



Heart-shaped Dilly Bars at Bethalto Dairy Queen easy way to say “I love you” on Valentine’s Day

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BETHALTO - Kelley and Chad Gerber have continued a long-standing Bethalto Dairy Queen tradition of heart-shaped Dilly Bars.

Kelley Gerber said the heart-shaped Dilly Bars are a long-standing tradition at the Dairy Queen and she and her husband are more than glad to continue it.

Today, through the day, the Dilly Bars will be available and also available in packages. Kelley and Chad purchased the Dairy Queen in October 2015 and have continued many of the well-established traditions in the Bethalto community. She said she loves the people of Bethalto and her “excellent” staff. Kelley is originally from Tennessee and still has a sweet, Southern demanor about herself.

“It is just a great tradition,” Kelley said. “Valentine’s Day is about love and giving to everyone. The heart-shaped Dilly Bar is just a bit more of a personal touch. Dairy Queen also started a Cupid Cake, which is extremely popular.”

James and Cheri Hartsock opened the Bethalto Dairy Queen in November 1995. In July 2001, **Brenda and Jim Cox** purchased the Diary Queen in Bethalto. In 2012, the Bethalto operation remodeled to the latest DQ concept.

Bethalto Dairy Queen general manager **Toni Book** has been an employee since the business opened and marks her 20th anniversary in November. Hartsock made the original mold for the heart-shaped Dilly Bar. The Bethalto group had to get approval through the corporate office to make the unique heart-shaped Dilly Bars weigh exactly the same as the others and meet other specifications.

Dairy Queen's mission statement is to create positive memories for all who touch DQ and the heart-shaped Dilly Bars appear to match that during the Valentine's season. Today, the Bethalto DQ gets heart-shaped Dilly Bar orders from various schools, businesses and even nursing homes.

Kelley said she and her husband are extremely excited to have the Bethalto Dairy Queen.

"We found out they were selling it and we thought it was such a great restaurant," she said of the Bethalto location. "We wanted to give back to the community and we thought we had a good opportunity to do that with the restaurant."

Today, on a snowy Valentine's Day, the Dairy Queen opened at 11 a.m. and the heart-shaped Dilly Bars will be free-flowing all day with customers.

"It is a tradition everyone loves," Book said of the special Valentine's treats.

Book said the staff produces about 1,500 heart-shaped Dilly Bars, working nonstop from February until Valentine's Day to produce them. She said each manager and staff member works on the project.

"Kids come in and see a different shape and something different and something you can only get here," she said. "The mold is pre-set and we start at one, it has to be a certain weight. After we pour the ice cream in them, we freeze them for a couple hours, then dip them, drain the dip off, and leave and let them freeze for a little longer and bag them. Usually we are jam-packed here on Valentine's Day."

Kelley Gerber summed up Valentine's Day appropriately by saying it is "a day to show passion and love for the people you care about."

"A lot of people show love on Valentine's Day through food and what a better way than through a heart-shaped Dilly Bar," she said. "That just says **I love you.**"

