

## Family Matters



**Family does matter.** It especially matters when stability is tested and the definition of family takes on broader meanings and new dimensions. Who is your family? What does your family look like in times of need?

Foster/Resource families answer those questions every day. Two COBYS foster families share what that means in their lives as they open their home to children from hard places needing care.

**Leah and Jared Martin** (below) shared some thoughts at the Dinner & Conversation event.



**Carol and Alex Rabold** answered some questions as we celebrate their 20 years of foster care with COBYS (and 7+ years before moving to PA).

See both stories on pages 6-7

COBYS staff and friends of the organization joined together for a dinner and conversation on March 16. We provided updates about what is new in our care and we gave reminders about what is good at COBYS. Under the theme of Family Matters we shared that Care Matters, Messy Matters and Support Matters. We heard from one of our resource families and then we heard from our guests.

Whether you are able to join us at events like this or are engaged with our ministries at various times throughout the year, we want you to know that we are always open to dialogue. Want to know more about the realities facing our clients, the services provided or how best you can support our care? Be in touch and we'll get the conversation started. Contact Anne Stokes, director of development & communications at [anne@cobys.org](mailto:anne@cobys.org) or Steve Nichols, donor relations manager, at [steven@cobys.org](mailto:steven@cobys.org). We will continue to share stories representing the work we do together in making a transformative difference in the lives of the children, families and individuals we serve.



## Community Matters



### 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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## Persistence Pays Off



I am impressed with persistence. That's one of the qualities I admire in Mari, my wife. By the time you read this, Mari will have run the 2023 Boston Marathon. That is an accomplishment that takes persistence. Regularly waking up early to train in the cold winter months, running 20 or more miles on Saturdays, all while working and being a fantastic mom and wife. (Mari is also humble. I had to work pretty hard to convince her to give me permission to include this. I can be persistent too.)

Persistence is also a quality in many of our staff and the children we serve. A recent example of this involves Scott (name changed). Scott will be 13 years old in May. Scott came into foster care when he was six because of physical abuse and his mom's drug addiction. Since he came into the foster care system, Scott has been in 18 placements. Again, 18 placements. Two of those placements were in residential facilities that lasted a total of about three years. He was hospitalized on two occasions. He also was in a mental health hospital for almost five months. Two of his placements were short-term foster care stays with COBYS families, and the last placement (his adoptive family to-be) is a COBYS family.

Given the length of time he was in care and his multiple challenges, he had six rounds of Child Specific Recruitment which each are six months long and is where our staff try to find a forever home for kids who need them, often older children and children with behavior or other challenges.

Scott also had three rounds of child preparation, two child profiles, two child profile addendums, and one placement unit of service all completed by COBYS. I realize those terms may not mean much, but that's a lot of work for one child.

After numerous placements, including two homes that had previously agreed to adopt him but then asked for his removal due to aggressive behaviors, Scott is currently in a COBYS home that is a great fit for him and his adoption should be finalized in the near future. A tremendous amount of persistence by many COBYS staff and by Scott got us to this point.

We are all thrilled that Scott will now have a forever home after all this time, but it's worth noting that he has some apprehension about getting adopted because he is concerned that he'll miss the regular contact with his COBYS caseworkers who he calls his "superheroes" because they have been family to him.

This is just one example of our staff being persistent, and in this case, it is most definitely paying off! Yes, I am impressed with persistence.

Galatians 6:9, *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

Mark Cunningham,  
 Executive Director



**COBYS Core Values: LIFTS**  
 Life is Sacred • Integrity • Faith • Teamwork • Servanthood

## COBYS Events for 2023



FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2023, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

### Lunch & Learn

1411 Columbia Ave, Lancaster, PA 17603

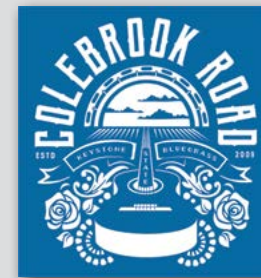
You're invited as COBYS Family Services is the featured non-profit for June in the cooperative venture by *United Way of Lancaster* and *Meals on Wheels of Lancaster* to introduce local service providers. Cost: \$20. Please email Feleen Nancarvis at feleen@lancastermow.org

SUNDAY, SEPT. 10, 2023

### COBYS Bike & Hike (see the back page)

Lititz Church of the Brethren

Join us for our annual gathering to take a 3-mile walk, a 10- or 25-mile bicycle or 65-mile motorcycle ride in support of COBYS. The day's events are topped off with our *Incredible Ice Cream Celebration*. Registration and our Kickstart campaign begin in July.



