



Fostering Hope

Winter 2021

Volume 31, Number 1

Serving Others:

On Becoming a Resource Parent

“Congratulations, you have been approved as resource parents by COBYS Family Services.” These are encouraging words for the individuals, couples and families who choose to foster and adopt children through COBYS. But what does it really mean to be ‘approved’ and what will it take to be a successful resource family? The answer, many months of intensive screening and training and a whole lot of heart.

Anyone age twenty-one and up is eligible to be a resource parent. While many resource parents are in their late twenties and thirties, COBYS is pleased to also have parents who are older, some with older children or they are empty nesters. These experienced parents are often more comfortable having older children and/or sibling groups, two of the greatest needs, or children with trauma-related behaviors, placed in their home. The journey for hopeful resource parents to be approved, which generally takes at least six months, starts with a call or email to Senior Resource Home Coordinator Karen Rice. After

The process is long, uncomfortable and it is totally worth it.

Steps to Approval as a Resource Parent

1. Inquire with COBYS
2. Attend an Orientation Session
3. Complete the Resource Parent Application
4. Attend Pre-Service Training
5. Complete Home Safety Check
6. Complete any recommended therapy or meetings

expressing interest in fostering children, the first step is to attend an orientation session that covers the basics of the whole process. After that, it is on to the application.

The application to be resource parents covers everything from income history and personal references to medical and family history. People do not have to be wealthy to welcome children into their home, just financially stable. COBYS dives deep into personal background, because as a foster care agency entrusted with the safety of children, we want children to be placed in homes that are healthy and can remain so throughout the foster and adoption process. To this end, potential resource parents may be asked to attend therapy or receive other services, prior to any placements. According to Karen Rice, “what makes the most successful resource parents is openness to healing a family, being focused on the child’s need not their own needs, a good support system and a servant heart.”

During the approval process, resource parents specify the characteristics, such as age and gender, of children they want placed in their home. COBYS staff members encourage resource

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LEFT: Chris and Leah Blose in a group hug with their two adopted children, Nevaeh and Wilbur. The kids were adopted in September after 1,568 days (more than four years!) in foster care.



Right: Eileen Thorsen, Bryan Dixon, and their children. Bryan and Eileen became resource parents in 2018. Alaysia and A'Marie were adopted in October 2020.

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

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What's New, and What's Not



I'd like to share a few things that have happened at COBYS recently:

A COBYS resource family received one on one consultations (through Zoom) to help them gain skills with specific challenging behaviors of children they were fostering. They decided to proceed with adoption for their two foster children due to the resources provided by COBYS. They said, "We are shocked with the amount of support we receive through COBYS. We know we have so much to learn but we are in this for the long haul." COBYS provides one-on-one consultations with other families as needed.

A young mother found a parenting class so helpful to her family that she even attended a session from the delivery room! So now, you can truly say that COBYS delivers! (And so did she!)

One of our resource families recently walked with their foster child as he learned that his birth mother died. The resource family had a wonderful connection to birth mom including picking her up to take her to baseball games with them since her son was playing. That bond allowed them to be able to connect in his grief and the family was with him at the funeral along with their COBYS caseworker.

The end of 2020 closed out COBYS fourth decade of services. We celebrated our 40 years of service at the banquet in March as well as in the past four newsletters. Above are a few, new short stories of what COBYS has done in the past months. I could have looked back and shared a number of other stories, as we have provided services for more than 61,564 people since our inception.

While we enjoyed looking back over the past 40 years, that isn't where our focus is. Our focus is on the next child that needs us to make sure they get the services they need, the next family that family that needs our support and compassion. That's not new. Motivated by our Christian faith, COBYS is committed to continuing our excellent service into the next decade. We hope you will go on the journey with us!

Mark Cunningham,
 Executive Director



COBYS
 Core Values:
LIFTS

Life is Sacred
LIFTS
 Integrity
 Faith
 Teamwork
 Servanthood

COBYS Board of Director News

COBYS Family Services is happy to introduce two new members to our 2021 Board of Directors.



