

## Creativity, Cooperation and Compassionate Care

**Foster care really is meant to be temporary**, with the goal of returning children to their biological family if possible, or adoption when that is not. Recently, Ashley Naque, senior adoption caseworker, and Megan Varga, adoption caseworker, provided child preparation services as four children were fortunate to begin to transition home to their biological parents. Preparing the children for the transition back home to their biological parents and infant sibling started while they were in their foster homes and continued as they transitioned home.

Even though the children had been involved with the child welfare system for several years, reunification was able to occur, not always the case with longer stays in foster care. Ashley and Megan worked together with the mutual goal of supporting the biological family as best they could.

Once the children had transitioned home, they met with the biological mother and children, developing a chore chart and house rules for the kids and helping mom establish structure and good routines from the start. Ashley made sure the mother had a good supply of incentive prizes from the dollar store and candy to help motivate the kids to complete chores and follow rules.

**On the day of their final session**, COBYS was able to bless this family and these kids with everything they needed to go back-to-school. They were starting a new school, which meant they would have to make new friends, meet new teachers, and get used to a completely different school environment. Their mom shared their sizes with Ashley and Megan and described what shoes they had hoped for. The oldest girl wanted Puma high tops and the boys wanted Nikes. Through the use of the COBYS Care Fund, Ashley and Megan were able to pay for their shoes and get one of the boys two pairs of pants from Target. Everything else, and Megan and Ashley stress, **EVERYTHING** else, they were able to get from the Kids' Closet.

They loaded up three backpacks with school supplies, found three lunch boxes, winter coats for all four children, t-shirts, long sleeve shirts, pants, shorts, sweatpants and toiletries. Ashley was working with the young girl who is not of school age and was able to find clothes for her, a doll, coloring books and crayons as well. They could not leave the baby out so they found some winter clothes and pajamas, a feeding plate that sticks to a tray of a high chair, a sippy cup and a box of diapers.

Then they had the idea to include the parents as well for a fresh start across the board. They found mom a coat, dad a sweatshirt and shirts, and both some sweatpants. Toiletries were added too. Plus each child received a Bible and a devotional for kids, that parents will be able to read with them.

We are so proud of the creativity, thoughtfulness and inclusivity demonstrated by these two exceptional caseworkers. Through generous gifts from our devoted supporters, they were

*"We are so thankful for the resources available at COBYS to bless this family as they adjust to being together again and starting school."*

*Helping to meet a need is one of the most rewarding things in life. The kids birth parents have been blown away by our support and generosity. We are truly rooting for them!"*

– Ashley Naque  
Senior Adoption Caseworker



(l to r) COBYS Adoption caseworkers Ashley Naque and Megan Varga.

able to present tangible examples of the COBYS Difference to a reunified family beginning the next chapter of their lives together, offering a solid first step in their new journey.

## 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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Leola, PA 17540  
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Fax: 717-656-3056  
[www.cobys.org](http://www.cobys.org)

## Winging It and A Prayer

I have a confession to make...when I am asked to provide brief comments at an event, I do not prepare anything. I say a little prayer and step up to the mic, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide my words (side note – I do prepare my comments for longer speaking engagements, just not the shorter ones). So, when I stepped up to the microphone to provide closing comments at our September 8th Bike and Hike event, I honestly had no idea what I was going to say!

As I spoke, I realized that a statement of truth came from my mouth. I stated that there are many other organizations that do exactly what COBYS does, but there is a significant difference between them and us: A difference in our care is the intentionality to share the love of Jesus, to be mindful that we are treating our clients and fellow co-workers with the compassion, dignity and respect we all deserve.

I get the honor of witnessing this every day. When our caseworkers encounter families, especially for the first time, the families are in crisis. What they need, more than anything else, is not someone who will judge them or make them feel "less than." They need someone who will respect them and meet them where they are. Someone who will treat them with dignity. Someone who will love them, regardless of their circumstances or personal issues. They need someone who demonstrates the love of Jesus. This is what our incredible caseworkers provide to every individual with whom they come into contact. That truly is the COBYS Difference.

