

An exclusive magazine connecting and serving the residents of West Ellicott City

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NEIGHBORS OF

# West Ellicott City

**MEET THE CUNNINGHAMS:**  
THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS-AND SERVES-TOGETHER,  
**STAYS TOGETHER!**



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Anne Kelley Looney/Anne Kelley Studio





## MEET THE CUNNINGHAMS: THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS-AND SERVES- TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER!

By Lynne Layug | Professional photography by Anne Kelley Looney/Anne Kelley Studio  
Additional photos supplied by the featured family

One of our neighbors, Steven Clark Cunningham, recently published his second children's book, *Your Body Sick and Well: How Do You Know?* Steve's new book is written "not only for young readers, who can enjoy the colorful illustrations, the fun rhythm and rhyme, and the basic content, but also for older readers who may better appreciate the plays on words and the more in-depth content." His 2009 collection of poems, *Dinosaur Name Poems*, was translated into Spanish by his wife, Myriam Gorospe, and won the 2009 Moonbeam Award.

Steve is currently working on a book about religious literacy for young readers, inspired in part by his graduate work with Harvard's Religious Literacy Project. He is presently a graduate student working on his master's degree in religious studies at Harvard Extension School.

This explains what Steve does in his "free time" but by day Dr. Cunningham works at Saint Agnes Hospital and Cancer Institute, where he is the Director of Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Surgery as well as the Director of Research for the residency programs there. He also practices at Howard County General Hospital and is

part of the Maryland Surgeons, which is a large and well-respected multispecialty surgical practice, with offices in Howard County and Baltimore. Dr. Cunningham specializes in surgery of the pancreas, liver, and bile ducts, including the gallbladder.

Steve graduated from Creighton University in Omaha, NE where he majored in chemistry and Spanish, which would really come in handy when he met his future wife, Myriam who grew up in Spain. He then earned his medical degree from George Washington University (GWU) and completed a general-surgery residency at the University of Maryland Medical Center. Steve's fellowships in oncology research and pancreatic and hepatobiliary surgery were both completed at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He has published many research papers, book chapters, and other publications focusing on pancreatic, liver, and biliary diseases.

Steve met Myriam in a research laboratory where they were both working on molecular biology. Steve likes to say that "our gazes met across a crowded laboratory, inverted through an Erlenmeyer flask!" Myriam had received her undergraduate degree from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Spain before coming to



the US for a PhD program in molecular and developmental biology at the State University of New York at Albany. Dr. Gorospe then joined the National Institute on Aging (NIA) in Baltimore for postdoctoral training and is currently the Chief of the Laboratory of Genetics and Genomics at NIA. Myriam has published many research papers and is a world expert in her field.

Myriam and Steve were married in Colorado, where Steve was born and where most of his family still lives. Steve had started medical school at Creighton University but transferred to GWU to be with Myriam in the Baltimore-Washington area. Their four children were all born on the same Bayview medical campus where the couple first met and where Myriam currently works.

The family relocated to Howard County in 2012 to take advantage of the excellent schools. They moved into a quiet cul-de-sac and were delighted to discover that they knew several of their neighbors already. "A colleague from work and two friends from church were already living here," Steve explained, "so we felt immediately at home, like we were part of an extended family. Over the years we have helped each other a lot – with childcare, transportation, snow removal, etc."

Their son, **Lucas (20)**, is studying computer engineering at the University of Maryland, College Park. Lucas has great memories of his pilgrimage to Ireland with his church youth group and enjoys computer and board games with friends and family.

**Ana (18)** is a junior at Centennial High School (CHS), where she is a part of Active Minds, a club devoted to mental-health advocacy. She enjoys math, music, and participating in service events with her school's National Honor Society chapter. Ana recently teamed up with a friend to shop and deliver for community members who are homebound.

**Amaya (16)** also attends CHS, as a sophomore, and is on the school's track and cross-country teams. Amaya enjoys being a part of Centennial's Horizon Club, one of CHS's largest clubs, which is dedicated to giving back to the community through a wide range of events. Amaya also enjoys photography, especially taking pictures with her sister.

**Matteo (13)** is in 6th grade and enjoys biking to school, swimming, skateboarding and gymnastics as well as spending time with his family and his pets. The family has had numerous pets over the years including a pond of gold fish, a bearded dragon named – depending on the day – Rex, Smaug, or Norbert, and Emma, their 12-pound Beagle mix from Small Miracles Cat and Dog Rescue.

The entire family is multilingual: they all speak English and Spanish, and the kids are all learning French in school. Steve also speaks French, some Greek, and a little Italian; Myriam still remembers some Basque from spending her summers near her birth town of San Sebastian, Spain.

The Gorospe-Cunningham family attends St. John's Episcopal Church, where Myriam and Steve are active as youth-group leaders and community volunteers. Myriam's volunteer focus lately has been with food insecurity and Steve's with outreach at Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment). Myriam and Steve support a wide variety of youth service work in and around St. John's and are often joined by their children in service to the community.

One of Steve's favorite "church" activities is participating in the Fellowship of the Table, a men's group at Saint John's that gathers to play billiards at each other's homes and to enjoy an evening of conversation and fellowship. Myriam enjoys meeting with a knitting group in which she and some friends gather for conversation, fellowship, and of course, knitting!

The family looks forward to travel vacations in the summer, especially road trips. They have visited national parks such as Yellowstone, the Everglades, and the Grand Canyon, plus trips though the Northeast, the West Coast, and to Key West. They are grateful for having been able to travel overseas to Spain, France and Germany to visit family, and, most recently, Greece, where the couple visited friends and colleagues from work. Next summer they are planning a service trip to Honduras.

## FAMILY FEATURE





Myriam and Steve are grateful to Gawthrop Contractors who recently completed a new addition on their home. A dining area was added off of the family room that they use for board games, hosting dinner parties, and home projects. A basement recreation area was also added which now houses Steve's many books and provides Steve with space to host the Fellowship of the Table crew. The family recently buried a time capsule just outside of this addition and they hope it will not be opened for many years!

Most evenings before dinner, each member of the family shares what they are thankful for and one thing they hope to see improve in the world. We are grateful that they shared their story with us and hope our readers enjoy reading Steve's books!