Ken Craul

Ken is a graduate of Lampeter-Strasburg High School and a current resident of East Lampeter along with his wife, Nancy. He has had a career in the building and contracting industry, currently working as the Operations Manager for Dutch Family Services. He is a member of Willow Street Mennonite Church where he has served on its board, as a trustee and usher. He currently serves on the Lampeter Strasburg Homes of Hope Committee and as a Homes of Hope Mentor for families in the Homes of Hope program. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his three grown daughters and their families, including three grandchildren. He also enjoys golfing, playing softball and riding motorcycle.

"There are several families at our church who currently have foster and adopted children through COBYS. Seeing the impact that stable family units can make in the lives of children who have faced adversity of all types is great to see. I have also been able to interact with several of these children and have witnessed the joy that they have from loving parents that are able to care and provide for them. I believe having the opportunity to serve and provide oversight to an organization who provides these opportunities will be a tremendous experience, very rewarding as well as humbling."



Mark W. Anderson

Mark is a graduate of J.P. McCaskey High School and a lifelong resident of Lancaster County. He graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), with a degree in Printing Management. He currently lives in Manheim Township and is a single father of three grown sons. Previously, he served on the Manheim Township School Board for twelve years. Currently, Mark works for the Derry Township School District in Hershey as its Facilities Director and is an active member of Highland Presbyterian Church. At church, he has served as an Elder and assists with audiovisual needs for services.

What excites Mark about becoming a COBYS Board member is, "The opportunity to be a part of an organization that helps and supports families that are experiencing difficulties and help children that are in challenging or dangerous situations largely at no fault of their own."

COBYS wishes to extend our sincere thanks to all our Board of Directors for generously giving their time and talent to help guide and direct COBYS ministries. A special thanks to Ken Leaman, Wilbur Rohrer, Suzanne Schaudel and Bob Wintsch who concluded their service at the end of 2020.

The Faces of COBYS

Which of the COBYS core values (LIFTS) do you personally value most?

Beth Ressler,
 FLE Educator

Servanthood is probably most valuable to me; as Christ provides opportunities always along with the resources, I love to serve!



What's something cool about your department that you'd like people to know?

Melanie Rankin,
 Adoption Coordinator

Even though we are titled the "Adoption" Unit, that really is just one part of what we do. We work with families and children at all different places in their journeys. The adoption unit educates, supports, and empower all kinds of families at all different places in their journeys, and I think that is pretty cool!



Over the past months, what is one thing about working at COBYS for which you have been especially grateful?

Jackeline Velez,
 Permanency Admin. Assistant

Everyone at COBYS has been very helpful during these troubling times. COBYS staff have been very helpful when it comes to covering office phones and completing office duties for clerical staff.



ExtraOrdinary Give 2020 Extraordinarily Grateful

Thank you.

Thank you for helping COBYS Family Services provide compassionate care to children and families at risk by contributing to us during the Lancaster County Community Foundation's Extraordinary Give on Friday, November 20, 2020

Over \$85,000 was donated to COBYS, going far beyond our goal for the day. We are humbled by the support and are so grateful for such confidence in our mission to educate, support and empower children and adults at risk in our community.



COBYS participated with more than 500 other nonprofits in Lancaster County's largest day of giving. This year over \$13.4 million was donated. Every dollar donated will be stretched with more than \$500,000 from the Community Foundation, Rodgers & Associates, The S. Dale High Family Foundation, and other community partners. The stretch fund is distributed proportionally to the amount each organization raises.

We thank our friends who gave at the stroke of midnight to help us once again earn one of the \$500 Early Bird prizes offered to the first 20 organizations to reach 50 "unique donors."

This year COBYS again joined our partners at Brethren Village to host giving stations in the lobby at the Wolfe Auditorium and in the Game Room at Fieldcrest.

To learn more about the Extraordinary Give visit ExtraGive.org. If you have any questions about how you can participate in 2021, please contact Anne Stokes at 717-656-6580, ext. 101, or anne@cobys.org.

