



# Fostering Hope

Fall 2020

Volume 30, Number 4

2020: What a year!

## Mission Possible

**Over the past eight months we have all been on an unexpected journey.**

**Like you, COBYS has been forced to leave the sense of normalcy and familiarity.** New barriers stood in the way of us doing our job and fulfilling our mission to educate, support and empower children and adults to reach their full potential. In many ways, this new journey that we are on parallels the journey of the children and families in our various programs.

Being forced out of normalcy is exactly what happens to those who come into our care. Our ministry is to walk with them and support them to a place of stability and a healthy "new normal". But what does this look like when our normal way of doing things needs to be altered?

All of our departments have undergone the process of developing and adjusting to new procedures. Director of Business Operations, Cindy Umberger says, "I think there were several things that we just sort of accepted as not being possible until the pandemic forced us to look further... we assumed that we couldn't answer phones from home, but then our staff worked with the phone company to have the call forwarding come to our cell phone. We assumed that we couldn't keep our teams communicating as well, but in several of the departments, we are actually meeting (via zoom) more often than we did when in the office." With impeccable timing, at the end of 2019, COBYS fully equipped staff with



*Above: COBYS provided staff with Chromebooks at the end of 2019, kind of a Christmas gift to efficiency. Little did Santa know how vital they would become in 2020.*

*Below: The Foster Care unit shares a moment of celebration during a Zoom department meeting.*



Chromebooks, allowing all departments the ability to work from home. Additionally, several programs had converted to using electronic records shortly before the shutdown occurred. While technical changes like these were rarely viewed as being as urgent or important as our up-close and personal services, these very pieces ensured the ability of our case workers, therapists and educators to continue to provide the transformative care that our clients depend on.

The adaptations made with technology have also made way for us to continue to help find permanency for the children we serve. Adoption Supervisor Jen McDowell states, "In September 2020, two elementary aged children finally achieved permanency after being in the foster care system for four years. Typically, an adoption finalization hearing is held in a County Court House, in a court room filled with family members, friends, caseworkers, an attorney, and the judge. While this in person proceeding could not take place due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, the adoption finalization still occurred, now through virtual telecommunication! Instead of the full court room, computer monitors were filled with images of family members, friends, caseworkers, an attorney and judge, all celebrating this event. No doubt that, though the process to permanency looked very different for this adoption, the outcome for these children remained the same."

*continued on page 3.*

**"Zoom has allowed us to continue meeting with and training prospective foster/adoptive families. It took a lot of practice, trial & error, and grace from our participants, but Zoom has allowed us to continue moving forward in preparing families to meet the needs of kids in foster care."**

*- Sharon Kingsley, Resource Home Supervisor*

## 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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# Staff Wins! (and so do those we serve!)



**Every two months**, the staff at COBYS has the opportunity to nominate fellow coworkers for acts of service, kindness and generosity shown to each other and our clients. We call this program Staff Wins! All those nominated are listed in the staff newsletter and recognized at various staff meetings. A winner is chosen randomly from all nominees and is given a gift card.

In this most recent edition, some of the language used in describing those nominated included:

- patient
- flexible
- ensures staff stay connected
- making sure everyone's needs are being met
- fabulous
- they are blessed to have her insight, experience, and compassion
- a huge asset
- extra effort
- always goes above and beyond
- a prayer warrior
- sees the good in everyone
- available
- willingness to jump in and help when needed
- amazing support to our resource families
- you know the work she does is accurate and complete; she demonstrates serving joyfully each and every day
- has such a gift for working with people
- he has a passion for helping and supporting others

Why do I share this? Because working with children who have been abused or neglected is challenging. Because working with families who are struggling with any number of significant issues can be emotionally draining. Hearing encouragement from our co-workers can help us get through a difficult day or help us push forward when dealing with an especially demanding issue. We want our staff to "encourage one another and build each other up," as Paul said we should do in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

While all that is true, it's not the main reason we have Staff Wins!. The main reason is that when our staff are encouraged and built up, their clients are going to get the best from them. We really focus on doing all we can to make sure our clients get the best possible services. Our mission statement is, "**Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential.**" All we do focuses on that end.

At the bottom of the Staff Wins! nominating form, it says, "Because when 'Staff Wins!', those we serve win too!"

