



Missy Garman and her husband, Daryl, seek to pass the gift of a loving home to a new generation, just as Missy's adoptive parents did for her. From left, Daryl, Ava, Kloe (front), Kaylee, Cora, Missy, Jayden, and Aleah, pictured on adoption day in July.

When Missy & Daryl Garman learned that their three nieces were being placed into foster care, it didn't take them long to decide that Aleah, Kaylee, and Cora should come live with them.

After all, Missy's parents, Steve & Sherry Deitz, had done the same for Missy and her brother, Frank, adopting them through COBYS Family Services in May 2002. Her parents' love and commitment had helped to transform Missy's life. She was ready to pass on the gift.

"There's just been so much Steve and Sherry have done for Frank and me (and another adopted sister)," says Missy. "They gave all three of us a home when we had no one. The one thing we could always count on was the two of them. After they adopted us I had that

realization that I will never have to find another mom, never have to find another dad that's going to care for and love me as much as they did."

A short time later the Deitzes also adopted 13-year-old Christy, who was not biologically related. Missy, 12, and Frank, 11, joined Christy and the Deitzes' birth sons Tyler, 11, and Hunter, 10, and for a time another foster daughter to form a modern-day Brady Bunch.

Fast forward 14 years. Missy & her husband, Daryl, are on their way to attend a family wedding in October 2016, when they receive a phone call from Missy's older biological sister, Jessica, informing them that the Berks County Children & Youth Agency has

taken custody of her daughters. Five years Missy's senior, Jessica had decided not to be adopted and aged out of the foster care system when she turned 18.

Missy's life was taking a different path. Steve & Sherry were leaders in On Fire Youth Ministry, a Christian organization in Myerstown that sought to have a positive influence on students and their families. Through her involvement in On Fire and her church, Missy committed her life to Christ at age 14 and was baptized in the hot tub on the Deitz turkey farm. She soon became a junior leader at On Fire, sharing her faith with other youth.

A couple years later she also met Daryl through On Fire. ("I wasn't a fan of him when I first met him," Missy confesses, but that would change.) Daryl became a close friend of Missy's brother Hunter and spent a lot of time at the Deitzes, also benefitting from the family's positive Christian influence. Missy & Daryl eventually became a couple and married on October 24, 2009, when both were 19.

Missy always thought she would like to adopt and, even though Daryl had mixed feelings about kids, he was on the same page about adopting someday when their three biological children were a little older. But they hadn't planned on "someday" arriving quite so soon. And they certainly weren't figuring on doubling the size of their family overnight.

After taking a couple weeks to pray about it, Missy & Daryl agreed to become a kinship resource for Aleah, Kaylee, and Cora, and plunged into training required by Berks County. Daryl & Missy debate how long the training was. Missy says six weeks. Daryl thinks

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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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Honesty Is Not Always the Best Policy

I was walking on King Street between our two Lancaster offices recently when a little girl, who I guessed to be eight or nine years old, approached me. I greeted her by smiling a little and nodding. Really, it was more of an acknowledgment than an actual greeting. She evidently didn't appreciate it.

As we passed, she responded by saying, "What are you looking at, Big Head?" That took me back a bit. I was surprised that a young girl who I didn't know would have the audacity to speak to me in that way. To be clear, this was not a comment made under her breath. She said it loud and clear, fully intending for me to hear.

After considering her statement, I first of all had to credit the girl's keen powers of observation. You see, in fact, I do have a very large head. Finding hats that fit is challenging. My neck muscles are stronger than



most from holding my above average head. My head is so big, it keeps the rest of my body from getting tan. (Ok, that one I found on the Internet, but I thought it was a little humorous.) That the little girl sized up my head so quickly and accurately was really quite impressive. She spoke the truth.

Although she was being honest, what she said wasn't very nice. And that is why I am convinced that honesty is not always the best policy, even if integrity is one of our organizational core values. I like the adage: "All the things we say should be true, but not all true things should be said."