SUNDAY, SEPT. 24, 2023

### Colebrook Road Concert

Stonebridge Farm, Lebanon, PA

Enjoy a Sunday afternoon down on the farm with foot-stompin' bluegrass music by *Colebrook Road*. Food trucks will be on hand for this family-friendly music event. Hosted at the farm of Rachel and Mike Swank and benefitting COBYS.

EARLY NOVEMBER, 2023

### Community Matters Live Podcast and Conversation

Lancaster location TBD

Come sit in on the live recording of the "2 Adoptive Mamas" podcast and join us for an interactive conversation about the importance of the whole community supporting foster care and adoption. <https://twoadoptivemamas.com/podcast/>



### Kinship Family Matters

PA KinConnector is an information, referral and education program for kinship caregivers in Pennsylvania. They estimate that there are 259,405 children in Pennsylvania under 18 that live in homes where householders are grandparents or other relatives. 82,556 grandparents in Pennsylvania are responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren.

At COBYS, we currently we offer two Kinship support groups for residents of Lancaster and Schuylkill Counties. Kinship Caregivers can sign up for one or both sessions.

- Tuesday Evening Sessions 8-9 pm
- Thursday Morning Sessions 10-11 am

Topics include *Family Dynamics in Kinship Care*, *Giving our Kids a Voice*, *Scripts* and more.

For information on current topics and to sign up visit:

[www.cobys.org/family-support/kinship](http://www.cobys.org/family-support/kinship), or use the QR code.



# COBYS NEWish CAR

Fundraising Campaign

Campaign  
**\$25,000**  
Goal



## Safety Reasons:

- We can't have caseworkers stranded on the side of the road while delivering care.

## We go the distance for our kids:

- ▶ **COBYS Caseworkers drive thousands of miles each year** to provide care for foster/adoptive children.
- ▶ **Care includes** twice monthly visits with each child at the foster family home or in the community, medical and court appointments and other types of visits.
- ▶ **Heavy use and a wide geographic service area** (up to an hour away) mean vehicles need to be replaced every few years.



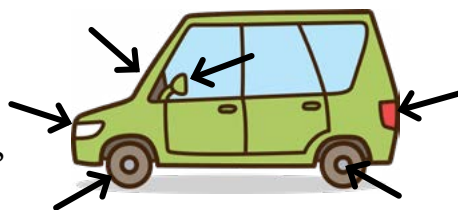
The Car Campaign goal is to raise \$25,000 by June 30, 2023



## Take "part" in our "drive"

**What "part" will you play?** Build reliable wheels so we can serve our kids together. We need:

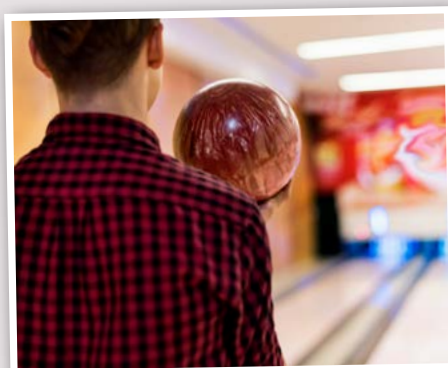
**Tires** (where the rubber meet the road), **Bumper** (safety device we hope never gets used), **Wiper blades** (because—spring happens), **Brakes** (so we don't use the bumper), and so much more!