**Mark Cunningham,**  
Executive Director

**"Because when 'Staff Wins!',  
those we serve win too!"**



**COBYS  
Core Values:  
LIFTS**

**Life is Sacred  
Integrity  
Faith  
Teamwork  
Servanthood**

# Mission Possible continued from page 1.

Director of Family Life Services, Abby Keiser, shared how the counseling department quickly pivoted to meeting clients through telehealth (virtually through Zoom), where our therapists have successfully continued to use Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and other therapies. COBYS therapists have been serving existing clients and taking new ones as they face the challenge of creating boundaries and structure for themselves while they work from home. They continue to hone their skills and understanding of the best strategies for telehealth so clients can continue to find healing and breakthrough.

With group gathering restrictions in place, the Family Life Education (FLE) department moved classes to Zoom. This has proven to be a blessing in disguise for some. FLE supervisor Holly Hardin shared how they are finding the online format actually makes it easier for some busy parents. One young mother with several children has been able to take a class at home with a toddler on her lap while her other children prepare for school the next day. She would not have been able to make the trip to participate in an

**"Having extended Reach software and the Chromebooks (in addition to a willingness to tackle challenges), thinking outside of the box, and having an abundance of grace with each other allowed us to continue providing services to families."**

– Sharon Kingsley,  
Resource Home Supervisor



in-person class, but the online format has given her that opportunity. Additionally, FLE has been able to offer more services to kinship families, including individual behavioral consultations through Zoom that address the challenges of their unique situations.

COBYS has always and will always face challenges or barriers that stand in the way of empowering our clients to reach their full potential. Facing and adapting to the challenges of the pandemic is no different. One of the reasons we are able to do this is that we are empowered internally by the same compassionate support we provide to those we serve. Foster Care caseworker Heather Martin summed it up this way, "We all have been so supportive and uplifting to each other during our time working from home...I am really grateful for each of my teammates and I am glad that we are able to adapt for and with each other."

We support each other as we adapt for and with each other. We do that with the common goal of ministering to the children and families we are called to serve.

## The Faces of COBYS

**How do you describe COBYS to people you meet?**

**Nicole Davies,**  
FLE Educator

I tell everyone what a fantastic agency COBYS is! Not just as an employee, but in the services we provide for children and families in need. There are so many facets to the work done by COBYS - from foster care and adoption to counseling and family life education. There really is something for everyone who may be struggling in one way or another.



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

**Shannon Beck,**  
Permanency Caseworker

Teamwork - our line of work can be so difficult, so to be able to truly work together as a team on an issue or concern and to be able to bounce ideas off one another is something that I have not experienced (in a positive way) at other positions I've held.



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

**Lynette Nisly,**  
Therapist

I have been so appreciative to be able to continue working, to have an agency that supported a quick move to teletherapy and of the many people who provided support - both clinically and with business and technology issues.



2020

# Celebrating 40 years

The COBYS anniversary year celebration concludes with our fourth decade.

## The 10s—Expanding to Meet the Need

After the turbulent 2000s, COBYS, and the world, would react by adapting and growing. As activism grew in response to issues around the country, COBYS reacted by making sound financial and best practices decisions.

The decade started with Mark Cunningham being named as executive director.

COBYS closed the financially challenged Teen Mother & Child Group Home as that model of care was becoming obsolete.

A much heavier emphasis was being placed on Family Life Education, so COBYS responded by purchasing property at 171 E. King Street in Lancaster city. This became the base for classes, workshops and programs for children, adults and families. The new venue helped to meet the need for the provision of instruction to foster cooperation, courage, responsibility, self esteem and respect.

As the number of kids in foster care rose, we added caseworkers to provide quality care, with additional staff to support resource families. That increase in staff, and overcrowding at the main office, led to the decision to grow our facilities again. In 2018, COBYS purchased the Murry Hill Center building which now houses Foster Care, Resource Home, Adoption and Family Life Education units.

This space expansion in turn provided more space for the growing Counseling Services. Added were depth of expertise and the capacity to serve growing needs across the community, needs in part due to an increase in the recognition of the effects of trauma. Since 2011, the number of therapists we have has tripled, increasing our capacity to deliver excellent care.

