

Mount Washington couple found love online

As Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Homeland, parishioner Kelly Bradford was approaching her mid 30s, her mother wondered if her “bohemian” daughter was ever going to settle down and marry a “good Catholic boy.”

The Mount Washington social worker had already tried meeting “the one” in a variety of venues, including Catholic organizations, church and bars, but a true match continually eluded her.

Then about five years ago a nun she knew presented her with a Valentine’s Day Card containing an advertisement for a Catholic internet meeting place and suggested this site may provide an end to her single status.

At first she dismissed the idea, since she didn’t own a computer at the time and heard her contemporaries call cyberspace mingling and act of desperation.

However, the Internet proved to be an apt tool in finding the man of Kelly Bradford’s dreams and she married the beau she met on a website Feb. 1, 2003. Her name changed that day to Kelly Hellmuth.

Finding love on the net has become a mainstream method of coupling in 2007, said Mary Ann Leard, president of the Catholic Single Again Council of Baltimore.

“It’s an alternative to meeting someone in a bar,” Ms. Leard said. “It seems as if we’ve seen a decline in our support group numbers, because they are using the internet, the chat rooms and other organized ways to meet people on the computer.”

Though she acknowledged the rise in its use as a tool to meet potential dates and life partners, the president of the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s council encouraging single Catholic meeting events said people need to be cautious when utilizing internet pairing apparatus.

It is wise to meet the man or woman one met on an internet site in a public place

and to let a third party know who they are meeting and when the get-together is taking place, Ms. Leard cautioned. "I also wouldn't give that person my address or home phone number until I knew them better."

Ms. Hellmuth was given that same advice before her first face-to-face meeting with John Hellmuth - a D.C. architect with whom she had been having a month-long correspondence on avemariasingles.com- in summer 2002.

Though she didn't heed her friend's advice and told her future husband to meet her at her Mt. Washington home, she gave her mother his full name and when he was scheduled to pick her up.

"I also took him to the antique shop of a friend of mine," Ms. Hellmuth said. "That way someone would see him. But, I also wanted someone I trusted to meet him and give me her honest opinion."

By giving him her home address, Mr. Hellmuth said his future wife established an initial element of trust, something she said he earned during their online courtship.

The couple has been very open about how they met, even though the venue didn't have the wide-spread credibility it seems to have now.

The profiles provided on the Catholic singles website allowed them to select candidates who shared their values, interests and unusual senses of humor. It also allowed them to view photos to see if they were physically attracted to one another.

Both had been dating fellow Catholics for years, but hadn't found that magical mix of solid Catholic values with a comical and adventurous spirit, until they read one another's profile on avemariasingles.com.

Their month-long internet courtship also allowed them to discover they had more compatible traits and the computer screen took away the inhibitions they would have faced in person.

"It took the pressure off to have that computer screen between us," Mr. Hellmuth said. "I also feel like it allowed us to be a little more frank with each other and get to the root of what we were really looking for."

Their first face-to-face meeting lasted more than 10 hours, with trips to unique Baltimore sites, meals and endless conversation.

However, it was the second set of meetings that made Ms. Hellmuth certain she had discovered her Prince Charming. It was a weekend of visits to an amusement park and a church service at Mr. Hellmuth's D.C. parish, St. Patrick.

"To me, it was the epitome of a great date," Ms. Hellmuth said. "Here was someone who would be goofy with me at Bush Gardens and then take me to church."

Having just celebrated their fourth wedding anniversary, the 30-something couple continues to fix up the Mount Washington home they share with two dogs and three birds.

"We wouldn't have met each other if we hadn't both signed on to avemariasingles.com," Ms. Hellmuth said. "Something directed us to that site and I'm so grateful we followed."