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# Bradley's Buddies 5K Run/Walk in Wenonah keeps namesake's memory alive



By [Melissa DiPento/South Jersey Times](#)

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**WENONAH** – Eileen Caraker will never forget her son or what he was like. What she remembers most about Bradley was his zest for life.

“He had a big booming laugh and that hug that just took your breath away,” Caraker said. “You always knew he was there.”

Bradley, the youngest of three children, loved playing sports and enjoyed nature, playing music and making crafts, his mother said.

Then, in August 2005, when he was just eight years old, Bradley was diagnosed with leukemia.

“We don’t really know why – he was really the healthiest child we’ve ever known. When they told us, it was the shock of our life,” Caraker said.

During his time at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), members from their tight-knit Wenonah community rose to the occasion to support the family.

Bradley responded well to the treatment and was showing signs of improvement during the fall of 2005, his mother said. But then, the cancer came back.

Kristen, then 13, the oldest sibling, found out she was a perfect bone-marrow match for her little brother.

By April 2006, Bradley was back home in recovery. But the family wasn’t home for very long. He passed away the following month.

“We never thought he would be anything but cured,” Caraker said.

That summer, the community rallied together to honor the family. Friends and neighbors established the [Bradley’s Buddies 5K run/walk](#), which was held for the first time in September 2006.

The event continues to keep Bradley’s spirit alive and will be held this weekend at the Wenonah Elementary School.

So far, the event has raised \$72,000 for leukemia research at CHOP. 80 percent of funds raised from the run benefit the work of CHOP researcher Dr. Stephan Grupp, who has transplanted blood cells from children who have had leukemia into mice in order to replicate the cancers.

Twenty percent of funds raised support local children with cancer.

Many other community groups in Wenonah continue to raise money and awareness for Bradley's cause.

The Wenonah Women's Club has held a blood drive each spring, collecting 615 units of blood and 62 units of platelets.

Students at Gateway High School organize a yearly talent show to raise money for leukemia.

The 5K Run/Walk will be held on Sunday, Sept. 30 at 9 a.m. Runners and walkers should arrive early to register.

Pre-registration, open until Wednesday, is available online at [runsignup.com/bradleysbuddies](http://runsignup.com/bradleysbuddies).

Participants can also register on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Wenonah Park.

The cost is \$20 before the race and \$25 on race day. For children under 12, the cost is \$15 prior to the race and \$20 the day of. A family of four can run for \$65.

Those who wish to make a donation can send checks to Bradley's Buddies, P.O. Box 352, Wenonah, NJ, 08090.

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