As we end the review of the history of COBYS during this celebration year, we'll also share that, at the banquet in March, we announced that in 40 years we have had approximately 61,564 points of service, unique types of interaction with children, adults and families. Those points of service continue every day as we walk with those we are called to serve.



**Mark Cunningham named Executive Director in 2010**



**COBYS purchases 171 E. King Street to host growing Family Life Education programs**



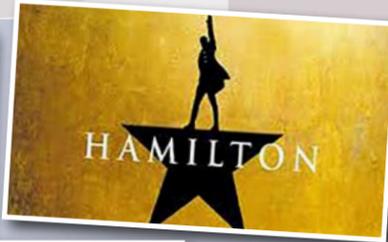
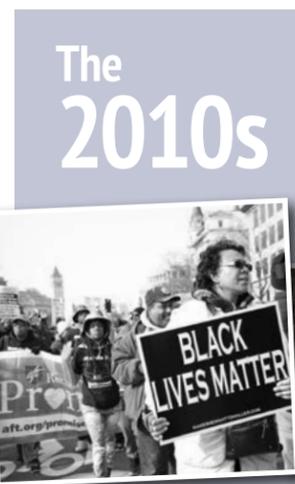
**COBYS purchases 444 Murry Hill Center to house Foster Care, Adoption and Family Life Education staff**



**Group Home closes as Foster Care model changes**



**Vacated space in the main office building allows Counseling to expand**



**At the annual banquet, COBYS announces 61,564 points of service in 40 years**

*In each issue of Fostering Hope in 2020 we highlighted milestones from the four decades of our 40-year history. We hope you enjoyed reminiscing with us during this celebration year.*



## You walked.



## You rode.



## You ate ice cream.



# Bike & Hike 2020 Social Distancing Edition

COBYS Family Services successfully held a modified version of our annual Bike & Hike fundraiser on Sunday September 13, at the Lititz Church of the Brethren, 300 West Orange Street, Lititz. Many also participated on their own in the days leading up to the in-person event. In the midst of a pandemic and with an altered format to adhere to group gathering guidelines, friends of COBYS generously exceeded the goal of \$100,000.



Participants adapted to the changes by participating in one of three ways: "On Their Own" before the event; on September 13 for the modified "Day Of" event; or by sponsoring Executive Director Mark Cunningham, who was supported with over \$25,000 as he covered 40 miles, one for every year that COBYS has existed to serve the community, the week before the event. (He actually covered 42 miles!)

**"We are overwhelmed and humbled by the generous support for the Bike & Hike this year, especially during these uncertain times. The funds raised go a long way to helping COBYS continue to provide compassionate care, beyond basic services to children and families at risk in our community."**

– COBYS Executive Director Mark Cunningham

## You supported us!

**Wow, wow, wow!**

Friends and supporters of COBYS donated **over \$140,000**

to the 2020 Bike & Hike – **the second highest amount in the 24-year history of the event.**

Because of the generosity of Bike & Hike sponsors and participants, COBYS is empowered to continue our mission and ministries in our community.

### Event Sponsors



### Gold Sponsors



### Silver Sponsors



### Bronze Sponsors





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*Celebrating  
40 years*

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS - NOVEMBER 20, 2020

### How to "ExtraGive"

**Set Your Alarm.** The first 20 organizations to receive 50 "unique gifts" will earn a \$500 Midnight Madness prize. We are looking for people to give at the stroke of midnight to help us win in this category for the ninth year in a row!

**It's the Little Things.** Even small gifts (like mustard seeds) 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).

**Visit with COBYS.** We will be at the Brethren Village giving stations from 10am-2pm on November 20:

**Wolfe Auditorium and  
the Game Room at Fieldcrest**

THE EXTRA<sup>TM</sup>  
ORDINARY  
GIVE



NOVEMBER 20, 2020

Learn more at [ExtraGive.org](http://ExtraGive.org). If you would like to participate but don't have access to a computer or can't make it to a giving station, contact Rebekah Hamilton at 717-656-6580 or [rebekah@cobys.org](mailto:rebekah@cobys.org).



40  
Years  
compassion  
dignity  
hope

Support  
COBYS  
during this  
community-wide  
day of giving

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