I recognize that the demands for your attention are great. I want to say "thank you" for partnering with us to provide care to those in need. We appreciate that you have thought of us in some way and hope that you are blessed in the same manner as you have blessed us.

Blessings,  
Mike



THE COBYS+ DIFFERENCE

## The Gift of Giving

Giving in time, talent and treasure is something you value, we know because you value the ministries of COBYS. But how did the need to give become something you care about? Likely it was emphasized in your family, perhaps discussed or maybe demonstrated with acts of kindness. Of course, giving is a Biblical concept filled with many encouragements, such as 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (NIV)

It is important that the concept of giving is passed on to the next generation. Here are some suggestions for your children and grandchildren:

- Establish a jar (a Reward Jar?) where loose change goes or even a dollar a day.
  - As the collection grows, you are visually establishing a pattern of giving. Talk about where it should be donated and why.
- Participate in "Reverse Advent", instead of getting a treat each day leading up to Christmas, you treat someone else by making small donations or doing acts of kindness.



EXTRA  
GIVE

## How to "ExtraGive"

**Set Your Reminder – For the Day.** Choose the best time to give that works for you, whether you are an early bird or a night owl or somewhere in between.

**Make Your Gift Count Double.** At select times during ExtraGive day, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar by these generous COBYS sponsors:

### 6:00-9:00 a.m. – Fillmore Container

will match gifts during this time dollar for dollar up to \$100 per donation for a total of \$2,500 in extra generosity.



### 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. – Grauer's Paint & Decorating

is generously matching your gifts at **two times** during ExtraGive. From 11:00 – 1:00 gifts will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$100 and from 4:00 – 7:00 they will be matched up to \$150 of each donation for \$5,000 total.



### 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. – Summit Advisory

keeps the generosity going late in the evening. Gifts made during this time will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$100 for a total of \$2,000.



Our thanks to these partners who are magnifying your care as we all make the COBYS Difference a reality.

**It's the Little Things.** Even small gifts starting at \$10, like small acts or small "extras" for kids can have a big impact. Gifts given throughout the day may be randomly chosen to receive prizes. For the complete prize list, see [extragive.org/prizes](http://extragive.org/prizes).

**Every Gift Matters – Even more.** COBYS will be awarded stretch pool funds based on the number of "unique" donors (a unique email = a unique donor). So even small donations from many sources add up!



### You're doing good, treat yourself to a cookie and get a free drink.

Participating in the ExtraGive is doing good in the community. You deserve a treat. COBYS will be at Taylor Chip on Manheim Pike from 3:00-6:00 pm on ExtraGive Day, Friday, November 22. **Stop in and say "hi" and get a free specialty drink with purchase of cookie.**

Learn more at [extragive.org](http://extragive.org) or contact Steve Nichols at 717-656-6580, ext. 161 or [steven@cobys.org](mailto:steven@cobys.org).

For a complete list of prizes visit:  
[www.extragive.org/prizes](http://www.extragive.org/prizes)

## SAVE THE DATE EVENTS

GIFTS THAT  
GIVE HOPE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2024

## Alternative Holiday Giving

What do you give to the person who is really hard to buy for, has everything, or maybe more accurately, doesn't want more "things"? We all know a few folks like that. There is a solution that goes beyond the gift exchange.

**A solution is in Gifts That Give Hope.**

Make plans to attend on Sunday, December 1, 2024 from 11am-4pm at the Lancaster Farm & Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road in Lancaster PA 17601.

The Gifts that Give Hope fair supports 35+ remarkable local nonprofits, marketplace vendors, social enterprises, fair trade companies, food trucks, and businesses for good, including COBYS this year.



While the fair is near Christmas we encourage you to think about alternative giving throughout the year. Stock up with charitable gifts now for birthdays, celebrations and thank you gifts throughout the coming year.



