



# Letters to you

**We each have many roles in life.** We are children, parents, aunts or uncles, grandchildren, friends, employees, community members and more. There are times and milestones when we especially celebrate or nurture our relationships with others. Personal letters or correspondences allow us to express what we sometimes find difficult to say out loud, and they can be windows to authentic, deep feelings.

We share this collection of letters, inspired by people in the COBYS community. As you read them, who do they bring to mind? Is it your child, a family member, perhaps even yourself?

We hope these letters offer a glimpse of the life-altering effect you make, when together we serve kids and families in our communities. May these touch-points help you connect to the value of our services. May they remind you that we all can have a profound impact with both big and little interactions, if we are mindful and true to our calling – to serve one another.



*Motivated by Christian faith, we educate,  
support and empower children and adults  
to reach their full potential.*

## A letter from a Resource Family to the community through their blog

### Why do you do that?

We'd like to clear up a some misconceptions about fostering with a few facts, and hope for some understanding and grace.

- **First, we foster because we are called to do it.** It's just what we are drawn to. We're not angels, or superheroes; nor are we "saving" these kids. But we also haven't lost our marbles. It's hard, but worthwhile.
- **We don't expect you to do it too.** It's okay that we all have different gifts.
- **We'd love for you to be interested in the kids we foster.** They deserve to have a caring, supportive community around them. You can be part of that!
- **We appreciate support more than you know.** We knew this would be hard, but help is truly appreciated That can come in many ways:
  - **Just listen** empathically. It's simple, but sometimes having someone to talk to goes a long way.
  - **Cook us a meal** occasionally; that can be huge.
  - **Offer to run an errand** for us.
  - A blanket offer of, **"What can I do for you?"** may be just what we need.

Most of us have been fortunate to have some form of support to help us through our hard times. These kids and families, who are not so different from us and want to be together, probably don't have that support. And we know, "There but by the grace of God..."

**One last thing, speaking of grace;** please offer it to these kids, their family and our family as we navigate through the instability, transitions, testing, trust and acceptance. Because with work and love they can gain some stability and hope in their lives.

Your fostering family friends,

Andy & Lynn



*We are Andy and Lynn and the kids.*

*We are your neighbors, your fellow church goers, your family. We are also resource parents for kids in foster care, so our family looks different from time to time.*

*With our blog we'd like to share thoughts that we think will help you understand our family and other foster families.*

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## A letter from a biological mother to her daughter at the voluntary termination of parental rights

My Dear Layla,

This has been the worst week of my life. I've struggled to make this decision. And you know I've been struggling with so much more too. I wanted to fight for you. I wanted to be the best version of myself that I know I can be.

But I also want you to have the best life - with the most opportunity. You are a special girl. A smart girl. And you deserve so much more than I can offer you right now.

I have to do this for you to have a better chance. I don't want to. But I have to. And so, that is how I came to this decision.

It is so final it hurts. But you deserve this. You deserve everything. Please know that I love you. My failures are not yours. This is the best way to provide a better future for you.

It breaks my heart when I think of the things I may never see in your life.

You are loved. I wish we had time for me to answer all the future questions you will have. I wish for a lot of things, but mostly, I wish I was better for you.

I hope for so much for you, for your future, I had to do this now. I have to say good-bye.

I love you my dear girl.

- Mama





An email note to a teen client from his therapist  
after the completion of his therapy sessions

Thank you and best wishes



Amy Wittmaier

To: 83jason6002@gmail.com



Dear Jason,

Thank you for your note to me. I feel the same way about you, and I admire your strength and resilience. As we have come to the end of our sessions together, I want you to know how proud of you I am. It has been a pleasure getting to know you and watching you grow and mature - in age, attitude and understanding.

It has been a long road we have journeyed together. You have displayed courage in addressing your trauma, but I am so glad you have put in the hard work. You have come so far and my wish for you is that you keep using all the skills you've learned to continue your positive progress. You have shown repeatedly you can do that and can thrive through challenges.

I know it is hard to say good-bye (it is for me too), yet I am so grateful to see how you have grown to become the confident young man that you are.

I wish you all the best,

Amy

A letter from a caseworker to a 12-year old child  
who is being reunified with his father



Dear Anthony,

We have made it! After many days of being in the unknown, you are going to live with your father soon, as he prepares his home for you. I know you have been waiting for a long time for this moment and I am thrilled to say it is nearly here!

To say I am proud of you is an understatement. You have walked through many days of hearing "maybe" to all your questions, and now we can give you an answer! You have learned just how difficult relationships can be, but also all the beauty that comes with them, too.

I have had the privilege of watching you grow throughout your time in foster care into a bright young man. We have talked about really grown-up things: behavior, mistakes, choices (both yours and your parents'), grace, family and needing one another.

