

Adoption Landmark: *500th for COBYS, First for Anthony*

Anthony was unaware of the significance that his May 31 adoption held for COBYS Family Services. But he knew something about what it meant for him. After nearly three years in foster care, it was his special day to celebrate officially joining his five siblings as a member of the Austin & Cathy Ginder family. Many extended family members, friends, and COBYS staff were there to celebrate with him.

The fact that Anthony, now four, was the 500th child to be adopted through COBYS didn't make much difference to him, but becoming part of the Ginder family already has made a lasting difference.

"When you think about 500 children, that's a big number," says COBYS Adoption Supervisor Jen McDowell. "That's a significant number of lives that have been positively impacted. At the same time," she adds, "the 500th isn't any more important than the 17th or 25th. But I think this milestone shows our ongoing commitment."

Jen should know. Not only was she with COBYS for the 500th adoption this spring, as the first supervisor of the program she also was on hand for the first (and 17th and 25th, for that matter). After some time away to raise her family, Jen returned and has overseen dramatic growth for the program, which marks its 20th anniversary this year.

Of course, Anthony could care less about all that. What he does care about is that he has been welcomed

into a home with loving parents who are attentive to his needs and to those of his siblings, all of whom are under age 10.

Anthony's birth mother was in the child welfare system when he was born. He was placed in the already busy Ginder household in September 2015, soon after his first birthday. At that time he joined Ezekiel, six; Mila, four; Isaiah, two; and Anna, six months. Baby Lucas was born the following July, making a very full house! The Ginders adopted Ezekiel and Mila in May 2017.

Austin & Cathy were approved as COBYS resource parents in June 2014, and welcomed Ezekiel and Mila into their home that August. Then, after a number of possible placements that didn't materialize, the call for Anthony came, and they quickly had to prepare to add another young child to their family.

Then when Cathy became pregnant again several months later, it was time to get a bigger van and another house. Now the eight Ginders live in a modest three-bedroom row house in Lancaster City, with a boys' room, girl's room, and one for Austin & Cathy. It takes a lot of bunk beds to make it work.

Their ability to "go with the flow" is one trait that helps the Ginders to be effective parents.



Anthony (front left) and the rest of the Austin & Cathy Ginder family with Judge Hoberg. Anthony's adoption on May 31 was COBYS' 500th.

"They have a good balance of being laid back, but also have always been very on top of getting their kids the services they need," says adoption caseworker Mary Lambright, who has supported the Ginders in all three of their adoptions. "They are very good at just rolling with the punches."

Foster care caseworker Heather Martin often visited the family first thing in the morning before family

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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.

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

I Am a Child of God

Overall, I think I have a pretty great life. I am blessed!

I have a beautiful, talented, VERY understanding wife; three amazing, capable kids; a job that I believe makes a difference in the lives of numerous kids and families; and co-workers who regularly go above and beyond what is expected for the sake of those kids and families. I even have some friends that I really enjoy being with. Again, I realize I am blessed!

But even though all that sounds great, and most of the time it is, things aren't always great. Sometimes, I have a bad day, or week, or weeks. And it's during those times when things aren't going well that I have to have a talk with myself. And here is what I say:



- My wife is important. She makes me a much better version of my real self.
- My kids are important. They too make me a much better version of my real self. They inspire me.
- My job is important. I try to add value to the lives of those I work with, and by their extension, the lives of the kids and families we serve.
- My friends are important. Relaxing and laughing and enjoying my time with them brings balance into my life.

But none of those things defines me as a person. I am not defined by the fact that I am Mari's husband, or Jordan's, Aja's, and Alyssa's dad. Or by my job at COBYS. Or that I have friends.

The only thing that defines me as a person is that I am a child of God. Everything else is fleeting. Extraordinarily important to me now, but fleeting. So in those moments of uncertainty, those moments that are challenging, I rest in the fact that in the midst of all that is happening around me, I am defined by one thing, and one thing only: I am a child of God.

And I hope and pray that you know that you are a child of God, as well.

On the journey with you,

Mark

Former COBYS board president David Stauffer spurred these thoughts with a presentation he did some years ago. I thank and credit him.

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members went their separate ways. While Austin & Cathy were getting ready for work and school, preparing breakfast for six kids, and generally attending to the needs of their family, they also graciously provided Heather with the information she needed.