Gifts That Give Hope Lancaster is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote charitable, alternative giving through an annual gift fair that offers the opportunity to purchase holiday gifts in support of charitable causes and meaningful gift giving. Attendees can purchase gifts of support to COBYS.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025

## COBYS Dinner & Conversation

Plan to join us for celebratory evening of good food and conversation at our annual spring fundraiser. We will share updates, highlights and news at COBYS and provide first-hand accounts of the care being provided to kids, individuals and families in care.

2024 Banquet participant, foster parent Krista Casler.



TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025

## Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner



COBYS is blessed to be supported by the Wenger Foundation through their annual Praise Dinner, with donations directly benefiting Family Life Education services.

[www.wengerfoundation.org/events](http://www.wengerfoundation.org/events)





# Walkin' (and biking) on Sunshine

**We are so grateful,** grateful for your support, grateful for a day of fun and fellowship and grateful for a beautiful September day where the weather couldn't have been more perfect. After two years of hunkering inside (except for the brave souls who tempted the rain or walked in it anyway), it was so nice to be able to share the sunshine at our signature fundraising event.

Thanks to your support, and the 235 participants, over \$102,000 was raised to support the COBYS mission of caring for and walking with children and families when they need us most. With your support, together we make a life-altering impact on their lives through compassionate care delivered with the COBYS Difference.

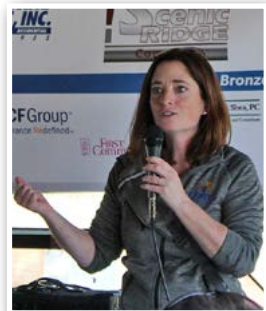
This day of celebration, fellowship, fun and of course, ice cream is a nice break from the sometimes difficult but important work of COBYS. Thanks for making it a great day!



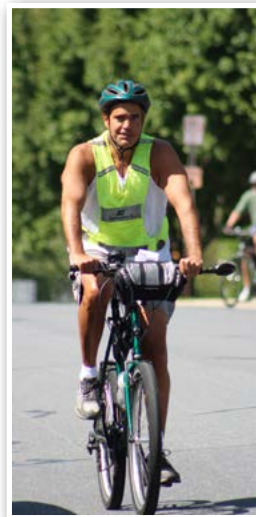
Top 2024 fundraisers (l to r): Don Fitzkee, Floy Fitzkee and Londa Brandt.



(l): Director of Development and Communications Anne Stokes, and (r) Executive Director Michael Lausch address the Bike & Hike participants.



The 25-mile bikers started us off and were rewarded with a gorgeous ride in the Lancaster countryside.

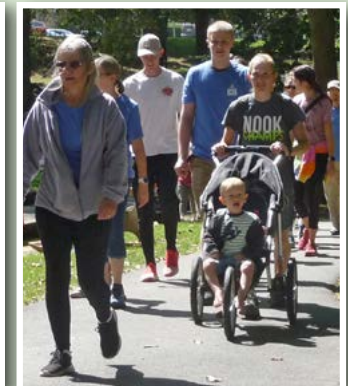


The 10-mile bikers took to the road for their ride through the back roads of Lancaster farmland.



## Tasty Tour hits the spot!

The Tasty Tour was a big hit! Over 50 people participated in the inaugural year of this delicious Bike & Hike option. Thanks to our four treat stops: Dosie Dough, Cafe Arabella, Sweet Legacy and Slate Cafe.



Walkers enjoyed the traditional 3-mile route through Lititz Springs Park and the main streets of Lititz.



And of course we ended with the always popular Incredible Ice Cream Celebration!



### Event Sponsors



### Gold Sponsors



### Silver Sponsors



### Bronze Sponsors





## COBYS 2023-2024 Annual Report

At COBYS, our focus across the services we deliver continues to be trauma-informed care. To meet the increasingly complex needs of our children and youth in foster care, as well as those children, youth and adults in the wider community, our staff receive on-going training in best practices, allowing them to provide the COBYS Difference in care.

