

No Longer Alone

Post Perm Services Provide Support for Adoptive Families

When Nelson and Sharon Groff, of East Earl, adopted their foster daughter, Lindsey, in July 1999, they weren't fully prepared for some of the challenges they would face. They felt alone and unsure of whether their daughter's behaviors were "normal" or not.

"For 12 years we went through that," says Sharon.

But through a series of circumstances that began with a bad case of poison ivy, the Groffs now are receiving support through COBYS Family Services that they could have used years ago.

Justin and Kathy Engle, of Hershey, were being held hostage by their adopted son, Jayden, 7, whose tantrums were wearing on his parents and younger siblings.

"Our whole family was living in sort of a state of emergency," Justin explains. While many challenges remain, after a year of help from COBYS, the state of emergency has been lifted and the Engles are receiving much-needed support.

While their circumstances are somewhat different, what the Groffs and the Engles have in common is that both have been blessed by post permanency services coordinated by COBYS adoption caseworker Matt Stoltzfus.

In Pennsylvania, adoptive families are eligible to receive these free services, with funding provided by the Department of Public Welfare



(Above) COBYS Post Permanency Services helped Kathy & Justin Engle's family emerge from a 'state of emergency.'

(Right) Therapeutic horseback riding brought many benefits for Lindsey Groff.

through the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). Available services include case advocacy, respite care, and support groups. Post permanency is a growing edge of COBYS' menu of adoption services, with Matt currently serving 10 families.

The Groffs and Engles have benefited in various ways from the support they have received.

Nelson and Sharon stumbled into services when they needed to replace lost health insurance cards. In the process of picking up a prescription to treat Lindsey's poison

ivy, they somehow mislaid the essential cards. As they applied for new ones, a helpful worker at the Department of Public Welfare pointed out that they were eligible for help through SWAN. They chose COBYS to provide services, and Matt showed up on their doorstep in November 2009.

The first thing he did was walk them through the process for obtaining a monthly adoption subsidy. Though they would have been eligible for this substantial support years earlier, through a misunderstanding with their adoption agency they had not applied.

Nelson and Sharon now are using some of this new income to pay for horseback riding lessons for Lindsey at Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center. Matt recommended riding as a means of improving Lindsey's self-image.

Sharon was initially skeptical. She recalls, "I said to Matt, 'What does

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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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Editor/Designer: Donald R. Fitzkee

COBYS Family Services
1417 Oregon Road
Leola, PA 17540
Phone: 717-656-6580
800-452-6517
Fax: 717-656-3056
www.cobys.org

Current Struggles, Future Success

Lititz Run passes close by the old mill building that serves as the COBYS main office. I am fortunate to have a perfect view of the stream through my office window. As I write, a momma duck and seven ducklings are taking a swim. The ducklings are facing upstream, paddling their little legs and feet rather aggressively. And they are going nowhere.

All that work, all that effort, all that energy, and they aren't moving forward. Sometimes they pause and the current drives them backwards. After a short break in calmer waters along the side, they plunge back into the faster current again and swim like crazy—without really getting anywhere.

But as I watch, I realize that getting somewhere isn't the goal. It becomes clear to me that momma duck is teaching her ducklings how to navigate the waters. The goal for these ducklings isn't to reach some destination upstream; it is to learn the currents of the stream and how to function effectively in those currents.



(I might have come to this conclusion earlier had I known more about ducks. I freely admit that my duck knowledge is limited. I do know, however, about the duck that went into a pharmacy, picked up some ChapStick, and asked the clerk to put it on her bill.)

I know also that sometimes I identify with those ducklings. I feel like I am moving with effort, struggling with my tasks, and seemingly not getting anywhere. Maybe you have experienced the same feeling. There are times in our lives when we become frustrated at the lack of movement, direction, and accomplishments.

But then again, during those times, maybe getting somewhere isn't what is most important. Maybe the struggles are part of the process. Maybe when we are expending energy and striving toward a goal, only to find ourselves frustrated by the current, we are learning valuable life lessons. Maybe we are discovering how to navigate life and to resist the strong currents that are sure to come against us.

In those times of struggle, we need to remember the words of Paul, when he wrote, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14 NIV).

In time, the seven ducklings will learn to fly and move on to bigger and better ponds and streams. The time they spent swimming against the current of Lititz Run no doubt will serve them well. And if we keep our focus on the goal and press on even when the going is tough, we, too, will ultimately get to where we are going.

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director

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riding horse have to do with confidence?" But now she displays unbridled enthusiasm for her daughter's riding.

Lindsey began riding in June 2010 and her instructors immediately noticed she was a natural on a horse. In September she rode in her first show. Although initially she was reluctant to compete, Lindsey summoned the courage. She finished first in the obstacle course and second in command. In November, Greystone recognized her with its "Rising Star Award."