"They are really good at handling multiple conversations at one time!" says Heather.

Patience is another important quality that Heather highlights.

"Anthony's case was a lengthy one," she recalls, "and it was difficult because there were a lot of unanswered questions for a really long time. They were trusting that everything was going to happen that was supposed to happen."

At the same time, they didn't hesitate to ask questions and explore whether they could be doing more to move the case toward resolution.

From the start, the Ginders have been open to what God had in store. They didn't place limits on the kind of children they would care for and were open to fostering or adoption. "We felt that God was saying, 'Be open to whatever,'" says Cathy.

The Ginders are adventurous people, but they had a gut check moment at the beginning of their journey. Their first exposure to Ezekiel and Mila was a four-hour visit with lots of screaming.

"It was like four hours of crazy," Cathy recalls. "It was a lot to manage and we had no experience at all. Austin took them back and we sat down together at the table. We just stared at each other and ate ice cream."

"We were, like, 'Are we really going to do this?'" says Austin. "We perceived that this was going to be a very different life. It was like giving up on the 'normal.' So I feel like we accepted the hard option right from the beginning."

Compounding the challenges the Ginders faced was that they were fairly young and were having babies and fostering at the same time.

"We really didn't know how to parent yet," Cathy recalls. "So we were learning parenting skills in a normal situation mixed with parenting in trauma at the same time. The learning curve was very steep."

They managed to stay ahead of the curve and adjust each time their

family grew or changed. Along the way professionals affirmed that Cathy had a gift for understanding her children's needs and an ability to understand the reasons behind challenging behaviors, which made it a little easier to deal with the behaviors.

In the midst of caring for their children, Austin & Cathy also find

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Starting on the Next 500

After the 500th adoption became official at Lancaster County Courthouse on May 31, COBYS wasted no time getting to work on the next 500. Soon after the Ginders and their supporters exited, Donny & Lorene Zimmerman and 82 of their closest friends and family members entered for the adoption of two-year-old Dylan.

Dylan is the third son that the Zimmermans have adopted through COBYS. All three came into their home soon after birth. Now the growing family consists of Josiah, 6; Kade, 5; and Dylan, soon 3.



"My friend grew up in foster care," Lorene explains, "and her experience inspired me to do foster care. I feel that every child deserves a loving home."

"Foster care had always appealed to Lorene," adds Donny. "If this is your calling, don't hold back," he counsels. "Foster care may take a lot of your time, but can be very rewarding. I would recommend anyone that has interest to attend trainings and see what it's all about."

Donny & Lorene, who live near Fredericksburg, Lebanon County, did just that and were approved

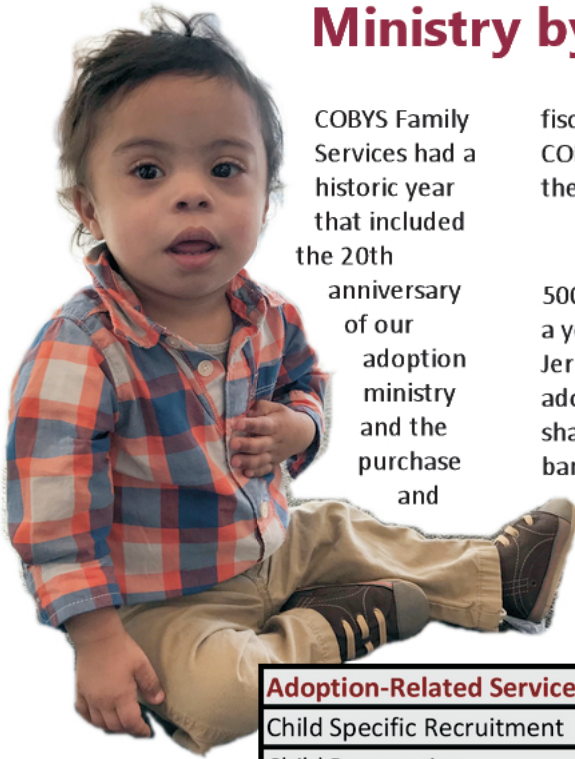
as COBYS resource parents in August 2012. Josiah joined their family almost immediately, and his adoption was finalized in August 2014. Next came Kade, adopted in 2015.