**We need you to be a part of the solution. Beyond financial support, we need to grow the COBYS Community with new donors and new foster families, joining those who already know what valuable and needed ministries we provide. Help us spread the word by sharing the need for foster families ([www.cobys.org/fostering](http://www.cobys.org/fostering)).**

This report provides a snapshot of our care during the past fiscal year (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024). Our 105 staff members are called to serve through delivery of our necessary, but sometimes messy and often heartbreaking care. We do all this in order that we might fulfill our mission, that **motivated by Christian faith, we educate, support, and empower children and adults to reach their full potential.**

### Adoption.

The COBYS Adoption unit provides a range of services that assist children and families during the foster care process, in finalization of adoptions and in the life-long journey for families who have experienced adoption.

Our adoption staff work with some foster and adoptive families approved through COBYS, but also provide services for many additional children, those placed in foster homes licensed through counties and those already adopted and in kinship placements. This wide range of services, facilitated by the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN), are needed to address difficulties faced by children of all ages. The outcomes we see for children served by COBYS illustrate how beneficial the trauma-informed care we provide is to a child thriving.

The following units of service were provided:

- 18 child specific recruitments
- 60 child preparations
- 121 child profiles and addendums
- 28 family profiles
- 27 adoption finalizations
- 39 families assessed for post adoption services

To date 680 adoptions have been finalized by COBYS.



### Foster Care.

Our Foster Care team ensures that children are safe and supported while in care. COBYS foster families provide temporary care until a child can reunify with a birth parent or move to extended family. Foster families sometimes adopt a foster child if the court determines that the child cannot return home. Our Resource Home Specialists not only license foster families, but they also place children in our homes and provide unparalleled support. COBYS increased our recruitment efforts this year in response to local and national shortages of available foster families.

Foster Care statistics for the past year:

- 22,786 days of care to 166 children
- 84 children discharged, 30 to parents/other relatives
- 13 foster children in our care were adopted, while 41 were discharged to other places.
- 90 foster families served, 16 newly approved
- 81 children were placed from county referrals. COBYS contracts with 10 county agencies.
- All COBYS foster families have received evidence-based training in Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI).
- COBYS foster families are diverse, including individuals and married couples ranging in age from 24 to 71.



### Counseling.

This past year, the Counseling department continued to provide sessions both in person and through teletherapy. We continue to recognize the needs of the community and have filled these needs through adding two more therapists. Bria Griffin joined COBYS in June 2024 as an unlicensed therapist who is working towards licensure under our supervision. Day Butcher, LPC joined COBYS as an art therapist.

During the past year, Counseling provided and engaged in:

- 8,148 total counseling appointments
- 86 new clients served
- 99 successful discharges of clients. Successful discharge indicates that clients have reduced symptoms and are able to maintain stabilization.

**Permanency.** COBYS is contracted by the Lancaster County Children and Youth Social Service Agency to act as the county caseworker, working with parents and biological families on their court approved plans for reunification. We also assure the safety of children in their out-of-home placements. The program promotes a stronger and more stable family unit and helps families understand their needs and requirements. The goal is for families to reunify whenever safely possible.

This year was one of transition for Permanency with staff turnover. Despite the turnover, we worked diligently to continue to live out the COBYS mission providing excellent services to our clients. We have seen a large increase in the number of cases with both youth and adult clients struggling with severe mental health instability. We have several cases where the mental health deficits or cognitive limitations of the parents are so severe they are unable to safely parent their children. This is especially difficult for COBYS staff as there is no amount of services or support that can change client intellectual functioning to help them create a safe environment for their children. These cases often lead to the children being adopted or released to a legal guardian. However, the positive reunification cases give us hope and drive us to continue the work each day in what is a very difficult job.