COBYS employees took part in the ExtraGive cast project with short videos about why they give extra for COBYS.



Resource Parents

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parents to be as broad as possible with their wishes, since the children needing care quite often do not match predetermined preferences. Families might initially prefer to foster only one young toddler, but who really needs their care is a sibling group of three preteen boys. The often-used phrase, *if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans*, is certainly true when it comes to foster children. Foster care requires resource parents willing to step out of their comfort zone, to know as Rice says, "you are in this to serve others, not for your own glory."

Characteristics of Successful Resource Parents and Adoptive Families

1. Tolerance for Ambivalent Feelings
2. Firm & Authoritative Qualities
3. Flexible Expectations
4. Ability to Delay Parental Gratification
5. Sense of Humor
6. Ability to Meet Personal Needs
7. Ability to Use Resources
8. Know Their Own Family
9. Honor Child's Heritage
10. Faith

Hearing, "congratulations, you have been approved as resource parents," might be the end of a months-long approval process, but it is really just the beginning of a journey. Karen Rice is realistic with those who want to foster and adopt. She tells them, "Your heart is going to be broken, but there is a child and a family that needs someone to jump in and be willing to go through the process with them. It is long, uncomfortable and it is totally worth it."

Connections Banquet



You're invited to connect with us.

Executive Director Mark Cunningham and Director of Development Anne Stokes invite you to join us for our **Annual (first ever virtual) Fundraising Banquet**, with good food (if someone in your household is a good cook) and fellowship (delivered electronically).

Even virtually, we hope to strengthen the connections you have with COBYS.

**Thursday, 6:30 p.m.
March 11, 2021**
cobys.org/banquet2021

Details on the next page →

Can't go a year without Gene Wenger's Ham Loaf? We've got a connection for that too!

Make a Banquet "Reservation" to receive a "Banquet Bag", complete with ready to cook ham loaf and other treats and goodies. See the back of this page for all the details.

COBYS supporters Kevin and Pam Bedell shared a photo of a recent dinner they had at home. The Gene Wenger's ham loaf made them think of the annual COBYS Banquet (they couldn't wait) - complete with cheesy potatoes and green beans! We hope you'll join them and make plans to enjoy some ham loaf at home as part of your COBYS virtual banquet experience.





Why you make a difference

Because of you, COBYS is able to provide care through our ministries that goes beyond the basics; caring for the person, not just the circumstance. With your partnership, we provide service with a commitment to excellence and a focus on the needs and God-given potential of every child, individual and family.

We simply are not the same agency without you.

Well, this is new

This year, we can't join around the table in fellowship, instead we encourage you to join us in celebration of COBYS and watch our virtual banquet.

Please consider enhancing your banquet viewing in these ways, where you can still enjoy some yummy treats and hospitality delivered by COBYS staff to you, your friends and family.

"Reservation" Options

Each Banquet Bag purchase includes a proportional amount of ham loaf, whoopee pies, customized puzzle and tote bag delivered to you and your guests. *(within geographic reason!)*

\$450 – 12 Person Banquet Bag*

\$300 – 8 Person Banquet Bag*

\$150 – 2 Person Banquet Bag

Free Will Donation: Banquet viewing is available to all, you do not have to donate. However, donations are encouraged.

** Supporters will be contacted for guest information after an 8 or 12 person pack reservation is received.*

**Can't join us on March 11th?
Watch on the
COBYS YouTube page
anytime after the event**

Reservations and Donations can be made:

- Credit Card:** (for fast confirmation)
Online: www.cobys.org/banquet2021
Phone: 717-656-6580, ext. 161
- By Mail/Check** (please use the handy return remittance envelope)

BANQUET SPONSOR

We hope you'll join our sponsor in support of COBYS.

A copy of the official registration and financial information of COBYS Family Services may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

COBYS Virtual Banquet 2021 Response Slip

Clip Here

To reserve your dinner "Banquet Bag", please complete and return this slip in the enclosed envelope no later than **Monday, March 1, 2021**, contact Rebekah Hamilton at 717-656-6580, ext. 161 or rebekah@cobys.org or register online at www.cobys.org/banquet2021.