Building their family through foster care and adoption has presented some challenges for Donny & Lorene as they have learned to surrender control of their schedule to the needs of their boys. The many trainings, visits, hearings, and doctor appointments sometimes have been a stretch, but Donny & Lorene always have help. Donny is the youngest of seven children and Lorene has nine siblings.

"Our church and family are extremely supportive," emphasizes Lorene. "And COBYS has been so good to us. They have always supported us. I can't emphasize that enough."

Lorene says it also helps her to remember that her family is part of her life's mission. "Approach it with a mission mind," she says. "If you view it as helping children and families, you won't become so overwhelmed."

Ministry by the Numbers: 2017/18 Annual Report



COBYS Family Services had a historic year that included the 20th anniversary of our adoption ministry and the purchase and

fiscal year (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018), COBYS served children and families in these ways:

Adoption. COBYS finalized our 500th adoption in May in the midst of a year-long anniversary celebration. Jerraca Hernandez, the first child adopted through COBYS in 1998, shared her testimony at a spring banquet.

An affiliate of the Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN), the COBYS adoption program provides a variety of adoption-related

Adoption-Related Services	2016/17	2017/18
Child Specific Recruitment	11	18
Child Preparation	56	84
Child Profiles	78	104
Family Profiles	36	44
Adoption Finalizations	34	31
Post Adoption Services (# of families)	28	65

renovation of the \$1.1 million Murry Hill Center to make room for expanding programs and services. More than 60 volunteers donated nearly 700 hours of service in preparation for the move of foster care, adoption, and family life education staff into the 13,600-square-foot facility along Oregon Pike early in 2018.

Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS educates, supports, and

empowers children and adults to reach their full potential. We carry out this mission through adoption and foster care services, counseling, family life education, and more. COBYS employs 123 staff, including 55 full-time employees (up from 122 and 45 last year). During the past

services (see table). They include child specific recruitment to help locate adoptive homes for children, child preparation to ready children for transitions, child and family profiles to facilitate matching, finalizations, and post adoption support. While the number of adoptions finalized was

similar to the previous year, adoption-related services expanded rapidly, resulting in the addition of three new full-time staff positions.

Counseling. Seven part-time therapists provided 4,610 hours of therapy at three centers during the year, a 33 percent increase from the previous year! Clinical services are offered at the Oregon Counseling Center, the Palmyra Area Counseling Center, and at the COBYS Family Life Center in Lancaster. Therapists provided an additional 966 client contact hours in group settings through two grant-funded programs.

Five therapists were trained in Seeking Safety, an evidence-based small group therapy program to address both substance abuse and trauma—one way that COBYS is seeking to respond to the opioid crisis. This program utilizes both COBYS therapists and family life educators to serve clients from Lancaster County's treatment courts. COBYS is seeking additional licensed therapists to meet the demand for child/adolescent services.

Family Life Education. Along with implementing Seeking Safety, COBYS educators partnered with Ephrata and Hempfield School Districts to pilot a Truancy Diversion Program for the Lancaster District Attorney's office. During the year educators led 88 courses and 39 workshops, providing 1,483 classroom hours of instruction to 1,336 adults, youth, and children. In comparison, the previous year's totals were 101, 29, 1,533, and 1,289. Programs and workshops were provided at various locations in partnership with 38 schools, community organizations, and churches.



Foster Care. The foster care program provides temporary care for abused and neglected children. Again this year, the number of children served hit a new high, with foster care staff facilitating 32,636 days of care for 170 children, up from 27,049 days of care for 154 children. COBYS served 44 sibling groups, striving to preserve these enduring relationships by placing children together in the same home with one or more siblings. COBYS families also cared for 12 children with special medical needs such as prenatal drug addiction, vision difficulties, congenital defects, and Down Syndrome. Of the 82 children discharged from COBYS' care, 41 were reunified with parents or other relatives, 16 were adopted by their foster family, 22 moved to other placements, and 3 were discharged after fleeing.

COBYS approved 24 new foster/adoptive resource families, bringing the total number of families open with COBYS during the year to 116. Orientation sessions are offered twice each month for people interested in exploring foster care and adoption. COBYS then provides 27 hours of training—offered six times per year in daytime and evening formats—to those seeking approval as resource families.