## COBYS Care Fund

### Care Fund In Action

The staff at COBYS often work across programs and services to make sure our children receive the best care possible. This past December, Morgan Adams, senior adoption caseworker and Andy Gonzalez, senior permanency caseworker, did just that and used the COBYS Care Fund to make sure a youth they were both serving had a chance to feel special. The youth was residing in a group home, so Andy and Morgan treated him to an afternoon out as a combined birthday and Christmas celebration.



The afternoon of fun consisted of lunch and bowling and a time for the youth to open his Christmas gifts. Christmas gifts are provided each year by generous donors to all children served by our Permanency unit. The youth was very excited and grateful for the day and to get to do something fun off the campus of his group home.

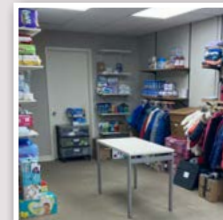
Celebrations like these are especially important for youth living in group homes. According to Morgan, youth in this type of care, "don't have people to take them out and do fun things normally, so it's extra special to be able to do that with them. These kids don't get to spend holidays or birthdays with loved ones, they are surrounded by other kids (who they don't always get along with) and staff (sometimes they like them, sometimes they don't). So being able to spend the day and hopefully make them feel special is important."

### Kids Closet Needs List

COBYS has one big closet for all our kids. Each foster child coming into care receives a backpack filled with clothes, toys, personal care items, a Bible and more. The Closet allows caseworkers to "shop" for each child and their unique needs. Gifts for special occasions, supplies for caseworkers' activities with kids and car seats for visitations all have a spot in the Closet. No used items, please.

Our Amazon Wish List is available for easy shopping: <https://a.co/hXsOAXh>

Or scan the QR code:



### The Top Needs are:

1. **Spring Clothing** – Basics (joggers, leggings, sweatshirts, t-shirts) for Newborn – Teen
2. **Baby Items** – Blankets, Mr. Brown's bottles, teething, hooded towels
3. **Diapers** (Size 4, 6 and 7) and Wipes
4. **Duffels** for teens
5. **Throw blankets** for kids and teens

COBYS is grateful to individuals, families and churches who help "stock the closet" with supplies for our foster care and adoption children.

If you are planning to make a donation or hold a supply drive, please contact Janice Burkhart at [jburkhart@cobys.org](mailto:jburkhart@cobys.org) prior to holding the supply drive or bringing the donation to our Murry Hill Center office. This allows us to confirm need of specific items and availability of staff to receive the donation.

Thank you for your interest in supporting the kids we serve.

## THE COBYS+ DIFFERENCE

### Parent Training

The Check Engine is a helpful parenting activity that teaches children to be aware and self-regulate their feelings. BIG feelings can impact every area of our lives, so COBYS trains our foster families to ask this question: How's your engine running? This question can teach children the skill of noticing how they are feeling so they can begin to learn how to self-regulate their mood and/or energy level. Maybe their engine is running in the blue (sluggish, sad, or low energy), green (good to go, calm), or red (high energy, or even mad/angry).



### Does the "Check Engine" meter work?

*"The same night we made them my foster daughter chose to use hers. She sometimes becomes dysregulated at bedtime and as I was tucking our boys in, she went and picked hers up to show me she was in the red. I was able to get down on her level, hold her hands and make eye class contact. She was able to tell me a reason why her engine was in the red. After we made them we were able to have a great conversation about how our bodies physically felt in each section and what we individually needed when our bodies feel a certain way. My bio son asked to check his engine the next day because he wanted a hug and that was one of his solutions when his engine was 'running slow'."*

- COBYS Foster Parent

### Roberta "Bobbie" Jean Knable



Roberta Knable passed away in November 2022.

Bobbie and her loving husband, Joseph, have been monthly supporters of the ministries of COBYS since 2012. To honor Bobbie's spirit and a life well-lived, Joe and his family recently provided a significant gift in her memory to the COBYS Care Fund.

Our sincere appreciation to the Knable family for continuing Bobbie's legacy by blessing our kids and families.



