



The Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning
February 2025



The Bergamo Break

Pause, pray, and stay connected with the latest news at Bergamo

Bergamo Love Stories

For Valentine's Day this month, we are highlighting two love stories that began at Bergamo or on the grounds of Mount Saint John.

In the summer of 1987, Tim and Mary Ellen Dillon (pictured right), met at Bergamo during Marianist LIFE (Living in Faith Experience), a program that brings together students and employees from Marianist high schools across the country. Mary Ellen (then Menke) was a science teacher at Purcell Marian High School in Cincinnati and Tim was a religion teacher at Chaminade Julienne Catholic (CJ) High School.



When Tim first saw Mary Ellen, he thought, "She's cute, but she's probably a nun." Similarly, when the facilitators introduced themselves, Tim was sitting between a pair of Marianist brothers, and Mary Ellen was unsure if Tim was also a brother. Later, after confirming that neither had taken a vow of celibacy, Tim and Mary Ellen acted in a skit and played a couple who dated, married, and honeymooned – Mary Ellen was "Mrs. Whip" and Tim was her husband, "Cool Whip." One Marianist brother remarked, "We never thought the two of you should be together, but you had such chemistry in the skit!"

The skit proved to be prophetic. Tim and Mary Ellen went on long hikes around the Mount St. John property during LIFE week and later enjoyed their first official date at Kings Island. Two years later, they again facilitated Marianist LIFE – this time as a married couple. They continued to help lead the LIFE program each summer until they started a family and had two children, Brendan and Kateri.

Though their children ended LIFE for them, so to speak, they continued to stay involved with Bergamo. Tim started the Kairos retreat program at CJ and thus has led dozens of retreats at Bergamo, while Mary Ellen wrote one of the stations for the trail guide at Mount St. John. Through the years, Tim and Mary Ellen have attended or hosted numerous Bergamo gatherings, including Kateri's baptism.

The couple is also still involved with the Marianists as members of the Micah 6:8 lay Marianist community and through their work at Marianist institutions – Tim still works at CJ and Mary Ellen teaches biology at the University of Dayton. They also passed their love for the Marianists on to their children. Kateri started a lay Marianist community and both children have been employed by Marianist institutions, with Brendan serving at Bergamo as the guest services coordinator. Tim and Mary Ellen hope their journey might one day inspire Brendan to have a love story instead of spending hours creating outstanding content, such as this article, for the Bergamo newsletter.

Since meeting 37 years ago, Tim and Mary Ellen still enjoy taking long hikes and attending retreats together. They have built a wonderful life for themselves and others, and, at the risk of editorializing, they have been wonderful models of the Marianist charism and terrific parents.

"We have a happy life," said Tim.



Another love story is that of Ginny Snead, Bergamo's accounting administrator, who met her husband, Steve (both pictured left), while working in Marianist Hall.

"I was sitting at my desk in Marianist Hall when he walked by my door with Bro. Tom Payne for an interview, and I thought, 'Boy, is he cute!'" said Ginny. Luckily for Ginny, Steve was hired to work at Mount St. John and turned out to be a reliable groundskeeper and a real keeper.

Steve started working on the property in the summer of 1989, and he and Ginny had gone on their first date by the fall.

"We would sit together at lunch," said Ginny. "The staff was all excited for us."

The couple got engaged a few years later on Christmas day and were married in June 1994. As a gift for their one year anniversary present, Steve gave Ginny a cat from the Mount St. John's property, which they named "Gracie." This was the first of a number of cats over the years, and the couple now has 14 cats. When they are not cat-rearing, the couple enjoys watching sports together, though Ginny, an avid Reds fan, said she had to explain baseball and football to Steve, who "didn't see what the big deal was."

They have enjoyed 31 years of marriage, which, as Ginny said, has been a story of "living happily ever after."

Bergamo is proud of its role in the stories of the Dillons and Sneads, in addition to the countless other relationships, friendships, and community bonds that have been formed or strengthened here. We hope that you, too, experience this fellowship during your next visit.

-Brendan Dillon, Guest Services Coordinator at Bergamo



Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning

LENTEN FAITH-SHARING GROUP

Deepen your faith with a community of adults of all ages

Build community through weekly faith-sharing opportunities, prayer experiences, and more. Thursday evenings during Lent at the Bergamo Center, starting March 5.

Space is limited. To find more information and to register, visit www.bergamocenter.org and click "Register" or call (937) 426-2363, option 1.

Faces of Bergamo: Meet the Jacksons!

Carol and Don Jackson are spiritual directors at Bergamo Center. Spiritual directors serve as companions for people on their spiritual journeys and help them process their relationship with God. You can learn more about spiritual direction in an upcoming newsletter or on the Bergamo website.



Please tell us about yourselves. We have been married for 62 years and are blessed with 3 children, 8 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. We met when we were both working at Beerman's department store - Don was a stock boy and I got to boss him around!

Prayer has been central in our marriage and we have been involved in many faith-based opportunities together. Beginning with the Cursillo, the Charismatic movement, the Healing Light community which was housed above the print shop and the many programs offered at Bergamo during the 70's and 80's.

How have you been involved with Bergamo/the Mount Saint John property?

We first attended a pre-Cana retreat on the Mount Saint John property in 1962 (before the Bergamo Center was founded). Following the Second Vatican Council and exhortation of Pope St. John XXIII, Bergamo's patron saint, to "Throw open the windows of the church and let the fresh air of the spirit blow through," Bergamo's presence initiated many faith changes and growth for us and many others. We attended our first guitar mass, experienced dialog masses and began to better appreciate the role of the layperson. Bergamo provided the much-needed bridge between pre and post-Vatican II.