I am confident that the things you have walked through, that other kids have not experienced, will continue to mold you in many ways. I trust that you will remember the impact of your decisions and choices on the relationships in your life.

Sometimes in life, our relationships are blessed with a second chance. This is what you and your dad have been given and worked hard to earn. Please remember to give each other grace while you adjust to living together. You will need each other's strengths in this journey!

I have all the confidence in you, and I will always be praying for you and your family.

Wishing you all God's blessings,

Lauren Hunter

**Maybe Days**  
A BOOK FOR CHILDREN  
IN FOSTER CARE



A letter from an elementary age boy  
to his new resource family

TO MS. ARIEL AND MR PETER  
I LOVE THE PLAYGROUND AND PLAYING WITH MY  
DINOSARS. I AM GOOD AT BUILDING BLOCKS.  
MY BEST FRIEND IS MY STUFFED DOG RALPH.  
HE REALLY LIKES THE SANDBOX. PIZZA IS OUR  
FAVORIT AND ICE CREAM TOO!! I DO GOOD IN  
SCHOOL. I TRY HARD BUT MATH IS HARD. WILL  
I STILL BE ALLOWED TO WATCH MOVIES?  
TOY STORY IS MY FAVORIT. BUZZ IS SO FUNNY.  
I LIKE CARTOONS TOO.

WILL I HAVE MY OWN ROOM?  
I USED TO SHARE WITH MY BABY  
BROTHER. SOMETIMES HE CRIED  
A LOT! WILL I STILL SEE HIM?



I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE BEACH AND SWIM  
WITH SHARKS. THEY ARE SO COOL! DID YOU  
KNOW THEY DON'T HAVE BONES!

WILL I GO TO THE SAME SCHOOL? HOW LONG  
WILL I BE WITH YOU? I'M TRYING TO BE A  
GOOD BOY. I HOPE YOU LOVE ME.

OH, I'M ALLERGIC TO CATS. BUT IF YOU HAVE A  
CAT I CAN HIDE IN ANOTHER ROOM. DO I HAVE  
TO CHANGE MY NAME WHEN I MOVE IN?

SAM



A response letter to an elementary age boy  
from his new resource family



Dear Sam,

Thank you so much for writing to us! We liked your  
dinosaur drawing and learning about you. We are so  
excited to welcome you into our home. We know this is  
a big change for you. We will try to help you with the  
change and answer as many questions as we can.

- You will have your own room.
- You will continue seeing your brother and your name  
will stay the same.
- You will go to the same school.
- We can try to go to the beach when it's warmer.
- We didn't know sharks don't have bones.
- We don't know how long you will be with us.

Our family can be silly at times. We enjoy being  
outdoors; camping, hiking, and exploring. We have two  
dogs (no cats), and they love to cuddle. We attend  
Christian church every Sunday. After church we have  
a big BBQ during football season. At times, you will be  
surrounded by a big family, and you belong too.

We won't be perfect, we don't expect you to be  
perfect either. Emotions and big feelings, all of them,  
are welcome in our house. There will be happy times  
and some sad times. All of this is ok.

We already love you and can't wait to meet you.  
Tell Ralph we can all go out for pizza and ice cream.

Ms. Ariel and Mr. Peter



## A letter from teen-age girl to her adoptive parents

Isabella Martin

Dear Mom and Dad,

Tomorrow is my adoption finalization, I'm nervous and happy at the same time. You know how much I love writing, so I thought I could best express my thoughts by writing them down - on this beautiful stationery you had made for me!

Over the last two years of being a part of this family, you have loved me even when that wasn't so easy, giving me the freedom to explore who I am and who I am becoming. Thank you for continuing to encourage me to attend therapy even as the years have gone by. I know I can't become the best version of myself without working through my past. Because of your love for me, you have been honest with me as I've wrestled with that and the whole idea of being adopted, I truly appreciate it.

As adoption day is here, I've realized I don't have to let go of my relationships with my sister and my grandma as I officially become a Martin. I can be a part of both families because both families are a part of me. They both make me who I am. And even though I will not see my birth parents, I know they are a part of me too.

What I love most about our family is how we accept each other, quirks and all. I wasn't sure I would ever find my forever family or even imagine wanting to be adopted, but here we are. Gaining you as parents and Connor as a big brother is about to be a reality. I know he and I fight sometimes, but I really do like having a big brother and I'm glad he'll always be by my side.

I will try to sleep, but I can't stop thinking about tomorrow, it's a big day. And yet I know it is just the beginning of another chapter that makes me, me - officially a part of our family.

Love,  
Isabella

## A letter to teen-age girl from her adoptive parents

Isabella,

We are filled with joy and nervous excitement for your adoption finalization tomorrow. While we knew long ago that you were meant to be a part of our family, we are thrilled a judge will make it official.