In Colossians 4:6, the Apostle Paul counseled, "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

The third chapter of James deals with the power of the words that we speak. The writer likens the tongue to a bit that guides a horse, a rudder that guides a ship, and a spark that ignites a fire. All of these are small things that carry a lot of weight. Like my neck.

The things we say to each other and about each other are important. Before we speak (or write or post or tweet), let's first of all make sure that what we are saying is true. And then let's ask whether it is charitable, helpful, and full of grace.

The Christmas card inserted in this newsletter encourages us, as followers of the Word who became flesh, to use our words to bring, peace, joy, and hope to a troubled world. That seems like sound advice, no matter the season and no matter the size of your head.

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director

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longer. In the end they agree that it was six weeks; it just felt longer to Daryl!

The girls joined the Garmans in spring 2017. Today the family is Daryl & Missy; Aleah, 12; Kaylee, 9; Cora, 3; and the Garmans' three birth children Jayden, 7; Kloe, 6; and Ava, 5.

While their initial commitment was to provide temporary foster care, they were not surprised to learn by fall 2017 that the girls would not return home. Missy & Daryl agreed to adopt, and COBYS was chosen to do the work.

COBYS Senior Adoption Caseworker Zoe Dutill came on the scene in October 2017, providing services to prepare the girls for adoption, completing a comprehensive family profile, and facilitating the finalization of the adoptions. The girls officially became Garmans on July 10, 2018.

The girls especially appreciated the adoption-themed books that Zoe read with them to help process the changes that they were experiencing. Aleah spoke of one that talked about a kangaroo caring for a sheep, with the message, "it doesn't matter if you are different."

Zoe gives high marks to Missy & Daryl for their commitment to their kids. Daryl is the first to admit that Missy does the lion's share of the work, but Zoe observes that the couple does a good job of working as a team and staying in touch during the work day.

"Melissa is a very invested mom," adds Zoe, "loves the kids, and prioritizes them over most everything. She took her own adoption experiences and has tried to make improvements over what she wishes could have happened when she was a child."

Missy agrees that her own experience informs her parenting decisions today. "There are so many things I'm trying to do the same as Steve and Sherry have done for me," she says. "But I'm also learning and doing things on my own."

Missy says that she always felt at home in her family. "I never once felt out of place. That's one thing I want the

girls to feel too."

Asked how the adoption felt to her, Aleah reflected, "It's a happy/sad thing," reflecting a sense of loss in separating from her birth parents, but joy in finding permanency with Missy & Daryl.

That sense of loss can be somewhat mitigated in kinship adoptions such as this one, says Zoe. Missy & Daryl had occasional contact with Jessica and were not strangers to the girls, which eased the transition. Kinship adoption also preserves family history, medical information, and other valuable ties.

Every other week Missy & Daryl

provide the opportunity for the girls to have a few minutes of carefully supervised phone contact with their birth mom, who the girls now refer to as their "aunt." Maybe someday greater contact will be appropriate, the Garmans say, but it is obvious that they wrestle with benefits and potential drawbacks of such interaction.

Though managing the schedule for six children is a huge challenge, Missy is committed to providing opportunities for her kids to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, which

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A Grateful Witness

*"Grandma looks different!"
"Is that Mommy?"
"Who are those other boys?"
Lots of giggles.*

Aleah, Kaylee, and Cora are gathered around the kitchen table with their mom (right), looking at a photo on the cover of the Fall 2002 issue of the COBYS *Fostering Hope* newsletter (below). They slowly come to realize that the family pictured is their own family. Grandma Sherry had a different hair color back then. And those other boys? That's Uncles Frank, Tyler, and Hunter, now grown men.

And, indeed, that is Mommy, Missy Garman. The photo was taken on her adoption day in May of that year. I know, because I took the photo at the Berks County Courthouse.

