

For Bethalto DQ owners, love is a Dilly

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Jim and Brenda Cox, who own the Bethalto Dairy Queen, have a unique way for customers to celebrate love and Valentine's Day each year – through heart-shaped Dilly Bars.

In regard to Valentine's Day, many think about the gift of flowers, but Brenda and Jim have attempted to provide an alternative to that by producing the only heart-shaped Dilly Bar in the country. The heart-shaped bars are served only at this local Dairy Queen from Feb. 1 to Feb. 15.

“It is a unique symbol of love,” Brenda Cox said. “It is a great idea to show love for Valentine’s Day. When we sell them we see the kids just light up with big smiles on their faces.”

The late James and Cheri Hartsock opened the Bethalto Dairy Queen in November 1995. In July 2001, Brenda and Jim purchased the Dairy 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.

Sam Temperato, a St. Louis man who designed the Bethalto DQ, invented the Blizzard and it was released in 1985. At the present, Bethalto DQ has more than 1,000 orders for the unique Valentine’s bars prior to the holiday. That number does not include what the DQ sells to others in the restaurant.

Myranda Rule, an assistant general manager, spearheads the making of many of the heart-shaped bars. She said the entire staff is taught how to make them. The bars are made with the heart-shaped mold on a tray, then dipped in chocolate. Rule said she loves spreading the gift of love with the bars to others at Valentine’s and agreed with Brenda Cox that seeing the kids’ faces when they receive the bars are her best moments each year.

The Bethalto business has won six Dairy Queen Corporate Pride Awards and only three awards are given to the top Dairy Queens in the nation. The PRIDE Awards have been available only the past seven years and the Bethalto location has won six times. On the year the Bethalto DQ remodeled, it was not eligible for the award.

The PRIDE Awards are based on an unannounced yearly facility inspection by the DQ corporate offices. Food temperatures, adherence to standards, cleanliness, upkeep of grounds, good preparation, storage, and sanitary measures such as hand washing, use of approved products for sanitizing utensils and work surfaces, etc., are all carefully inspected. Only 2 percent of the DQ’s in the nation are in this awards class for the PRIDE Awards.

The Bethalto DQ offers a night for charities for a certain amount of months each year.

Brenda and Jim Cox have been married for 22 years and much of their life outside their home has been developed at DQ with staff and relationships with customers. The couple considers every employee almost a part of their family.

“We are very proud of the accomplishments of our crew,” she said. “To be listed as one of the top 2 percent of Dairy Queens in the nation we have an awesome crew led by a general manager with over 16 years experience. This is what makes this possible.”