

CHILD SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT One Child at a Time

Treating each child as our one child is the focus of the attentive care we strive to provide at COBYS Family Services. This specific attention is very evident in the Child Specific Recruitment (CSR) services we provide through the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). CSR is used to find a permanent resource, a family or other connections for a specific child or sibling group in foster care. CSR is a non-emergency service for children who have been placed in foster care, but do not yet have an identified permanent resource. There can be many reasons a child is referred for CSR services, but often it occurs with older children, the desire for a sibling group to stay together or a range of medical and behavioral needs. The permanency goal for children served by CSR could be adoption or

permanent legal custodianship, or even adults who provide an ongoing supportive relationship.

COBYS caseworker Kayla Ressler begins providing CSR services by gathering a complete profile of the child. She consults with all the adults who are currently supporting the child, including additional caseworkers, therapists, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and current resource parents. Over a period of time, usually a minimum of six months, but often lasting much longer, she will meet with the child on a monthly basis, engaging with him/her in an age-appropriate manner. She will promote the child and his/her needs in many different ways, including through the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE), where approved families are able to view profile of waiting children. Caseworkers at other SWAN affiliate

"It is important to consider their needs, but also be open to who they are and who they could become with the right family and the right support."

agencies across the state, like COBYS, also use matching events that are held throughout the region. Kayla becomes the child's personal recruiter, looking for a family for him/her.

When potential family and child matches are identified, their profiles are reviewed. If there is agreement among care providers about potential suitability, an interview with the family is arranged. Kayla often recommends that more than one family is interviewed because, "it is our due diligence to interview all the families to determine the best fit. We are thinking about the child's entire future and they deserve that consideration." If the interview process goes well, then a visit between the family and child will be scheduled and often might include something fun like bowling or mini golf to help ease any awkwardness and stress. Successive visits of varying types including home and overnight stays can follow over a longer period of time, with every effort being made to ensure that a family will be the best match for the child. As Kayla notes, "We are thinking in terms of permanency and forever for this family and child, so we do not want to rush anyone."

Last year, 19 children were provided CSR services. These children can have cases at varying stages. Some are legally ready for adoption, while others are not yet at that stage, but could be in the future.

Child Profile: Melody

Melody is a typical 14-year-old girl who enjoys spending time with her friends, listening to music, drawing and playing basketball. She also likes to read, sing and play video games. In her free time, you might find her shopping, catching a movie, hiking, swimming or enjoying a bite to eat. Her favorite foods are cheeseburgers, spaghetti, chicken parmesan and salad.

Melody describes herself as shy at first, but once she is given time to warm up, she loves to talk! Others describe her as friendly, social, resilient, respectful and responsible. She is an excellent student and has a history of being on the honor roll! She dreams of being a veterinarian or doctor someday.

Melody has been residing in a group home since her placement into care in 2017. She is not legally free for adoption, however the County is looking for a family willing to provide her with permanency.



2020

Celebrating 40 years

Part 1: The 80s—Humble Beginnings

How did COBYS come to focus on serving one child at a time, one family at a time, one interaction at a time, with compassion, dignity and transformative hope? Because at its core, that's how it started.

The seeds for COBYS were planted in 1972, when two congregations brought similar requests to a District Conference of the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren about how the church might best meet the needs of youth and families. A committee was formed to determine how to respond to the churches' concerns, and after years of discussion and exploring options, the district decided to form a teen foster care agency. In 1980, Church of the Brethren Youth Services (COBYS), opened its doors in the newly built Hempfield Church of the Brethren. COBYS placed its first foster child with a family in the spring of 1980.

In late 1980, COBYS was approved by the state Department of Welfare, qualifying for public funds, and therefore, the ability to serve many more children, reimburse foster parents for their service, and provide medical and dental care for children. Today, all of the children in COBYS' care are referred by County Children and Youth Agencies in Lancaster and the surrounding counties.

Starting a new agency wasn't easy, and finances were tight in the early years. Over time, the ministries and support base grew, and COBYS began adding new programs and services, all aimed at helping children and families succeed. By the mid-1980s, individual and family therapy along with parenting classes were added. These ministries matured into today's Counseling and Family Life Education programs.

COBYS first decade started as a slow, cautious, methodical movement and ended with momentum building as new programs were created and existing programs were expanded. All decisions and changes were implemented with the goal of caring for and nurturing one child at a time, one family at a time.



40 Years
compassion
dignity
hope



Early Staff



Resource Families



Group Home



COBYS Offices

The 80s



In each issue of Fostering Hope in 2020 we will highlight milestones from one of the decades of our 40-year history. Next issue: Part 2: The 90s.

One Child

continued from page 1.

For Kayla, the most important thing to focus on is the potential of each child. Kids might "have challenging behaviors, are teenagers, have medical needs, or they may have lots of siblings, but they are more than that...It is important to consider their needs, but also be open to who they are and who they could become with the right family and the right support." COBYS is one of many agencies that provides CSR services. For Kayla, what is important about our service delivery is that, "we care deeply about our kids. We are willing to spend the time and energy on these kids and advocate for what is best for them. We are thorough and unwilling to give up until we find what we are looking for."

Child Profile: Nate

Nate is a teenager who was receiving child preparation services from caseworker Kayla Ressler when he needed to move from his current placement.



Kayla then began providing CSR services and after a few months he was matched with a single father who lives not far from Nate's community of origin. After he moved to this home, Kayla continued working with Nate and she was able to see the bond, with playful banter, that quickly grew between Nate and his foster father. Nate is the only child in the home and is receiving the time, attention and support that he needs.