Permanency Unit. In partnership with the Lancaster County



Children and Youth Agency, which funds the program, Permanency Unit staff seek safe, permanent homes for foster children; monitor the well-being of foster children and support foster parents; and assist birth parents to overcome the issues that led to their children's placement in care. Despite challenges posed by high staff turnover, the program served 155 children from 107 families, the same number of children as the previous year. A total of 21 children returned home to a parent or guardian, 21 were transferred to the adoption unit to gain permanency through adoption, and 9 others were released to caregivers through permanent legal custodianship. Three youth signed out of care after turning 18.

The 21 children transferred to the adoption unit was triple the number from the previous year. Staff first seek to reunify children with parents or relatives, but an increasing number of cases involving parents struggling with

drug addiction make reunification within the 15-22 months provided by state law more difficult.

Financial Support

The COBYS budget for the current year is more than \$5 million. Private giving (the focus of this report) accounts for nearly 15 percent of COBYS' income. Strong private giving helps offset challenges posed by inadequate public funding for some of our programs and services.

Giving to the general fund grew by a modest three percent over the previous year, the seventh consecutive year of growth following the recession, but the smallest percentage increase in recent years. The big story for 2017/18 was unprecedented bequest giving, which was timely in light of major spending on a new building.

Because of strong private giving in recent years, board and staff opted not to launch a Murry Hill Center campaign, but did send a low-key appeal letter, resulting in \$7,103 in "campaign" giving. (On the table below in previous years "campaign" refers to the Work for the Well-Being of the City campaign that focused primarily on the COBYS Family Life Center and education programming.) In Kind giving of goods and services was up sharply, due mostly to the donation of quality used furniture from Intermediate Unit 13 with a depreciated value of more than \$21,000.

We are grateful for strong support which enables us to continue to serve children and families in Christ's name and on the church's behalf!

A version of this report that includes a contributors list can be viewed on the Newsletter page at www.cobys.org.

Year-to-Date Private Giving Summary (Five-Year Comparison)					
	7/1/2013 - 6/30/2014	7/1/2014 - 6/30/2015	7/1/2015 - 6/30/2016	7/1/2016 - 6/30/2017	7/1/2017 - 6/30/2018
Bequests	\$31,912.67	\$228,988.26	\$106,448.86	\$1,003.29	\$700,422.95
Campaign	\$129,964.44	\$91,796.81	\$52,375.52	\$11,974.60	\$7,103.00
General	\$557,324.10	\$585,584.25	\$666,412.95	\$706,513.37	\$727,509.15
In Kind	\$23,799.80	\$23,778.85	\$28,900.28	\$24,440.91	\$48,066.87
Total	\$743,001.01	\$930,648.17	\$854,137.61	\$743,932.17	\$1,483,101.97

Dedicated: 200 Attend Murry Hill Center Open House



More than 200 guests stopped by COBYS Family Services open house events at Murry Hill Center on June 10 and 13, about a hundred each day. Located at 444 Murry Hill Circle in Lancaster, the 13,600-square-foot facility houses adoption, foster care, and family life education staff.

The open house events featured tours of the renovated facility, program displays, and staff presentations of services. In addition, a Sunday dedication service featured comments by Executive Director Mark Cunningham, a litany led by board Vice-President Wilbur Rohrer, and a prayer offered by Atlantic Northeast District Executive Pete Kontra. Board

President Fred Keller and Mark officially opened the building at a Wednesday ribbon cutting ceremony. Video of the dedication service and the text of Mark's speech can be accessed at <https://cobys.org/news-events/>.

COBYS purchased the building in January for \$1.1 million to help alleviate severe over-crowding at the main office in the historic mill at 1417 Oregon Road in Leola. Murry Hill Center is centrally-located between the main office and two COBYS facilities in downtown Lancaster. It is an additional location for COBYS; all other buildings are being retained. The main office continues to house administration and counseling staff.

(From left) Mark Cunningham and Fred Keller cut the ribbon held by executive staff Mary Sourber and Abby Keiser; Mark speaking at the Sunday dedication; and Wilbur Rohrer and Pete Kontra visit before participating in the dedication.

ExtraOrdinary Give Set

The 2018 edition of the Lancaster County Community Foundations' Extraordinary Give is shaping up to be the best ever, thanks to a "stretch fund" of at least half a million dollars to be divided among participating organizations.

COBYS will participate with more than 400 other nonprofits on Friday, November 16, in Lancaster County's largest day of giving. Over the past six years, this 24-hour online giving event has raised over \$31 million for more than 500 organizations, including \$7.1 million last year. During that same span COBYS has received \$289,000, including more than \$68,320 last year.