Carol: I have also worked in multiple roles at Mount Saint John, including assisting at retreats, working as a receptionist, in the accounting office and managing the St. Mark's Bookshop satellite store when it was in the Queen of Apostles Chapel building.

While working in the bookstore, I came across a book on the Enneagram, which piqued my interest and marked a leap in my faith journey. Since the 2000s, Don and I have become certified Enneagram teachers and offered national Enneagram workshops at Bergamo.

We have also gone through training to become certified spiritual directors and have offered this ministry and met regularly with spiritual directees at Bergamo since 2015.

What is a highlight of your involvement at Bergamo? *Carol: As I reflect on the experiences that have endured it would be the love of scriptures that was instilled by Fr. Frank Maloney and the precious gift of contemplation instilled by Bro. Bob Brisky.*

We also loved learning from the Marianists and all of the programs that were brought in here over the years.

What do you hope guests will take away from their time at Bergamo? *We hope they find attributes of God - support, faith, hope, and service - reflected to them in this*



January Highlights

After returning from the holidays, Mother Nature decided to dump nearly a foot of snow on us, causing several groups to have to reschedule their events. Once we finally dug our way out of the snow, our building was once again filled with guests all throughout January, including three senior Kairos retreats and three junior retreats. The Glenmary Missionaries held their retreat here during what was so far the coldest week of the winter. These novices who are beginning their path toward priesthood, are all from Africa and were not too excited about our Dayton weather! However, most mornings found them circled around our warm & inviting fireplace, which they enjoyed immensely. And finally, here for the first time was Fondation Fanmi Pitit Manman Mari. This group, composed of Hatians and Haitian Americans, is dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor in Haiti and building schools and clinics in rural areas. While here at Bergamo, they celebrated Mass together and prayed before the Blessed Sacrament during Adoration. In summary, though January was cold & snowy outside, inside our building you would have found much joy, laughter, and community & faith building!

February, March, and April Arrivals at Bergamo

FEBRUARY

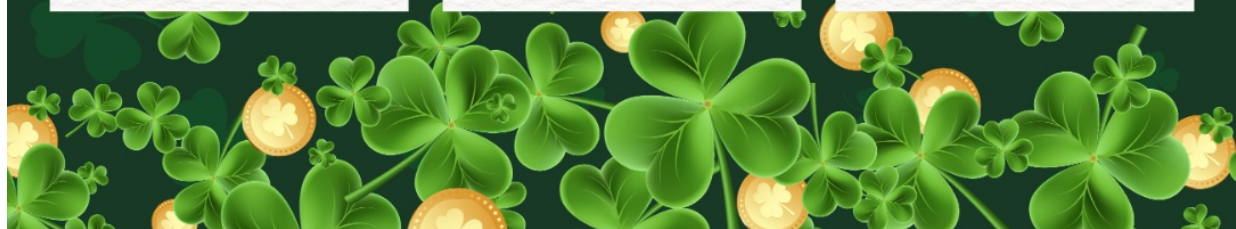
Mt. Notre Dame HS
Moeller HS
Haller Scrapbooking
Retreat
Kopfler Scrapbooking
Retreat
Elder HS Juniors
Quilt Dreamers Retreat
Moeller HS
Administrators (Marianist
Educational Partners)
Trinity Reformed
Episcopal Church
Lutheran Church of the
Resurrection
Purcell Marian HS
DePaul Cristo Rey HS

MARCH

Bergamo-Sponsored
"World's Greatest"
Retreat
Bellbrook Presbyterian
Church
Seton HS Junior Retreat
LaSalle HS Kairos
Illuman Enneagram
Ignatian Spirituality
Project Men's and
Women's Retreats
Alter HS Kairos
Royalmont Academy
Retreat
Creative Quilter's
Retreat
Midwest Native Plant
Conference
LIFE Planning Meeting

APRIL

Purcell Marian HS
Chaminade Julienne HS
Kairos
UD Chaminade Scholars
Retrouvaille
NW Baptist Church
Pax Christi
Wright Patterson Air
Force Base
Moeller HS
Dayton Knitting Guild
Bergamo-Sponsored
Lenten Faith-Sharing
Group



3 Minute Retreat

Pause. Breathe deeply. Slowly read the following passage three times.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.
(1 John 4:18-19)

Reflect. What fears are you holding onto? Take a few moments to talk with God about these and bring them to God's love.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own. *Lord, when I am afraid, let me feel your love. Amen.*

Connect with Us

Spend the day at Bergamo! Attend an upcoming Day of Rest and Healing:
March 3, 4, 5, April 22, 28, 29, May 5-9, 12-15

Find more information on our website: www.bergamocenter.org (under "Adult Programs")

Interested in booking a group? Contact us at (937) 426-2363 or info@bergamocenter.org

Check out photos from your group's visit to Bergamo and other updates on our Facebook and Instagram pages!



CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Have you thought about ways you can give your time in service, especially with Lent right around the corner? Have you ever considered the ministry of hospitality, and how simply being kind and helpful can make someone's day? If so, please consider volunteering at Bergamo's front desk! We would love to have a few regular volunteers who could help us out. Whether you can commit to once a month, twice a month, or even weekly, we would be most grateful for your time. Please reach out to Brendan Dillon, our guest service coordinator, at brendand@bergamocenter.org if you are interested.

Moving to Quarterly Newsletter

If you have read this far in our newsletter, it means you are one of our devoted readers, so first of all, thank you! We have decided to switch from a monthly to a quarterly newsletter, but will continue to share the latest from Bergamo and provide you with prayerful reflections and ways to get involved! Until then, we ask that you continue to keep Bergamo Center, along with all of our many guests, in your prayers.

Thank you!

Join Our Cause

Please consider supporting Bergamo's mission of providing excellent programming and facilities.

Donate

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