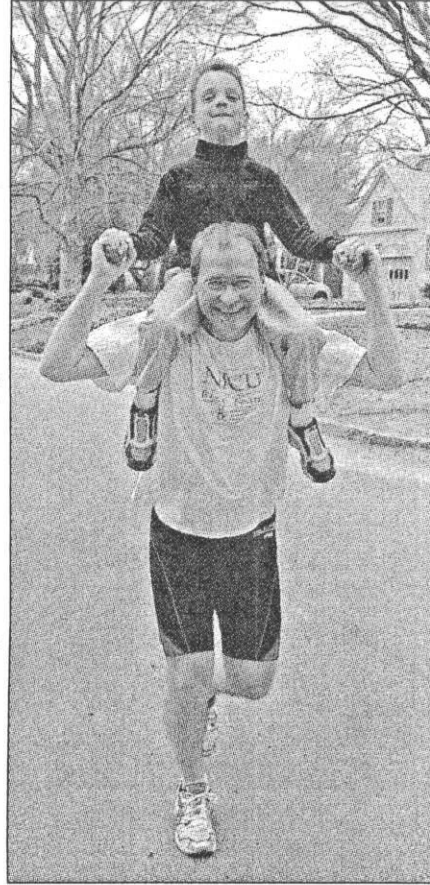


# Marathoners make their runs personal



T&G Staff/JIM COLLINS  
Brian Carroll takes a run with his son,  
Brendan, 6.

## Marathon is payback

By Paul Jarvey  
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

WORCESTER — Brian Carroll will probably reach the Boston Marathon finish line in just under four hours today, but it won't be the end of his race, just another hurdle cleared in what has become his life's new journey.

This will be Carroll's fifth Boston and 21st marathon since 2002, all to raise money to buy specialized medical equipment for the UMass Memorial Newborn Intensive Care Unit.

Brendan, the third son of Brian and his wife June, spent the first 5½ months of his life in the UMass NICU. He was born

Turn to **Marathon**/Page A5

# Boston Marathon is father's way to pay back hospital

Marathon/From Page One

three months premature on July 10, 1999, weighing just 1½ pounds.

"He was very small and very sick," Carroll said. "And that's not a good combination."

There were significant respiratory problems, infections, a brain hemorrhage that necessitated two operations, retina damage that threatened blindness, complications and more complications.

"You watch them and you don't know how they're feeling, and you don't know if it hurts," Carroll said.

Brendan is 6 now, getting healthier every day, but his 44-year-old father continues his pavement-pounding mission, raising money through personal and corporate pledges. He and his team, Brendan's Buddies, have brought in more than \$150,000 so far.

"I can't buy enough equipment for these people," Carroll said last

week from his office at 554 Main St. where he is the president of Carroll Enterprises. "How do you thank someone for saving your son's life?"

In his case, you train before dawn, run marathons, get other people to run with you and beat the bushes for donations. He has set up a Web site ([www.brendansbuddies.com](http://www.brendansbuddies.com)) to let everyone know about his cause. In July, he will try his first Ironman triathlon — 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, 26.2-mile run.

"It has become a lifestyle — a lifestyle of fitness and a lifestyle of fundraising," Carroll said. "Sometimes, the only way to draw attention to your cause is to do something extreme."

Carroll was a hurdler at St. John's High, but by the time he reached his late 30s, he hardly looked like a future marathoner. Brendan wasn't the only one who put on weight in the NICU. His dad ballooned up to 220 pounds, the stress, odd hours and busy schedule leading to some unhealthy eating habits.

There are lots of ways to raise money, many of which are considerably easier than running marathons, but Carroll feels the 26.2-mile distance is a true test

of endurance and commitment.

"If you are willing to suffer for four or five hours, then you really believe in the cause you are running for," he said. "There's nothing routine about 26 miles."

Carroll has been successful in getting others to join his team, too. Today, he will run with Dr. Jack Wixted, a UMass orthopedic surgeon who treated Carroll for a broken arm — triathlon training injury — last year. Some UMass residents will also run. Anyone is welcome, especially NICU parents.

NICU parents are a tight group, bound by the shared experience of having critically ill children and by their admiration

for the UMass doctors and nurses, according to Carroll. The UMass NICU, located at the Memorial campus, is an internationally recognized program caring for 500 high-risk infants annually.

By the time Brendan reached his second birthday and his health had sta-

bilized, Carroll began thinking about ways to give something back to the UMass NICU.

In the back of his mind he also had this idea of running the Boston Marathon, considering it one of those experiences — like seeing the Grand Canyon or jumping out of a plane — that you check off as you go through life.

Someone from the UMass Memorial Foundation put the two ideas together, suggesting he raise money by running the marathon. It was perfect. He would get back into shape, reach his goal of running Boston and raise money for a cause he was deeply committed to.

"It was tough," Carroll said of the 2002 Boston Marathon. "You're never really prepared for your first marathon, but every mile you tough it out, you think about each week you were in the hospital."

Running races and raising money — and Carroll is careful to keep both aspects of Brendan's Buddies in balance — has been rewarding and fun.

"When it's over and you have your family around you, it's special," he said. "I can't remember how much it hurt at Mile 22, but I do remember the hugs at the finish line."

---

**'When it's over and you have your family around you, it's special. I can't remember how much it hurt at Mile 22, but I do remember the hugs at the finish line.'**

**BRIAN CARROLL**  
MARATHONER

---