For the first time this year offline gifts (checks, stocks, securities) can be



Bike & Hike Targets 20-Year Growth Streak

It's not too late to participate in the 22nd annual COBYS Bike & Hike, to be held Sunday afternoon, September 9, at the Lititz Church of the Brethren. The event includes a three-mile walk, 10- and 25-mile bicycle rides, and the 65-mile Dutch Country Motorcycle Ride, which this year will travel along scenic country roads in northwestern Lancaster and Lebanon Counties. A silent auction runs throughout the afternoon. Pre-registration is not required.

The Bike & Hike is COBYS' signature fundraiser, having raised more than \$1.3 million for COBYS ministries since its inception. Last year, the event grossed \$136,669 and attracted more than 600 people. Participants included 306 walkers, 129 bicyclists, and 166 motorcyclists on 104 cycles, along with some additional friends who stopped in to visit and participate in the silent auction.



Bike & Hike income has grown for 19 consecutive years. Planners are seeking to make it 20, while also setting a new attendance record.

"We are off to a great start this year, with record business support already in the bank," said Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "Now we just need walkers, riders, and donors to get us the rest of the way."

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 receive a \$5 discount. New this year, participants can not only register online, but create a personalized fundraising page to invite support from friends.

Each participant receives a free t-shirt, 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.

For more information, including the brochure, sponsor sheets, and walk and ride routes, visit www.cobys.org/bike-and-hike or contact Development Associate Anne Stokes at 717-656-6580 or anne@cobys.org.

for November 16

THE EXTRATM ORDINARY GIVE



channeled through the ExtraOrdinary Give and are eligible for matching funds. Arrangements for such gifts must be made by the end of October, with a minimum donation of \$10,000 required. For the second year, businesses may give matching funds in

advance.

Otherwise, the logistics are the same as previous years. With credit card in hand, donors simply need to visit ExtraGive.org between 12:00 midnight and 11:59 p.m. on Friday, November 16, choose COBYS from the list of organizations, and give a donation of \$25 or more.

Every dollar donated will be stretched with at least \$500,000 from the Community Foundation, Rogers & Associates, the S. Dale High Family Foundation, and other community partners. The more COBYS donors give, the greater our portion of the stretch fund.

On top of the stretch, an additional \$50,000 will be awarded in prizes. During certain time periods, individual donations will be randomly selected. If a COBYS donor is chosen, the

foundation will add \$1,000 to that donation.

COBYS is seeking friends to give at the stroke of midnight to earn one of the \$1,000 Early Bird prizes offered to the first 10 organizations to reach 50 unique donors. COBYS has earned this prize each year so far.

COBYS again will team with Brethren Village to host a giving station at the Village's Chives American Grill from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Stop in to give and receive a treat. Additional events may be scheduled at other locations.

For more information, visit ExtraGive.org. To learn more about giving prior to the event and still earning a match, contact Development Associate Anne Stokes at anne@cobys.org or 717-656-6580.

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ways to take care of themselves. Austin runs a web-hosting business and Cathy does wedding photography on a very part-time basis. She is a longtime runner and more recently has taken up swimming with some triathlete friends. The physical activity and adult interaction give her a boost.

Austin enjoys long walks on city streets and going to the movies. Because finding childcare can be difficult, they do some of their de-stressing alone while their spouse takes care of the kids. At the end of long days, they sometimes unwind together with coffee (Austin) and chamomile tea with whole milk (Cathy). Austin tries to finish his coffee



Anthony was all smiles on adoption day with three COBYS caseworkers who supported him and his family. From left, Heather Martin, Jen Linder, and Mary Lambright.

before it gets cold, which doesn't always happen.

While she understands that the life they have chosen isn't for everybody, Cathy does challenge those wrestling with a call to care for kids not to give in to their fears.

"Fear is never a good reason to make a choice one way or another. You don't operate out of fear. If you are

already interested in [foster care or adoption], then there's a good chance from a Christian perspective that God might be saying you should step forward."

She came across a saying that she likes: "If God calls you to it, he'll see you through it."

Austin & Cathy have answered a call to care for three children who needed a safe and loving home. Thanks to many other families who, like the Ginders, also said yes, 497 other children have had an opportunity to make fresh starts.