I had just joined COBYS' staff in January. The story of Missy & Frank's adoption was the first of many such stories I would tell in *Fostering Hope*, each one



inspiring (to me at least) in its own way.

By the time you are reading this I will have concluded nearly 17 years of service at COBYS, so the cover story in this issue is my final adoption account. And just like the first one, it features Missy. This time she is the adoptive mom, rather than the adopted daughter.

Even though writing a second generation adoption story makes me feel a little old, mostly it makes me feel grateful to have witnessed the difference that this one family—not to mention many similar families—have made and continue to make in the lives of God's children. —Don Fitzkee

Rain Dampens Bodies, but Not Spirit at Record-Setting Bike & Hike



Despite steady rain that cancelled portions of the 22nd annual COBYS Bike & Hike, Sunday, September 9, was a bright day for COBYS Family Services.

More than 200 supporters walked three miles through the streets of Lititz in a steady downpour. The route was revised to avoid a soggy Lititz Springs Park. Despite the weather, gross income is projected to exceed \$147,000 by the time all pledges are in, a jump of more than \$10,000 from last year's record.

"We knew the weather would impact attendance," said outgoing Director of Development Don Fitzkee, "but we weren't sure about income. We were thrilled that people gave so generously. It was a great day!"

The increase in income marked the 20th consecutive year of growth for COBYS' signature fundraiser. Since its inception, the Bike & Hike has raised more than \$1.4 million for COBYS ministries.

In addition to the walk, the event usually includes two bicycle rides and a motorcycle ride, all staged from the pavilion at the Lititz Church of the Brethren. The rides were cancelled due



to a flood advisory, and the event was moved indoors.

"We were really grateful that the church could accommodate us inside on short notice," said Fitzkee. "It made for a much more pleasant afternoon."

A number of would-be riders walked instead, or came to donate and pick up a t-shirt. In addition to 210 walkers, many others stopped in for fellowship, ice cream, or to bid on the Silent Auction that ran throughout the afternoon. Total attendance was estimated at 350, down from 601 people who walked or rode last year.

Taking the weather in stride, planners jokingly changed the event name to "COBYS Soak & Hike" and Fitzkee encouraged participants to "make memories" as they trudged through puddles.

Keith & Lisa Reinhart, owners of the Lampeter Café, cheered bedraggled walkers by setting up an impromptu coffee and hot chocolate station. (Someone suggested that serving hot drinks was an excuse to not have to walk in the rain, and Keith did not deny it.)

Contributing to the day's success was record business support. More than 100 businesses and others provided cash or in kind donations of auction items,



Photos from left: It wasn't so bad. You just had to dress for the weather; Top fundraisers Mari Cunningham, Londa Brandt, Floy Fitzkee, & Lucy de Perrot; It was a fine day for eating ice cream; The Reinhart family served up coffee and hot chocolate; Okay, it was kind of miserable outside; Well, no it wasn't so bad. You just had to dress for the weather!

door prizes, food, or supplies. Cash sponsorships from businesses exceeded the last year's amount by \$11,000 and the previous best by \$6,000. The auction generated \$4,921, nearly \$1,000 more than last year. Bringing top price at \$440 was a Philadelphia Eagles-themed cornhole game made by Craig Snyder and donated by Galen & Nancy Shenk.

Mari Cunningham established a new individual fundraising record with total pledges of \$12,525. Other top fundraisers were Floy Fitzkee, \$6,685; Londa Brandt, \$5,810; and Lucy de Perrot, \$3,900.

Four Church of the Brethren youth groups earned gym and pizza nights by raising at least \$1,500. They were: Little Swatara, \$10,462; Mohrsville, \$5,031; Mountville, \$1,972; and West Green Tree, \$1,556.





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COBYS Helps Adoptees to Know Their Story

The coming of age of the COBYS adoption program—now nearing the end of its 20th year—along with some new state legislation, is creating demand from adoptees and their families for information about blood relatives. And COBYS is responding.

