

The Family That Was Meant to Be



*The Herr Family: Back row, left to right: Mim, Ben, Andrew, & Taylor
Front row, left to right: Emily, Cat (Taylor's fiancé), & Kristin*

When Emily spotted a fleeting rainbow sunspot in a mostly cloudy sky on the way to her adoption hearing, you might easily conclude that everything that day would proceed without a hitch. Especially after she added, "That's God's sign for me!" For Emily, a young girl who had come so far, and grown so much, you would be wrong about the "without a hitch" part.

To the outside world the Herr family was complete. With two grown biological sons, and a high-school-aged daughter, Kristin, who had been internationally adopted as an infant, only Mim and Ben Herr knew that throughout their life together they had always thought they would have four children. Both come from families where adoption is part of the family culture, so there was no lack of positive role models, for adoptive parents or adopted children.

Attachment is paramount. From "Lie Down" nighttime stories, 3 Stooges movies, and playing in the snow, to sliding down the stairs together on pillows, all allow bonds to be built with Emily over time.

"God's world is full of variety," Mim says, "We are proud to have that in our family." The Herrs embrace the uniqueness and cultural background differences as adding positive variety to their family.

Mim and Ben share knowing smiles when they talk about the differences of adopting an infant and an older foster child. Both come with unique challenges.

Ben is a clinical psychologist at Milton Hershey School and has provided care at a child and adolescent outpatient center. Mim, who taught for many

years, holds a master's degree in counseling and is currently working as a Pre-K teacher's aide at Lititz Area Mennonite School where Emily is enrolled. No strangers to the benefits of education, both agree that while learning about the uniqueness of parenting adopted children is necessary, seeking God's wisdom is most important in preparing themselves for the myriad of questions Emily asked about her experience.

Truthfully, honestly, and patiently answering Emily's questions laid the groundwork for good communications and opened the door to building trust. Signs of progress with Emily came incrementally with love, devotion, and persistence. Over time she began to confide in them, and more frequently talked about wanting to



stay with their family. A turning point came when she drew a picture of herself with Mim in a heart shape, and labeled it "This is Love".

Before beginning their journey with Emily, it was Kristin, ironically, who reignited the foster care/adoption call in the Herrs. She spoke of the desire for a sister through adoption. This time, foster care seemed to make more sense than infant adoption. Ben and Mim were a little wary of the idea at first, especially considering that the primary goal of fostering is to give care and love to children who need it

continued on page 7

Mission Statement

Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS Family Services educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential.

Board of Directors

Wilbur Rohrer, President
Rebecca Fuchs, Vice-President
Suzanne Schaudel, Secretary
Robert Wintsch, Treasurer

Erin Benson Ken Leaman
Fred Keller Scott Moyer
Kay Kulp Lisa Reinhart
Eric Landram

Administrative Staff

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director
Cynthia Umberger, Director of Business Operations
Anne Stokes, Director of Development
Abby Keiser, Director of Family Life Services
Mary Sourber, Director of Placement Services
Jen McDowell, Adoption Supervisor
Holly Hardin, Family Life Education Supervisor
Sharon Kingsley, Foster Care Supervisor
Ruby Nolt, Krista Rankin, Permanency Unit Supervisors
Tim Strawser, HR and Business Manager
Bethany Kauffman-Raub, HR and Office Supervisor
Doug May, Communications & Development Manager

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

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

Hope In The Midst of Chaos

A new feature in this edition of the newsletter is highlighting COBYS staff. "The Faces of COBYS" shines a light on some of the people who work every day to fulfill our mission. We plan to feature a few employees in each issue.



I would like to tell you about one more employee, Matt Stoltzfus. Matt is a senior adoption caseworker and has been an employee of COBYS since October 2000. On Monday, March 11, Matt was skiing with his son in Scranton. On what ended up being Matt's last run of the day, one of his skis got stuck in some slush, and the fall resulted in a severely broken left leg. His tibia was broken in two places, near the middle of the leg and near the kneecap.

Matt was in a hospital in Scranton until Friday, March 15. While there, he had surgery to stabilize his leg so he could be transported back to Lancaster. On Friday, March 15, Matt was transported by EMS back to his house. Matt had a second surgery on Friday, March 22.

