News & Events page at www.cobys.org. The registration deadline is July 20.

For more information, contact COBYS Director of Placement Services Mary Sourber at 717-656-6580 or mary@cobys.org.