“Some of our first adoptions are just now reaching an age at which they want and are allowed to conduct searches for information on relatives,” explains COBYS Senior Adoption Caseworker Ashley Bankert. “We’ve seen a steady increase in inquiries over the past couple years.”

The legislation is two related state laws that make it easier for adoptees and their families to access birth family information. Passed in 2010, Act 101 opened previously sealed adoption records to adoptees, and the related

Act 127, approved in November 2017, made available noncertified copies of an adoptee’s original birth certificate.

“This act, and all the chatter it caused, has caused an increase in adoptive parties looking for information,” says Ashley, who serves as COBYS’ certified Act 101 representative.

As part of the various post permanency services that COBYS offers to families after they adopt, COBYS now helps eligible individuals and families to obtain information about birth families, but only if the adoption was finalized by COBYS.

“So if adoptive parents have a child asking questions that they just don’t have answers to,” explains Ashley, “we can help them try to find that information.”

Examples include details about the adoption, family history, current whereabouts of relatives, and more. If both parties agree, COBYS can serve as an intermediary to exchange communication, or even mediate direct contact.

“The biggest plus is that adoptees deserve to know their story,” says Ashley. “Beyond that, they can also access information that may be beneficial for their well-being, like their birth family’s medical history.”

Ashley acknowledges that revisiting painful chapters in life also can be traumatic for adoptees. “In training for this role, we are taught to approach each situation slowly and cautiously,” she says, “and use discretion in moving forward at each phase.”

Stokes Named Director of Development

Anne (Wessell) Stokes began November 5 as COBYS Family Services Director of Development.

Anne has served as COBYS Development Associate since January and previously served in fundraising, event planning, and grant administration positions with the Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania and United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in Communications from Loyola University Maryland and a Master’s in Nonprofit Management from Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies. Anne grew up in the Spring Creek Church of the Brethren in Hershey, completed a summer internship with Brethren Housing Association in 2009, and served for a year through Brethren Volunteer Service, coordinating children’s ministries and communi-



cation for the Cincinnati Church of the Brethren.

In her previous role with COBYS, Anne

managed the donor system, took a lead role in event planning, and assisted with donor cultivation and development. As Director, Anne will carry primary responsibility for fundraising and communication functions, oversee the Communications and Development Manager, and serve as a member of the five-member Executive Team.

Anne, husband Tim, their two-year-old son, and two dogs live near Pottstown.



Thank You! To help celebrate the 20th anniversary of the COBYS adoption program, organizers of the October 5-6 Church of the Brethren Atlantic Northeast District Conference at Elizabethtown College designated COBYS to receive the offering from the Friday evening worship service and encouraged conference-goers to bring items for the COBYS Kids Closet. The result? A cash offering of \$1,400 and a huge pile of items (pictured) to benefit foster children in our care.

\$150,000 Grant to Fund Trauma Therapy Training

COBYS Family Services has received a nearly \$150,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to train therapists in an evidence-based treatment for trauma.

COBYS will spearhead training of 28 therapists from across Lancaster County—including six COBYS therapists—in Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. Director of Family Life Services Abby Keiser and therapist Amy Wittmaier will coordinate the project.

The training of therapists throughout Lancaster County “will allow these specialized services to be offered in every community,” says Keiser. She will participate in Lancaster Mental Health Court treatment team meetings to help connect people who have experienced trauma with service providers who receive training through the grant. The primary target group is adults who have unresolved trauma from earlier in life. Victims of crime are another group that will benefit.

According to the Trauma Institute & Child Trauma Institute (TICTI) website (www.childtrauma.com/treatment/emdr/), EMDR is used to treat trauma-related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, and post-traumatic reactions. The therapist

guides the client in concentrating on a troubling memory or emotion while moving the eyes rapidly back and forth by visually following the therapist’s fingers. This rapid eye movement, which occurs naturally during dreaming, seems to speed the client’s movement through the healing process.