**Scan the QR code to donate today!**

Or visit: [cobys.org/cobys-newish-car-campaign](https://cobys.org/cobys-newish-car-campaign)

*If donating by check, please designate "Car Campaign" in the memo line.*

*Our car dealership contacts believe a lightly used vehicle could be purchased for around \$25,000.*

## Leah and Jared Martin



## Family Matters

Leah & Jared Martin will be married 10 years in July. They live in Elizabethtown and were first approved as resource parents with COBYS seven years ago. Their two children were adopted through COBYS and the family has a current foster placement of two siblings. They have fostered 11 children with COBYS.

### **What led you to foster care, and what led you to COBYS specifically?**

**Leah:** With foster care, we were talking about that since before we were married. I knew for some time that I wouldn't have biological children. So we knew that our family would be some form of adoption or foster care, because I always knew I wanted to be a mom. We talked about that and were both really open to it.

We went to one of the COBYS Information Sessions and were really impressed with the training and information there. It really convinced us that foster care was the direction we wanted to go. And we've been with COBYS ever since.

**Jared:** We talked about it early in our relationship, and whether they were biological kids or not, we would have kids and we'll provide a home for them. And we chose COBYS based on their "motivated by Christian faith" emphasis, as that is an emphasis in our decision to open our home.

### **You had a placement with many responsibilities and daily visits. Can you tell us about that?**

**Leah:** Yes, a previous placement we had, had very significant medical needs, so a ton of doctors visits and seven-days-a-week visitation requirements. Not all visitations were in person, many of those were virtual for a certain amount of time. That means a lot of schedule coordinating.

### **What are some things that have been rewarding in this journey, and what have been challenges?**

**Leah:** One thing that comes to mind, is our son. He was our first placement and is now adopted by us. We first met him in the NICU when he was about three-weeks-old. He came home at about a month-old. At that time he was on oxygen. He took his first steps at around 22-23 months. And he now rides a two-wheeler bike, he walked himself home from the bus stop today with another kid in his class. He will always have developmental issues, but just the growth and progress there has been really, really great.

### **Would you say a few words about the process of saying good-bye to foster care children who are going back home or to a placement?**

**Leah:** The day of a child leaving is very often hectic. Although you might have a good idea of what might happen, you don't necessarily know, because it will be decided in court. In our experience, you don't know until the judge decides. And once the judge decides, it may be as quick as, "We'll be here in three hours to pick up the child." So you're saying "good-bye" as you're packing everything up.

You generally do have an idea that that is a possibility, so you're not going into it completely blindsided. It can still feel very, very rushed. But because you have a sense that it could

happen, depending on the age of the child, there may be conversations happening before that about, "Hey, this might happen because the judge will be making a decision today, and this could happen, or this could happen." But it is quick packing stuff up. Then, doing your best to say good-bye.

We always try to pass on contact information, but at that point, you really have to focus on just saying good-bye and letting go of that control and that role. It is not easy, because you have a way to do things for this kid, and you've poured into them, and you know things will look different. Because, even in situations where it is the happiest, best option, and you know it is and are in agreement with that, it is still somewhere different. It is further away. And the ball's not in your court whether you get to keep contact or not. That's up to the biological family. We've had cases where we've had a little bit of contact and others where we know nothing.

For our family, we've taken a break after every placement, for a certain period of time just to kind of regroup and be together. After our last placement left, our two kids had a sleepover in the same room. They were missing the kids and wanted to cuddle together and cry a little. So, they had a little sleepover.

## Carol and Alex Rabold



This year, Alex and Carol are celebrating 20 years of service as foster parents through COBYS. Married for 31 years, their family has devoted their lives to serving foster children. Prior to becoming a licensed foster family through COBYS, they lived in Kansas where they fostered 100 kids in seven and a half years. During their 20 years with COBYS, they have fostered 36 children. They are currently fostering a 4-year-old.

They live in the Willow Street area. Alex is in commercial HVAC and Carol is a program coordinator for Bible2School. They have five children, Andrew (married to Dana with their two little girls Quinn and Ellie), Marissa (married to Cameron), and their three youngest, Zach, Gabe and Dylan.

### **What are your reasons for fostering? Have they changed or expanded over the years?**

We have always loved kids. Carol has family who are foster parents and our pastors in Kansas were also foster parents. While we started this adventure because we love kids and saw a need, we have realized that this is truly what God has called us to do.