In addition, Lindsey has served as a mentor for an autistic child receiving therapy at Greystone, and she now contemplates a future working with animals or kids or both.

"Horseback riding had all of these benefits that we really didn't count on," says Matt.

Matt also helped the Groffs to understand attachment issues, pointed them to specialized therapy, encouraged Nelson and Sharon to advocate for a new Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) at school, and connected the family with a support group.

As a result of the new IEP, says Matt, Lindsey is now getting what she needs to succeed in the classroom.

The monthly support group includes separate groups for parents and kids. Lindsey has relished being with peers who can relate to her experiences as an adopted child, and Nelson and Sharon have benefited from the information and support, as well.

"I was really glad the day that COBYS came into our life," says Sharon. "It was just a big help to us."

One result of all of these services has been a boost in Lindsey's confidence. Teachers have noticed her coming out of her shell, says Sharon. "Everybody sees the difference in her now."



COBYS post permanency services blessed Sharon, Lindsey (holding Buddy), and Nelson Groff.

Justin and Kathy Engle came to COBYS for post permanency services at the suggestion of their son's therapist. They were exhausted by Jayden's frequent tantrums, which had grown worse over a several-month period, and they felt like no one understood what they were going through.

They also wanted to tell Jayden—who has lived with them since he was 10 months old—that he was their adopted son, but they worried that the news might exacerbate his extreme behaviors. Complicating matters, Jayden's biological father is a relative that they continue to interact with at holiday gatherings.

"They felt like there was this cloud hanging over them that they needed to deal with," explains Matt.

Beginning in July 2010, Matt provided case advocacy expertise that enabled the Engles to obtain a Medical Access card to provide supplemental coverage for Jayden's mental health treatments and expensive medications (one of which costs \$400 per month). Justin and Kathy thought they were ineligible, but Matt knew of a special provision for children with a mental health diagnosis. "I would never have known that," says Kathy.

Matt provided contacts to have Jayden evaluated, which opened the doors for additional services, including a mobile therapist who

visits weekly. "Matt's been there all along with any kind of help or service that we needed to know about," says a grateful Kathy.

He pointed the Engles to a monthly support group, which Kathy, and sometimes Justin, have attended for six months. They found it to be very helpful. "I finally felt normal," Kathy explains. "The stories (of other participants) were exactly like ours."

Matt also helped them to obtain funding for regular respite care with a trained childcare provider to give much-needed breaks. The caregiver takes all three children so Justin and Kathy can have time alone. Sometimes they just go and sit together in a quiet place.

"It really makes a huge difference in our sanity," says Kathy.

And over a period of several months, "Mr. Matt," as the children know him, met with Jayden individually and with all three children, doing activities and reading age-appropriate adoption stories to lay the groundwork so Justin and Kathy could tell Jayden that he was adopted.

With a support network in place, the children adequately prepped, and Jayden's behaviors improved, Justin and Kathy broke the news to Jayden on Good Friday. It went better than they expected. Most effective, says Justin, was a photo album that Kathy put together at Matt's suggestion to help Jayden piece together his life story.

While they still face tumultuous times, Kathy says, "Everything has gotten better. It's gotten a lot better."

Recognizing that Jayden likely will face lifelong challenges, Justin agrees, "It's not solved, but it's definitely much better."

For more information about COBYS post permanency services, contact SWAN at 800-585-7926 and request COBYS as your provider.



‘High-Tech’ High Jinx Banquet Attracts Record Attendance

A record number of attendees at the March 10 COBYS “Really High-Tech Banquet” at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren enjoyed an evening of fellowship, learned a thing or two about COBYS ministries, and responded by giving \$32,808.

“We were thrilled with the record attendance on a dreary night and very pleased with the strong giving,” said Director of Development Don Fitzkee. “And people seemed to enjoy the program.”

The attendance figure of 386

edged out last year’s 30th anniversary banquet by one—despite heavy rains and a flood watch that kept some away—and the giving wasn’t far behind last year’s record high of \$33,781.

Executive Director Mark Cunningham and Don introduced presenters—with frequent interruptions from Mark’s high-tech next generation iPhone (one better than an iPhone), which had many capabilities, including exasperating Don.

Along with some high-tech

high jinx, the program included some low-tech information sharing and testimonies.

Permanency Unit Supervisor Nicole Schwartz spoke of the challenges of her work in Lancaster and the rewards of seeing children reunited with their families. Supervisor of Counseling Services Dr. Michele Romeo Martin and Licensed Clinical Social Worker Laura Miller talked about the Attachment & Trauma Therapy that COBYS provides for children. Family Life Education Supervisor Carol Rago and her guest, Dr. Bill Ziegler, Administrator of Lancaster Brethren in Christ Church, shared some exciting happenings in Education, including an update on programs hosted by Bill’s congregation last year.

