

# Marianist Center helps nurture families

BY MARY GORRY  
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The Marianist community in the Rockville Centre Diocese is dedicated to bringing Jesus to all people, not only through educating young people in schools, but also by offering family ministry retreats, sponsored by the Marianist Center, that help families grow stronger in faith and closer to each other.

“The Marianist Center has been in existence for about 40 years in the Philadelphia area,” noted Pati Krasensky, a member of the Long Island retreat team and associate director of community development of the North American Center for Marianist Studies in Philadelphia. A main focus of the center for some time has been ministering to the family through retreats. The Marianist Center, which is part of the North American Center for Marianist Studies, also has its headquarters in Philadelphia as well as several nearby retreat houses.

A Long Island retreat team was created seven years ago by Marianist Brother Walter Oberster from Rockaway, called Marianists for Long Island Family Experience. The team consists of laypeople and religious Marianists from Nassau and Suffolk counties with the goal of bringing “these family retreat experiences to more people,” said Krasensky. The group began by offering one-day retreats in parishes before branching out to also conduct week-long retreats at St. Gabriel’s Retreat Center on Shelter Island during the summer. Participating families include “kids from age two on up to

teenagers and young adults,” she noted.

Krasensky explained that during the retreat, the team and families convene in “a group setting for a presentation on scenes on communication, affirmation, forgiveness, commitment, and mission.”

There are also peer group discussions for the adults and older kids, along with age-appropriate activities, such as arts and crafts, to help reinforce what the younger ones have learned. The retreat participants “also do an activity as a family,” said Krasensky. “Like for affirmation, they might make cardboard cutouts of their family members and then say what each person contributes to the family.”

“The team on Long Island is made up purely by volunteers — couples, singles, families — from age 16 through parents and grandparents,” she noted.

She added, “Our volunteers tend to come from people who have experienced the family program at a retreat center and really connected to it and wanted to share that experience with other people.”

Krasensky is no exception. “I started going to the family retreats at Cape May (in New Jersey) when my daughter was seven; she’s now 22” and is also a member of Marianists for Long Island Family Experience, she explained.

As a team member, “I enjoy spending time with young families a great deal,” she said. “I find it energy-giving. I also enjoy giving back what my family got out of participating in the program. It has helped ground us in our faith and in our family values.”