We are happy to say that Nate's foster father is currently working on the adoption finalization process and there should be a date for finalization of the adoption in the next few months.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION Seeking Safety

Seeking Safety is an evidence-based group therapy program that focuses on coping skills in the present moment. The course may be mandated by the courts, recommended by a caseworker or participants may self-enroll.

Many people affected by trauma may turn to addictive behaviors to try to manage difficult feelings. Seeking Safety discusses tools to help them manage these symptoms and to cope effectively.

This program helps people learn to navigate triggers and successfully build a life of safety, security and well-being.

People do not share stories of their traumas, but instead look towards the future by practicing new ways to cope safely. The program and therapy are based on the present – where people are right now – not history-focused.

Sessions typically begin by reviewing the coping tools discussed in the previous class and participants providing a brief update. Then the main topic is introduced and discussed. Tools and techniques are presented. The sessions end with each participant setting goals for using newly learned processes.

Topics include: safety, stress and trauma, healing from anger, grounding, when substances control you, recovery thinking, community resources, healthy relationships, and boundaries.

Seeking Safety is an open-enrollment group. Participants may join the group at any point and receive a certificate after participating in 10 complete sessions. Two groups are offered: a women's only group and a group for both men and women. To learn more or to register, please visit cobys.org/family-support/programs-offered.

Women Only Group - Wednesdays
Murry Hill Center, Lancaster, PA

Open Session - Thursdays
Water Street Mission, Lancaster, PA



The Faces of COBYS

How do you describe COBYS to people you meet?

Leonida Gonzalez, Admin. Assistant, Permanency Unit



COBYS Staff are a group of people that are genuine. We see the people we work with just as that: people. People who are struggling, be it drugs, homelessness, mental health, etc. We understand that we are here to help them succeed and assure that the end result is in the best interest of the children we work with.

What does working at COBYS mean to you?

Holly Hardin, Supervisor, Family Life Education



I feel blessed to have the opportunity to serve others in such a meaningful way. Strengthening relationships between parents and their children can positively impact their family for generations – I have no doubt that our work matters.

THE EXTRA ORDINARY GIVE



310 donors contributed to COBYS in the 2019 ExtraGive!

Because people like you support COBYS,

we are able provide care that goes beyond the basics. The generosity of so many donors during the ExtraGive was truly extraordinary.

COBYS, along with over 500 other non-profits, will also receive a portion of the more than half a million dollar stretch pool sponsored by Lancaster County Community Foundation and others.

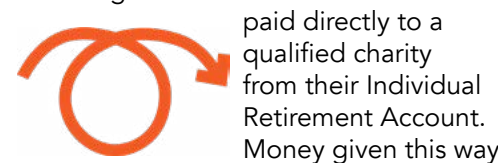
We exceeded our goal of \$65,000!

COBYS received over \$67,600 through the ExtraGive portal

Many Ways to Give

Choosing a way to invest in the work of your favorite charity, like COBYS, is personal. There is no one size fits all. Some options may make sense for you but not for other donors. Planning is key. Here are just some of the ways, beyond a straight financial gift, you might consider using to support COBYS.

IRA Rollover: Individuals age 70½ or over can exclude up to \$100,000 from gross income with donations paid directly to a qualified charity from their Individual Retirement Account.



Money given this way can be used to meet the donor's required minimum distribution, doesn't count as income, and does qualify as a charitable deduction.

Stocks: Giving stocks that have appreciated affords you savings in two ways: You can avoid paying capital gains tax on the increased value of your stock and also receive an income tax deduction for the full fair market value of the donated stock. COBYS has a TD Ameritrade account to facilitate the donation of stock to use as a charitable gift.



Donor Advised Fund: Contribute funds and assets of various types through this financial vehicle

and realize an immediate tax benefit. You can then easily make recommended donations to charities at times of your choice throughout the year.

Bequest: Include COBYS as a charitable beneficiary in your will and estate plans. In doing so, you are paying forward your life's material blessings and strengthening COBYS for the future.



Employer Matching Gifts:

Many corporate employers match charitable contributions by their employees. Have you checked whether your employer has a matching gift program? Why not double your gift?



Life Insurance: If you have a life insurance policy that is no longer needed, it could be given to COBYS as a gift. Name COBYS Family Services as the owner and beneficiary of the policy and receive a charitable deduction. If the policy has cash value, you may take a deduction approximately equal to the cash value of the policy. If you continue to make premium payments after the gift to COBYS, those premium payments are tax deductible each year.



Vehicles: If you have a vehicle you no longer need, avoid the hassle of selling it by donating it to COBYS. We work with a local auto dealer to resell donated vehicles, and COBYS utilizes the income to fund our ministries. You receive a charitable deduction equal to the gross proceeds from the sale.



To discuss supporting COBYS in these ways, contact Director of Development Anne Stokes at 717-656-6580. Please contact your financial advisor or attorney for information about your specific situation, and further details about each option.



COBYS Family Services
1417 Oregon Road
Leola, PA 17540

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*Celebrating
40 years*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



*40
Years*

compassion
dignity
hope

You're Invited

Help us celebrate 40 years!

Join us for our annual banquet of good food and fellowship. We plan to reminisce a bit, (okay, maybe more than a bit), celebrate where we are today and look to the future for COBYS.

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Noon & 6:30 p.m.

(Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.)

Middle Creek Church of the Brethren

351 Middle Creek Road, Lititz