Charlton and Amy Wolfgang told via video how the COBYS infant adoption program blessed them with daughter, Sophia, and resource parents Kevin & Julia Martin introduced their children and spoke of their meaningful ministries of foster care and adoption.

Inspirational music was provided by Steve & Marla Ditzler, of Lebanon.

Next year’s banquet is slated for March 15 at Middle Creek.

(Above) Resource parents Kevin & Julia Martin told their story. (From left) Mark Cunningham’s “iPhone” irked Don Fitzkee; Jenna Martin held on tight to her doll; and Laura Miller, Nicole Schwartz, & Bill Ziegler shed light on COBYS ministries.



17th Annual Fun Walk Raises \$7,000+

A total of 72 participants raised a preliminary figure of more than \$7,000 for COBYS ministries at the 17th annual Family Fun Walk, held Sunday, May 1, at Peter Becker Community, in Harleysville.

Thanks to a pledge following the event, giving may exceed \$8,000 by the time all gifts are received.

In comparison, the 2010 walk attracted a record 107 participants and raised some \$8,500.

“Our attendance didn’t match up with last year’s unusually high figure,” said event planner Don Fitzkee, “but those who did attend were generous. It was a good day for COBYS.”

The Joan and Ken Kabakjian family, of Harleysville, were top fundraisers, earning a grand



It was a nice day for a walk—or a ride—at the May 1 Family Fun Walk. Top fundraisers were the Kabakjian family and (left) Donna Parcell.

prize of two tickets to “Joseph” at Sight & Sound Theatres, Lancaster. The Kabakjians raised pledges totaling \$860. Donna & Sarah Parcell, of Souderton, earned a night’s stay at Willow Valley Inn and Suites, Lancaster, by raising \$591.

Youth from the Indian Creek Church of the Brethren, Harleysville, earned a gym and pizza night by raising \$1,721. Youth from the Springfield COB, Coopersburg, also participated, raising nearly \$600.

The Bauman Family Fruit Butters, Sassamansville, sponsored the walk, and 14 other businesses and individuals contributed prizes and supplies. Peter Becker Community graciously hosted the event.

The Family Fun Walk consists of a three-mile walk, followed by ice cream, refreshments, and awarding of door prizes. Walkers donate or enlist pledges from sponsors to benefit COBYS ministries to children and families. The 2012 walk will be held May 6.

Special Thanks

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Bauman Family Pennsylvania
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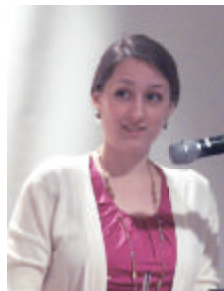
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Follow Us on Facebook



Additional photos of the Family Fun Walk are available on the new COBYS Facebook page. If you’re on Facebook, please visit our page and tell us that you “like” us. (If you’re not on Facebook, just tell us you like us the next time you see us.) We look forward to sharing information about COBYS happenings and building relationships through this medium!

Six Resource Families Recognized at Annual Banquet



COBYS recognized six foster/adoptive resource families for their years of service at its annual Resource Parent Appreciation Banquet on May 2 at the Eden Resort & Suites. The event was attended by 61 resource parents and staff.

Recognized for 15 years of service were David & JoAnne Chandler, of Quarryville. During that time they have provided foster care for 43 children.

Two families were recognized for 10 years of service. Darren & Lori Pray, of Willow Street, have cared for 20 foster children; and Kent & Deb Sell, of Bird in Hand, are in the process of adopting their second child through COBYS.

Three other resource families were recognized for completing five years of service. They are: Nelson & Treva Bollinger, Denver; R. Michael & Judy Burkholder, Denver; and Philip & Sharon Hosler, Lititz.

Planned by Resource Home Coordinator Emily Hartzler, the banquet featured entertainment by the Susquehanna Woodwind Quintet, a slide show of COBYS resource families and children, and a drawing of appreciation gifts provided by area businesses.

In her concluding comments Emily observed, "We hold this banquet once a year to try to

(From left) Members of the Susquehanna Woodwind Quintet entertained. Resource Home Coordinator Emily Rice thanked resource families for their service. Among those recognized for years of service were (from left) David & Joanne Chandler, Darren & Lori Pray, Kent & Deb Sell, and Nelson & Treva Bollinger. Absent were Michael & Judy Burkholder and Phillip & Sharon Hosler.

show you how much we appreciate your work, but it really will just never be quite enough for the ministry you are providing. . . . It is our prayer that we have prepared you and continue to support you so that you can carry out God's will for these beautiful children."