This past year Permanency Unit staff walked alongside children and families, to these results:

- 143 children from 94 families served
- 17 children from 13 families were reunified
- 14 children from 11 families were transferred to adoption
- Four children from three families were released to a legal guardian through subsidized permanent legal custodianship



### Family Life Education.

This year we began offering monthly Parenting Workshops through our Kinship programming that were meaningful to all caregivers. Some of the topics included: Intro to the IEP Journey, Helping Your Child Navigate School/Social Anxiety, Supporting the Mental Health of Child(ren) Under Your Care and Raising Children in a Digital World. This is a great opportunity for parents to explore and learn about current parenting challenges.

In both of our Incredible Years and Parenting Wisely programs individual sessions with an educator were added in addition to the group classes. These supports give families an opportunity to personalize their learning to address any challenges or struggles they are experiencing in their family.

We have six staff practitioners of Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), allowing us to offer our TBRI offerings to all Lancaster County and several surrounding county's foster and kinship families.

FLE statistics for the past year:

- 993 classroom hours
- 984 adults, representing over 1,082 children
- 99 courses held, including:
  - Blues Program
  - Kinship Program
  - Parenting Wisely
  - Seeking Safety Prison Program
  - Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)
  - Cooperative Co-Parenting
  - Incredible Years Autism
  - Seeking Safety

### Financial Support.

Significant generosity in financial giving from donors to COBYS was evident again this past year. Beyond the services we provide, your financial gifts strengthen our staff; staff who advocate for clients and are known for not giving up when arranging care in the face of many challenges.

We continue to focus on quality, multi-channel communication with our donors, providing a variety of opportunities to connect to our ministries, from general giving to the COBYS Care Fund and even the Kids' Closet. We have also begun and will continue a more concerted effort to recruit foster families and new donors, working with a

marketing agency for increased visibility of COBYS and targeted digital messaging throughout the region.

While the needs we are addressing will never go away, we believe our care is making a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

In order to maintain and expand financial gifts, we welcome you to connect with us so we can continue the conversation, connecting with you with a deeper understanding of our ministries, the very real and life-impacting issues we are addressing each day, and the ways you can help meet these needs.

Please contact Anne Stokes, director of development & communications, at [anne@cobys.org](mailto:anne@cobys.org) or 717-656-6580 x101.

### Year-to-Date Private Giving Summary (Five-Year Comparison)

COBYS Family Services	7/1/2019 - 6/30/2020	7/1/2020 - 6/30/2021	7/1/2021 - 6/30/2022	7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023	7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024
Bequests	\$580,090.69	\$39,337.75	\$189,056.70	\$54,256.16	\$44,375.01
General	\$624,739.22	\$725,209.74	\$739,363.21	\$786,204.15	\$756,311.42
In Kind	\$29,066.53	\$16,348.07	\$9,893.75	\$21,956.38	\$15,361.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,233,896.44</b>	<b>\$780,895.56</b>	<b>\$939,313.66</b>	<b>\$862,416.69</b>	<b>\$816,047.86</b>



COBYS Family Services  
1417 Oregon Road  
Leola, PA 17540

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Facebook and Instagram

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## Support COBYS Nov. 22, during the community-wide day of giving



**You're doing good,  
treat yourself to a cookie  
and get a free drink.**



COBYS will be at Taylor  
Chip on Manheim Pike  
from 3:00-6:00 pm on  
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**Get a free specialty drink  
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Fillmore Container**  
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Grauer's Paint &  
Decorating**  
11:00 - 1:00 gifts will be  
matched up to \$100. From  
4:00 - 7:00 they will be  
matched up to \$150 per  
donation for \$5,000 total.



**7:00 - 10:00 p.m.  
Summit Advisory**  
will match dollar for  
dollar up to \$100 for a  
total of \$2,000.

**See  
page 3  
for more  
details**

**For a complete list of prizes visit: [www.extragive.org/prizes](http://www.extragive.org/prizes)**

**[www.extragive.org/organizations/cobys-family-services](http://www.extragive.org/organizations/cobys-family-services)**