Matt currently is receiving physical therapy and occupational therapy in his home. He expects to be off work for 8-10 weeks.

While in the emergency room in Scranton, Matt noticed that his nurse has a Christian fish tattoo (an ΙΧΘΥΣ, ichthys). Matt commented on her tattoo and told her that he was aware of the meaning and that he was a Christian as well. The nurse took his hand and told him that while he may not know why this is happening now, there is purpose in this time of struggle. That same nurse visited Matt after surgery, told him she was praying for him, and again shared that this struggle Matt is experiencing is not in vain. That encouragement and hope from the nurse "was like an anchor" for Matt.

Matt shared with me that those words not only had meaning for him in his time of struggle, but recognized the same could be said about the many kids and families he (and the other COBYS employees) works with.

Many of the people we work with at COBYS are experiencing chaos in their lives. Kids being removed from their birth parents; birth parents having their kids taken from them; and families dealing with addiction, incarceration, and trauma.

There is hope. Matt may not understand why he is experiencing this chaos in his life, but there is hope. Our clients may not understand why they are experiencing chaos, and you may not understand why you are experiencing chaos, but there is hope. There is always hope.

Isaiah 40:31 says, "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."

While we may not have the wisdom to understand our current chaos, with reminders and the help of others, we can always look to God for hope.

Mark Cunningham, Executive Director

Family Fun Walk

Join us on Sunday, May 5, 2019 at Peter Becker Community in Harleysville for the 25th Annual Family Fun Walk – a safe and scenic 3-mile walk, with ice cream, refreshments, and a chance to win door prizes. Money raised at this event benefits the ministries of COBYS.

Prizes will be awarded to youth groups raising \$1,000 and individuals in various donation categories.



Mark your calendar!

COBYS Board of Director News

COBYS Family Services is happy to introduce new leadership appointments and new members to our 2019 Board of Directors. Serving as president is Wilbur Rohrer, vice president is Rebecca Fuchs, treasurer is Bob Wintsch and returning as secretary is Suzanne Schaudel. Joining the board for the first time are Erin Bensing and Kay Kulp.



Wilbur Rohrer, President

Wilbur and his wife, Judy, live near Lititz. They have four children and eighteen grandchildren. Wilbur retired in April, 2014 after serving 51 years as owner and operator of Rohrer's Quarry, Inc. At the close of 2014, Wilbur attained emeritus status after serving 30 years as a member of the ministry team at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren in Lititz. He also served 34 years on the Board of Directors at Brethren Village. He is currently enjoying his retirement by spending more time with his wife and grandchildren.



Erin Bensing

Erin Bensing joined the COBYS Board of Directors in January 2019 and is grateful for this opportunity to support children and families. She is Vice President of Business Services at Clark Associates, Inc., leading the teams handling accounting, financial reporting, tax, and other support activities for the family of companies. Prior to joining Clark Associates, Erin worked in public accounting at Walz Group in Lancaster and in Northern Virginia for several years. Erin graduated from Gordon College with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Accounting, and Northeastern University with a Master's of Science in Taxation. She is a licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

Born and raised in Lancaster County, Erin loves time with friends and family, good books, hiking, needlecrafts, and trying new recipes. She also enjoys music and serves as a violinist in Worship Ministries at Calvary Church in Lancaster.

Rebecca Fuchs Vice President



Becky is the pastor at Mountville Church of the Brethren. She graduated from Gettysburg College and thirty years later received her Master of Divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary. In the interim, she was a full-time mother, volunteer educator for Encounter Volunteer Child Abuse Prevention program in Lancaster, a part-time Admission's Assistant at Franklin and Marshall College, and Moderator of Lancaster Church of the Brethren. She and her husband, Dave, live in Lancaster, are the parents of four children, and grandparents to four grandchildren.

Kay Kulp



Kay Ann (Heltzel) Kulp live in Pottstown. She and her husband, Edward, have 6 children ranging in ages from 14-27. She is currently employed as an Activities Assistant at Keystone Villa Independent Living in Douglassville and also as a part-time manager at JoAnn Fabrics and Crafts. Kay is an active member at Coventry Church of the Brethren, serving as a deacon, nursery worker, and Vacation Bible School craft coordinator. A fun fact about Kay is that she and her family have collected the past 13 t-shirts from participating in the COBYS Family Fun Walk in Harleysville.