The appreciation banquet is held in conjunction with National Foster Care Month, an annual observance that provides "an opportunity to shine a light on the experiences of the more than 400,000 children and youth in the foster care system. The campaign raises awareness

about the urgent needs of these young people and encourages citizens from every walk of life to get involved." (www.fostercaremonth.org)

Currently, 49 COBYS foster families provide care for 60 children from several counties, including Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon, and Montgomery. COBYS holds free monthly informational meetings in Lancaster and Wyomissing for families wanting to explore foster care or adoption. To sign up for one of these sessions, contact Resource Home Coordinator Sara Riddle at sara@cobys.org or 717-656-6580.



Got Up & Went. In conjunction with National Foster Care Month, COBYS Resource Home Coordinator Sara Riddle (left) and resource parents Gary & Dawn Dupler Jr. appeared on WJTL 90.3's "Get Up & Go Show" on May 5. They are pictured with WJTL personalities Lisa Landis and Fred McNaughton (right). You can hear how they did at <http://wjtl.com/listen/wjtl-casts/>.

Debt-Free, Thanks to Successful Campaign

Thanks to generous giving through the Building for the Future financial campaign, COBYS Family Services is now debt free. COBYS made its final payment on the Permanency Unit building on King Street in Lancaster in April.

"It feels great to be debt-free," said Executive Director Mark Cunningham. "We are in a position of financial strength as a result of generous giving through the campaign."

The \$600,000 Building for the Future Campaign was launched in spring 2005 as part of COBYS' 25th anniversary celebration. The individual phase covered 2005-2007, with the church



phase extending through 2009. Since some churches delayed participation by a year, giving continued through 2010.

Goals of the campaign included the down payment and renovation costs for a property on King Street in Lancaster to house the Permanency program; improvements to the main office, including replacement windows, flooring, a remodeling project to expand a conference room, and

repainting a portion of the exterior stone walls; retiring debt on all properties; and increasing the endowment fund.

All of the capital expenditure portions of the campaign were successfully completed. Because total giving to the campaign of \$529,454 came up short of the \$600,000 goal, the lowest priority goal of expanding the endowment fund was not completed.

The programmatic goal of expanding adoption and foster care services eastward by recruiting a pool of resource families in Montgomery County bore limited fruit and was refocused. When the campaign was launched, Montgomery was the second leading source of foster child referrals for COBYS. Staff initially held resource parent orientations in Harleysville and recruited three families, resulting in one adoption and care of several foster children.

Unable to sustain a sufficient number of families in the Harleysville area, despite print and radio advertising and efforts to network with area churches, orientations were shifted westward to Pottstown in March 2007.

In the meantime, COBYS referrals from Montgomery decreased, while Berks County referrals remained strong. In order to better serve Berks children, COBYS shifted advertising dollars and moved monthly orientations to the Wyomissing Church of the Brethren, near Reading, in summer 2009, where they continue to be offered.

Praise Dinner Inspires Giving

The 16th annual Wenger Foundation Praise Dinner, held May 5 at the Lebanon Expo Center, attracted 800 people and raised nearly \$90,000 for four ministries. Donations for COBYS totaled \$16,881.

The evening featured a hearty meal and music from nationally known Southern Gospel groups The McCameys and The Triumphant Quartet.

With a few donations still expected, overall proceeds increased from last year's \$87,288 to \$89,442. COBYS donations were down from the \$19,940 received in 2010. Since 1999, the Praise Dinner has generated more than \$240,000 for COBYS ministries.

"We continue to be grateful for all the work Foundation President Rose Walmer and the Wenger family put into this

event each year," said Director of Development Don Fitzkee. "The Wenger Foundation is a tremendous blessing to COBYS!"

Underwriting all of the event's expenses were the Achey family, Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry, Schaeffers-town; Roger & Marjorie Gerhart, Lititz; Bud & Joyce Mitstifer, Myerstown; the Wenger Family, Wengers of Myerstown; and other anonymous contributors. Some 40 businesses and individuals sponsored tables for the \$100/plate dinner.

Also benefiting from the dinner were On Fire Youth Ministries, Friendship Community, and Evangelical Theological Seminary.

The May 3, 2012, Praise Dinner will feature popular speaker Tony Campolo and the Blackwood Brothers.



What Is It?



It's a walk!

They told us it was a youth group activity.



It's a family outing with matching shirts!



It's definitely a bike ride, Two actually.

COBYS Bike & Hike Sunday, September 11 Lititz Church of the Brethren

60-Mile Motorcycle Ride
10- & 25-Mile Bicycle Rides
3-Mile Walk



I see it more as a sundae bar.



No, it's a motorcycle ride.

Ice Cream & Refreshments
Door Prizes & Grand Prizes



Information, sponsor sheets available by August 1 at www.cobys.org.



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