We are so proud of the young woman you are becoming. From the day you came to our home two years ago until now, you have matured so much, working hard to deal with more sadness and trauma than any person should ever have to deal with. We love watching you embrace your passions of writing and art despite the challenges you have been through. We look forward to filling the family room wall with your art. Watching you take steps toward healing, not letting circumstance have the final say, makes us smile in admiration of you. Yes, your parents admire you!

You have come into our family through adoption, but the amount of love and the hopes and dreams we have for your future are no less than those we have for Connor. We are beyond blessed that you have accepted us as your family, including our crazy family traditions, mom's love of capturing each special moment on camera and dad's ability to embarrass you with his sweater style choices! Even in the times we haven't gotten this parenting thing quite right, you haven't turned away from us either.

We see so many bright things in your future, including that you will be driving by yourself in a few weeks! We look forward to the next chapters of your life, the things you'll accomplish, the dreams you'll chase. Always remember this is your home.

Love,

Mom and Dad



## A letter to a parent from the Family Life Education unit

### Recommendations requested



Monica Williams

To: education@cobys.org



Dear COBYS,

We are at our wits end and want what is best for our family, so we are hoping for some input, recommendations and help. We have an almost 9-year-old who has become overly argumentative (to the result of frequent yelling matches with us) as well as some other disruptive behavior.

We also have a 15-year-old who is struggling with depression and anxiety. Any suggestions for him would be greatly appreciated.

Monica Williams

### RE: Recommendations requested



Barb Paynter

To: williamsfam89465@aol.com



Dear Monica,

Thank you for reaching out to us. I am sorry to hear of your struggles, but please know you are not alone. We know many children experiences challenges and I am happy to share ways we may be able to help.

For your 9-year-old I would recommend the **Incredible Years** Parenting class, a free 10-week, 1 ½ hour group session class for parents of children ages 0-12.

- We discuss parent-child interaction and attachment, positive parenting strategies, and increase parents' ability to promote their child's social, emotional and academic development.
- A parent educator meets with each participant weekly for a individualized 15-minute session to assist in personalizing the concepts taught and to address personal family needs. This class is offered virtually on Zoom.

I would recommend the **Blues Program** for your teen. This 6-week group program is designed for teenagers and teaches skills to strengthen their power to push back against anxiety, stress and depression. Teens learn how their thoughts, feelings and actions interact to control their moods; and ways to challenge their negative thoughts to make positive changes in their lives. This class is offered virtually.

To register for these classes, please go to <https://cobys.org/family-support/programs-offered/>

## A letter from a donor to the community



Dear COBYS Family,

My husband, Dave, and I support COBYS Family Services because it has many attributes we want in organizations we provide for. Through my experience serving on the COBYS Board for six years and as chair for the last of those years, I got an insider's look at the work the staff does and how the organization functions.

COBYS' mission to serve children and families in our community and its rootedness in Christian faith are very important to us. The work the staff does is far more than a job, for many it is a calling. One of COBYS' Core Values is: *"All people are created in the image of God. We recognize the inherent worth of each client by exhibiting empathy, compassion and respect."* That statement sets COBYS apart from similar secular organizations. It shows a desire to extend the love of Christ to everyone they serve.

This difference in HOW the work is done makes an immeasurable difference in the outcomes for the children, adults and families served. But the most important reason why we personally support COBYS is because their work touches our hearts in profound ways.

We have all either known or read news stories about children who are living in awful, unsafe situations. And we've probably come across parents who mean well but just don't know how to be good parents. Board members regularly hear general descriptions of cases, and even these general descriptions were enough to keep me tossing and turning at night. Many success stories and times of celebration were shared too. This demonstrated to me that COBYS makes a real difference in people's lives. They enable children to be safe, to feel loved and to be all God has created them to be.

Dave and I are not equipped to directly care for those served by COBYS. But how we can help those kids and families is by being a part of the COBYS team through our financial gifts, and by offering our time when it's helpful. I encourage you, whether a donor who has been giving for decades or someone considering making a first-time gift, to join us in helping COBYS do the life-changing work it does.

*Becky Fuchs*

Becky Fuchs

Former Board President and donor of more than 30 years



# Now it's your turn

We've shared the experiences and feelings of those we serve, now it is your turn. Is there someone, or several someones, important in your life you think about and cherish deeply? Who do you want to encourage or celebrate? Write them a letter and let them know. We can't predict what tomorrow will bring, so don't wait to share your thoughts.

If these letters have inspired you to encourage our kids and families, please consider a donation to support our services. If you want to include a note of encouragement with the gift, we'll get it to those who could use a little extra compassion.



**COBYS Family Services**  
1417 Oregon Road, Leola, PA 17540  
717-656-6580 • [www.cobys.org](http://www.cobys.org)