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.

ExtraOrdinary Give 2018

Thanks to generous supporters like you, COBYS Family Services received over \$63,000 during the 24-hour Day of Giving in Lancaster County on November 16, 2018.



Save the Date! September 8, 2019 COBYS Bike & Hike

Our annual ride, cycle, and walk will start at Lititz Church of the Brethren, and include food, fellowship, and a silent auction.



Story Time Banquet



Thursday, March 14, 2019
Middle Creek Church of the Brethren

COBYS Shares Stories

COBYS Family Services "Story Time Banquet," held March 14 at the Middle Creek Church of the Brethren, revisited some old familiar children's stories and made inspirational parallels with the work done by the ministries of COBYS Family Services.

The program was offered at both a lunch and dinner seating. This year's event, with combined total attendance of nearly 500 people, raised more than \$56,000.



Executive Director **Mark Cunningham** welcomes the audience with a personal story about his childhood.

John Frye, Pastor of Music and Care at Calvary Church, provided a piano recital and sing-along at the lunch seating



Ridgeway Brass from Ridgeway Church of the Brethren provided lively music for the evening seating.

The Giving Tree

Director of Development **Anne Stokes** drew a parallel of the work of COBYS to the popular children's book "The Giving Tree". Where the tree provides for a boy throughout his life, COBYS provides for children in need throughout their journey of foster care and adoption.



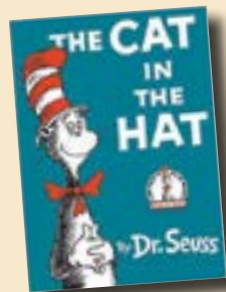
Director of Development **Anne Stokes** humbly invites the banquet audience to become part of the COBYS story with their support.



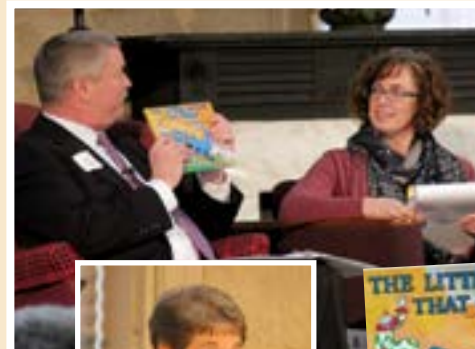
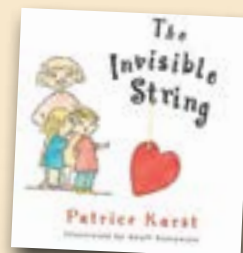
Mark Cunningham and Anne Stokes discuss options as they begin to make plans for the annual banquet.



Permanency Unit supervisors **Krista Rankin and Ruby Nolt** explained the difficult work provided by the **Permanency Unit** ministry at COBYS Family Services. They shared every day encounters as they provide foster care case management services for Lancaster County Children & Youth Agency. During the conversation, Mark interrupted with excerpts from "The Cat in the Hat".



Abby Keiser, Director of Family Life Services, shared information about the **Counseling Center**. She chose the book "The Invisible String" to explain some of the work done by COBYS therapists. Abby also introduced the Incredible Years group therapy program that incorporates puppets, videos, and role play to coach proper behavior in children.



Family Life Education supervisor **Holly Hardin and Cindy Umberger**, Director of Business Operations, share with Mark the myriad of options available through the **Family Life Education program**. They showed how the FLE ministry mirrors the lessons in "The Little Engine That Could" through classes, seminars, and educational programs.

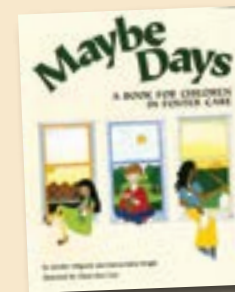
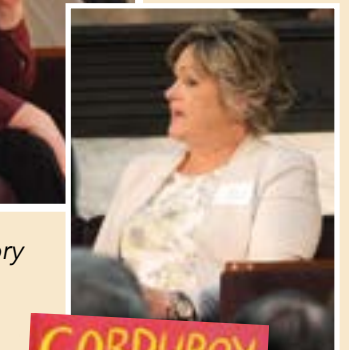
Umberger, Director of Business Operations, share with Mark the myriad of options available through the **Family Life Education program**. They showed how the FLE ministry mirrors the lessons in "The Little Engine That Could" through classes, seminars, and educational programs.