According to the institute, “EMDR is now one of the most well-researched psychotherapy treatments for trauma and . . . has been found to be the most effective and efficient of the well-established trauma treatments.”

Not only is EMDR proven effective, says Keiser, but it has the added benefit of being a relatively short-term

treatment method, often resolving issues within 10 to 14 sessions.

EMDR was pioneered by Dr. Ricky Greenwald, who now is Executive Director and Clinical Director of TICTI. Greenwald will provide 7.5 days of training for participating therapists over the course of the one-year grant period. The first training will take place January 15-16 at the COBYS Family Life Center in Lancaster.

An added benefit of the training, says Keiser, is that it will promote collaboration among the behavioral healthcare providers who receive the training. Participants in the training represent 10 different provider agencies.

Active Second Grader Needs Committed Home

“Alex” is a bright, kind, eight-year-old boy who enjoys playing board games and video games. He likes to color, listen to music, read, and watch TV, with special interest in cars and superheroes. Alex enjoys being active and spending time in the community, whether it be running errands or playing at the park. Some of Alex’s favorite foods are peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, pizza, chicken nuggets, and French fries. Alex is described as sweet, well-mannered, talkative, happy, caring, and humorous. He is currently in second grade and performs very well academically.



Alex will thrive in a home that is active, committed, and able to provide boundaries and structure. He will do best in a home where he is the only or youngest child so he can have lots of love and attention.

It would be best if there were no animals in the home. A family that is experienced with children who have special needs would be best. A permanent family must be willing to cooperate with outside services to help Alex meet his full potential. He currently has visitation with his younger brother, and a permanent family must be willing to continue this connection.

Because Alex is not yet legally free for adoption, we are not able to use his real name and have superimposed a mask over his eyes. The county has enacted steps to terminate parental rights.

Approximately 2,500 Pennsylvania children are waiting for adoption. While some of these children will be adopted by their current foster parents, many others are legally free for adoption but do not have an identified permanent home. COBYS adoption staff seek homes for such children through a service called Child Specific Recruitment. To learn more about Alex, please contact Kayla Ditzler at 717-656-6580 or kayla@cobys.org.

Important 2019 Dates

Please save these dates for the coming year!

March 14: COBYS Banquet, Middle Creek COB (March 15 weather date)

April 16: Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner, Lebanon Valley Expo

May 5: Family Fun Walk, Peter Becker Community, Harleysville

September 8: Bike & Hike, Lititz COB

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she feels like she may have missed out on in her youth.

Sherry takes obvious pride in the strong mother that her daughter has become. "We taught her how to have a mom and dad who take care of you," says Sherry. "And now Missy is going to do the exact same thing for these children that I did for Missy & Frank, and that (negative) cycle is going to end."

Missy agrees that that's their goal. She adds, "We always say we can't do this without each other. But we also can't do this without God. If he wasn't our center and our focus, then this would be impossible to do. I tell people all the time that his love and grace on me is enabling me to do this."

In addition to God, they have some



How many faces from this recent Deitz family photo can you match with faces in the 2002 photo on page three?

pretty good people in their corner. Not only can they draw on Steve & Sherry's experience and support, but other extended family members have adopted. In addition, they also have a strong support network of other adoptive

families at their church, The Fireplace Christian Fellowship, an affiliate of D.O.V.E. Christian Fellowship International.

They also appreciated Zoe's expertise and support. "She was there for every step of the process," Missy recalls, clearly explaining what would come next.

And once the adoption was finalized, COBYS provided monogrammed backpacks to each girl, which they love, says Missy. Aleah and Kaylee proudly wear theirs to school each day. Cora could almost fit inside hers, Daryl exaggerates, but they expect her to grow into it.

Similarly, Missy & Daryl are growing into their role as parents of six children. They are passing on a gift that Steve & Sherry first gave to 12-year-old Missy and her brother, Frank, many years ago. It's a gift that keeps on giving.