### **Why did you choose COBYS as your foster care agency?**

We chose COBYS mainly because they were a Christian agency. We had the privilege of working with the county and a private agency in Kansas and really appreciated working with an agency that supported our Christian values.

### **What are some aspects of providing foster care that have been most rewarding for you? What has been most challenging?**

We absolutely love the children that God has brought into our lives and the relationships that have been built, both with us as parents and with our biological children. Of course, juggling the needs of our foster children and our biological children has not always been easy. That's probably been the most difficult challenge.

### **What have you done to help develop appropriate connections between your biological and foster kids?**

Foster care is truly a family ministry for us. Our kids have been so valuable in the journey. As they "do life," they

model behaviors for the kids joining our family, without even realizing the impact that they are making. We have learned (the hard way) that it is extremely beneficial for our oldest to be the oldest child in the home, so that they are setting the example.

### **What are your thoughts on fostering sibling groups?**

We love the opportunity to foster siblings. We spent six months with a sibling group of five. That was so much fun! Whenever possible, we believe that it is best for siblings to stay together. They are already experiencing so much loss.

### **Over your extensive foster care experience, are there any placements that have really made an impact?**

All of the kids we have had the privilege of caring for have made an impact, in one way or another. We have learned that we really love special needs kids, spending two years

with a Down's Syndrome kiddo and three years with a child on the Autism spectrum.

### **Do you maintain connections with any of the children and families?**

We spent a number of years working with teenage girls. We are still in contact with many of them, mainly through Facebook. Currently, we spend Saturdays with one of our kids, as well.

### **What role did your faith play in your decision to foster children? Is there a particular Bible verse that sustains you?**

Jesus is the only reason we can do what we do! Without Him, I'm sure we would have quit a long time ago. Prayer is a huge part of our process in choosing to take a placement and during the placement as well. Philippians 4 is a favorite passage and so appropriate, as we bring our prayers for our kiddos before the Lord.

### **Philippians 4, NIV**

**<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**



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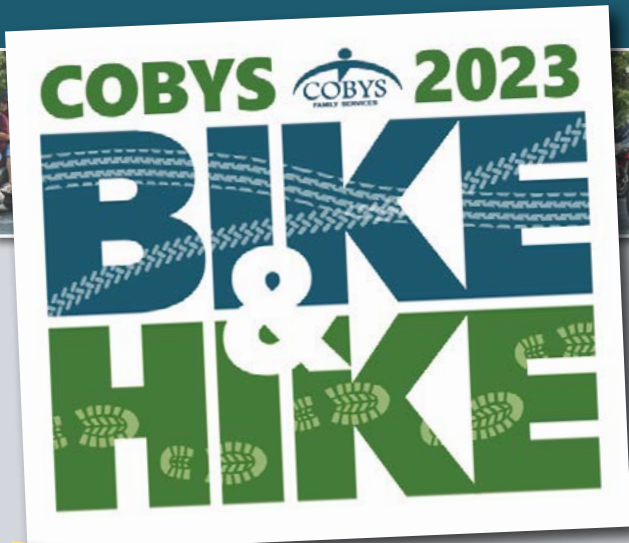


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### A Look Inside

Family Matters ..... 1, 6-7  
 Message from Mark ..... 2  
 COBYS Upcoming Events ..... 3  
 Memorial Gift ..... 3  
 Car Campaign ..... 4  
 The COBYS Difference ..... 4-5  
   The Care Fund  
   Program & Training News  
 Family Matters, continued,  
 two families' stories ..... 6-7  
 Bike & Hike - Save the Date ..... 8

## Save the Date



65-mile country-side  
motorcycle ride  
  
10 & 25-mile  
bicycle rides  
  
Three-mile walk



**Incredible  
Ice Cream  
Celebration**



*Sponsorship  
Opportunities  
Available*  
  
*Invest in your  
community*  
  
*Contact Anne Stokes  
anne@cobys.org*

**Sunday,  
September 10, 2023  
Lititz Church of the Brethren**

**Watch for details this summer!**