



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

J. Ray and Margaret Sigas will celebrate their 49th anniversary this spring. The Sigases live at The Heritage in Irondequoit.

Vows are eternal for St. Ann's/Heritage couples

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — For some people, entering an adult home doesn't mean having to be separated from their loved ones.

William and Johanna Kern, along with J. Ray and Margaret Sigas, are two of the 18 married couples living at St. Ann's Home and The Heritage, 1500 Portland Ave.

Living arrangements vary, from both spouses residing in St. Ann's or The Heritage, or one in each of the connecting facilities. The Heritage offers apartment-type dwellings for senior citizens who may need occasional medical attention but would also like to retain a degree of independence; St. Ann's Home is for residents who require more frequent care.

The Kerns, who have been married 63 years, came to The Heritage in

November, 1989; William was recently transferred to St. Ann's Home.

The Sigases, who tied the knot 49 years ago this May, entered The Heritage in March of 1990 and were fortunate enough to find two apartments next door to each other. Whereas most married Heritage residents maintain separate apartments from their spouses, the Sigases opted to convert one into a living room and the other into a bedroom for the two of them.

In honor of the 18 couples, who represent about six percent of the total St. Ann's/The Heritage population, the facility has planned a Valentine's Day "sweetheart luncheon" for the first time ever. This event is also open to residents' spouses who still live in the community.

"We felt that this would be an opportunity for them to have an intimate meal together and celebrate Valen-

tine's Day, because it's a tradition that they've carried throughout their lifetime," noted Sue D'Ettore, director of recreation at St. Ann's Home.

The couples are shining examples of the lifetime commitment that marriage is meant to reflect — a commitment much less prevalent in 1990s America than in previous eras.

"Their dedication and caring for each other always amazes me, because I haven't found that we're as dedicated in my generation," said the 40-year-old D'Ettore.

The seniors have some worthwhile advice for younger couples.

"People who get married should share whatever they're doing, and enjoy doing it," said Johanna Kern. "When the marriages break up, people don't know each other the way they should."

The Sigases, meanwhile, feel that the

key to a successful marriage is the willingness to compromise.

"You have to be very flexible. I don't know how else you can explain it," said J. Ray.

"You cannot have your own way all of the time," his wife added. "If (couples) would only give a little on both sides."

J. Ray is saddened by today's increasing divorce rates. "You spoil it for your children. Their lives will never be the same again," he said. "There's too much independence and too much going on these days. The families are disappearing."

Nothing has ever been able to destroy these couples' commitment — or their love for each other. Asked if she still has the same feelings for William as the day they were wed, Johanna Kern quickly and solemnly replied, "You bet."

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