In a video interview, **Ida Long** shared her courageous story of becoming a **Kinship Care** grandmother raising her two granddaughters, and the help she received through COBYS.



Sarah and Kevin Esh told the story of their journey to becoming foster and adoptive parents in a conversation with Mark.



Director of Placement Services **Mary Sourber** chose "Maybe Days" as the story that sums up the feelings foster children experience during their time in the **Foster Care Program**. She also suggested "Corduroy" as an example of a children's story that displays what adoption feels like for the **Adoption Program**. Then she reminded us of the tremendous impact we make in the lives of the children we serve, but the need for more families is huge.

COBYS Supporters Share Stories Too!

New to the annual banquet this year was a storybook donation drive. Having books to call their own is important for the kids COBYS serves through our foster care and adoption programs. Attendees generously filled the bin to overflowing with donated books.



Participant Profile: Markiana

Tell us about your family: My family consists of myself; my husband, Kevin; my son, Davion (18); my daughter, Anaijah (14); my step-son, Kevin Jr. (15); and Jasper, our 4 year old Teacup Yorkie.

What town do you live in? Lancaster

What is your professional and educational background?

I work as a Patient Service Representative (PSR) in a cardiologist office, and I am studying Human Services at Lancaster Bible College.

What are your outside-of-work interests and hobbies? I enjoy reading and writing in my free time. As of late, my go-to for alone time is my Bible and journal. I also love spending weekends at home with my family.

How has completion of the Parenting Wisely sessions changed your family?

Parenting Wisely has given me a better understanding of my teens and how they perceive my parenting style. Also, I was able to see the flaws in my parenting style and to work on correcting them. After completion of the program, my teens and I are able to discuss expectations, boundaries, and outcomes. Our discussions allow each person involved to share their outlook and feelings. Each of us are given the opportunity to be heard and feeling heard often opens a door to finding common ground. The kids learn to respect my stance on things and I learn to respect theirs. In finding common ground, we are able to meet each other's expectations and build our relationships.

What benefits has your child/children received? My daughter is the teen who had to complete the sessions with me. She now has a better understanding of why I place boundaries and have expectations. She doesn't challenge my authority as her parent as much. Also, her and I are communicating and talking through our challenges rather than staying stuck in our misunderstandings.

What benefits have you received? What impact has there been on other relationships? My reward has been less anxiety and stress. The relationships my teens and I are building are rewarding.

What are some of the challenges that led you to the program? My daughter was having a hard time with authority figures in her life. This led her into a whirlwind of trouble at home and in school.

Did you have any preconceived ideas about the program? I didn't know what to expect from the program. I was open to trying it when it was offered to us by the Youth Aide Program.

How did you feel after completing Parenting Wisely? I felt normal. For a while I thought me and my children were going through our struggles alone. After watching the videos and relating to the characters and scenarios, I saw that our challenges are shared by many.

What should someone who is considering the class know? I would tell them to go into the program with an open mind. Try not be afraid of the hard things you may realize about yourself or your child when watching the videos. Each video will depict a right way and a wrong way to go about parenting your child. I would encourage people to reflect wisely and to allow their child to reflect and share thoughts about your parenting style. My daughter and I had open discussions about each scenario. I was able to hear her heart and to see how certain things I said or did hurt her. The program has helped my daughter and I, as well as helped me in other relationships where conflicts arise.



Markiana and daughter Anaijah

Parenting Wisely

This program helps families with teens strengthen communication, earn mutual respect, and set boundaries within the home. Participants are often referred through the court system for school truancy concerns. Parents and teens come together for the initial class and then work through a monitored on-line program from home for the completion of the

program. The parents and teens answer questions and view videos demonstrating various situations along with examples of how a situation might turn out if it is handled in a negative way, as well as the result if it is handled in a positive manner. This program also has a version for parents with younger children.

Meant to Be from page 1

while the biological parents use the time to improve their situation to work toward reunification. Mim said they came to the realization that choosing to provide foster care is within God's vision, while trying to protect themselves from potential pain was not.