Name(s) _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ Email _____

Your Congregation: _____ First time attendee? Yes No

Banquet Bag "Reservations"

____ 12 Person Bag (\$450/bag)*

____ 8 Person Bag (\$300/bag)*

____ 2 Person Bag (\$150/bag)

(within geographic reason!)

** Supporters will be contacted for guest information after an 8 or 12 person pack reservation is received.*

____ *Free Will Donation: Enclosed is a donation to support the ministries of COBYS. (Check payable to COBYS Family Services.)
Banquet viewing is encouraged for all, you do not have to donate. However, free will donations are encouraged.*

Family Life Education



COBYS Family Life Education Unit successfully concluded the pilot Blues Program in early December. This six session cognitive-behavioral depression prevention intervention is for high schoolers with depressive symptoms and anxiety.

Although the program is for males and females, the pilot session held at Conestoga Valley was an all female group.

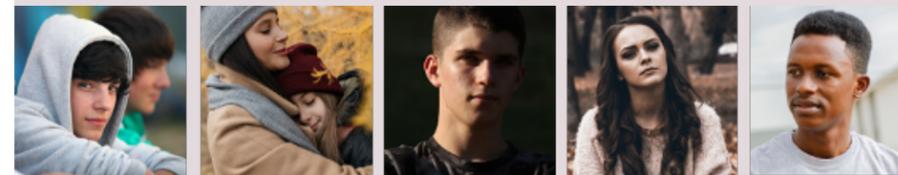
Participants and presenters agreed the sessions were very well received, and noticeable changes were achieved. Participants appreciated being in a group where others understood what they, themselves were going through.

Noticeable "weights were lifted" as life experience and coping techniques were shared.

Feedback from participants included this observation about what they thought were the good parts about the program: "Getting help and being given tools that help me be happy overall, and going to a safe space."

Many agreed that they hadn't realized that they could have positive thoughts even when some bad things were going on in their lives.

Winter sessions are planned in Ephrata and Elizabethtown.



BCF Group Decorates for COBYS

Christmas is a time when most people's thoughts turn to giving. In December, Christmas at Clipper Magazine Stadium hosted Christmas Tree Lane presented by BCF Group for community non-profits that support vital and worthwhile causes.

Visitors were invited to vote on their favorite tree or charity by purchasing \$1 donation tickets to place in ballot boxes by each tree and online. 100 percent of the proceeds went to the non-profits represented. Our thanks to Oregon Dairy for hosting the COBYS Tree and to BCF Group for decorating it. The tree received over 600 votes and \$600 in donations to COBYS.

Ways to Support COBYS

- Banquet
- Bike & Hike
- End of Year Giving
- Sponsor Events & Participants
- Extraordinary Give
- Family Fun Walk
- Kids Closet
- Monthly Automated Giving
- Online Giving
- Pray for COBYS Mission
- Tell Friends and Neighbors about COBYS

We Give Thanks

In March of 2020 when the pandemic began, like many of you, we were unsure of what the coming weeks and months would hold for COBYS. We worried not only about the kids, adults and families we serve, but about our supporters.

While our caring staff pivoted in service delivery and there is much continued concern for the most vulnerable we serve, what we haven't had to worry about is fundraising. We have experienced overwhelming generosity through every fundraising appeal, allowing us to continue delivering services with compassion, dignity and hope.

As we enter 2021, with uncertainty remaining and an ever growing need for the services we provide, your continued partnership with us is just as important as ever to sustain our ministries. Thank You.

With Gratitude and Blessings,

Anne E. Stokes
Director of Development





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MARK YOUR CALENDARS - MARCH 11, 2021

You're invited,

to connect with us

**6:30 p.m. Thursday,
March 11, 2021**



Connections

**to our Annual
(first ever virtual)
Fundraising Banquet**

**See inside
for details!
Invitation
on pgs 5 & 6**

BANQUET SPONSOR



www.cobys.org/banquet2021