Emily's path to adoption lasted more than two and a half years. Her biological great-grandmother had cared for her for four years and was included in court-mandated visitation schedules. The Herrs still maintain contact, visitation, and include her in special events in Emily's life. They realize that sharing Christ's love goes broader than to just the child in the adoption process.

Finally adoption day arrived. When they got to the courthouse in Reading, their lawyer informed them that the hearing was canceled because the judge was stuck in Washington D.C. due to bad weather. This would have been a crushing blow to Emily who had been asking about a court date and adoption for months. The group agreed canceling the hearing was not



You approach discipline differently with a foster child. When you're building emotional attachment while building your authoritative presence, you have to be more creative and less confrontational with discipline.

Boundaries need to be established in ways that are calm, gentle, and grace-filled.

– Ben & Mim Herr

an option. Luckily, while Emily was at the snack bar, balloons in hand, with Kristin and Mim's sister, their lawyer offered to search for another judge to take the case that day. While the family prayed in the corner, one judge walked by, exchanged greetings with the lawyer, but kept walking. A second judge came by greeting the lawyer with, "How are you?" The lawyer replied, "I'd be better if I had a judge." The door was opened. That judge agreed to take the hearing. A courtroom and stenographer were lined up.

Now they just needed her great-grandmother for the last piece of the proceeding. She had been spotted earlier in the day, but they feared she had left. Caseworkers scattered

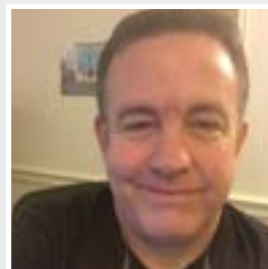
throughout the courthouse buildings to track her down. They found her, all the papers were signed, and everyone got to the courtroom in time.

Though the adoption hearing opportunity was almost as fleeting as the sunspot, the hope and promise of the rainbow was fulfilled for a family that was meant for four children.



The Faces of COBYS

How does your work at COBYS inspire you?



Matt Krebs, Permanency Caseworker

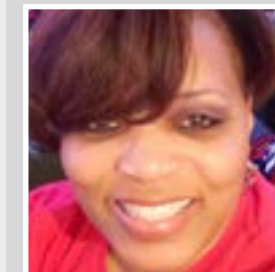
Many kids and adults have allowed me into their lives at very fragile, vulnerable times. This is a humbling thing. In the midst of much pain and loss, I have been inspired by the courage and resiliency of so many.



Jennifer Linder Miller, Sr. Resource Home Coordinator

I'm inspired by coworkers and supervisors who support each other through times of sorrow and joy. I'm inspired by the children who express courage and love in the midst of fear. I'm inspired by the families who provide unwavering commitment, who are open to participating in the uncertain, who are always willing to learn and grow. If you can do these things, you can do foster care!

What does working at COBYS mean to you?



April Russell, Family Life Educator and Kinship Navigator

Working at COBYS means that I get to work with wonderful people who are committed to serving families in the most direct fashion. I have been blessed and COBYS provides me with the opportunity to be a blessing to others.



Drew Scheffey, Part-Time Senior Adoption Caseworker and FLE Educator

Working at COBYS provides me an opportunity to help and to support children and to work with and to educate families. Doing this as part of an organization that values integrity, faith, teamwork, and servanthood is an honor.



COBYS Family Services
1417 Oregon Road
Leola, PA 17540

Non-Profit
U.S. Post Office
PAID
Permit No. 52
Lancaster, PA

Address Service Requested



Become our fan on Facebook.

A Look Inside

Feature Family1
 Message from Mark.....2
 Meet the Board.....3
 Banquet Review 4-5
 Parenting Wisely Account6
 The Faces of COBYS..... 6-7
 Ways To Support COBYS8

WAYS TO SUPPORT COBYS



**SPONSOR
EVENT
PARTICIPANTS**



**SPONSORING
EVENTS**



**MONTHLY
AUTOMATED
GIVING**



**FAMILY FUN
WALK**



BANQUET



VOLUNTEERING



**TELL YOUR
FRIENDS AND
NEIGHBORS
ABOUT COBYS**



**PRAY
FOR COBYS
MISSION**



KIDS CLOSET



BIKE & HIKE



**CHRISTMAS
GIFTS
DONATIONS**



**ONLINE
GIVING**



**EXTRAORDINARY
GIVE**



**END OF YEAR
GIVING**