

Race with purpose

5k planned to celebrate young mother's life

By STEPHANIE SCHELL

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Jennie Carol Tarter's life consisted of many loves — running, dining out, shopping, UK football, being on the water, Keeneland. But more than anything she loved her sons, 10-year-old Evan and 7-year-old Mason.

"She loved being a mom," added Amy Longwill, friend of Jennie Carol.

However, at age 34, her life was cut short.

While celebrating her successful completion of the 2008 Kentucky Derby Festival Mini Marathon over dinner the Friday following the April 26 race, Jennie Carol collapsed after choking, according to a bio on www.jenniecarols5k.com.

"Unfortunately, all efforts to help Jennie, including the Heimlich maneuver, failed. Jennie passed away on May 7 ... and was laid to rest the day before Mother's Day," the Web site states.

"She had no idea that would be her last race," said Jennie Carol's sister-in-law, Jenny Tarter.

She was in a coma for five days before she died.

Jennie Carol already lives on in a sense that her organs were donated. Her friends, though, are taking steps to make sure her memory lives on in other ways, too.

"What we wanted to do, specifically for her sons, was to see her life as a celebration," said friend Lori-Anne Clark. "The helpless feeling you have when somebody dies, you have to do something."

So this year marks the first-ever Jennie Carol's Memorial Mother's Day Run. They hope to make it an annual event.

"It's really good and I'm really happy about it," Mason said about the memorial race. "And I love my mommy."

Jennie Carol started running about two years before her death. The 2008 Kentucky Derby Mini Marathon was her second.

"She was excited to have run it by herself," Tarter said.

Longwill added, "She was so excited to have her sons there to see her finish."

They crossed the finish line with her.

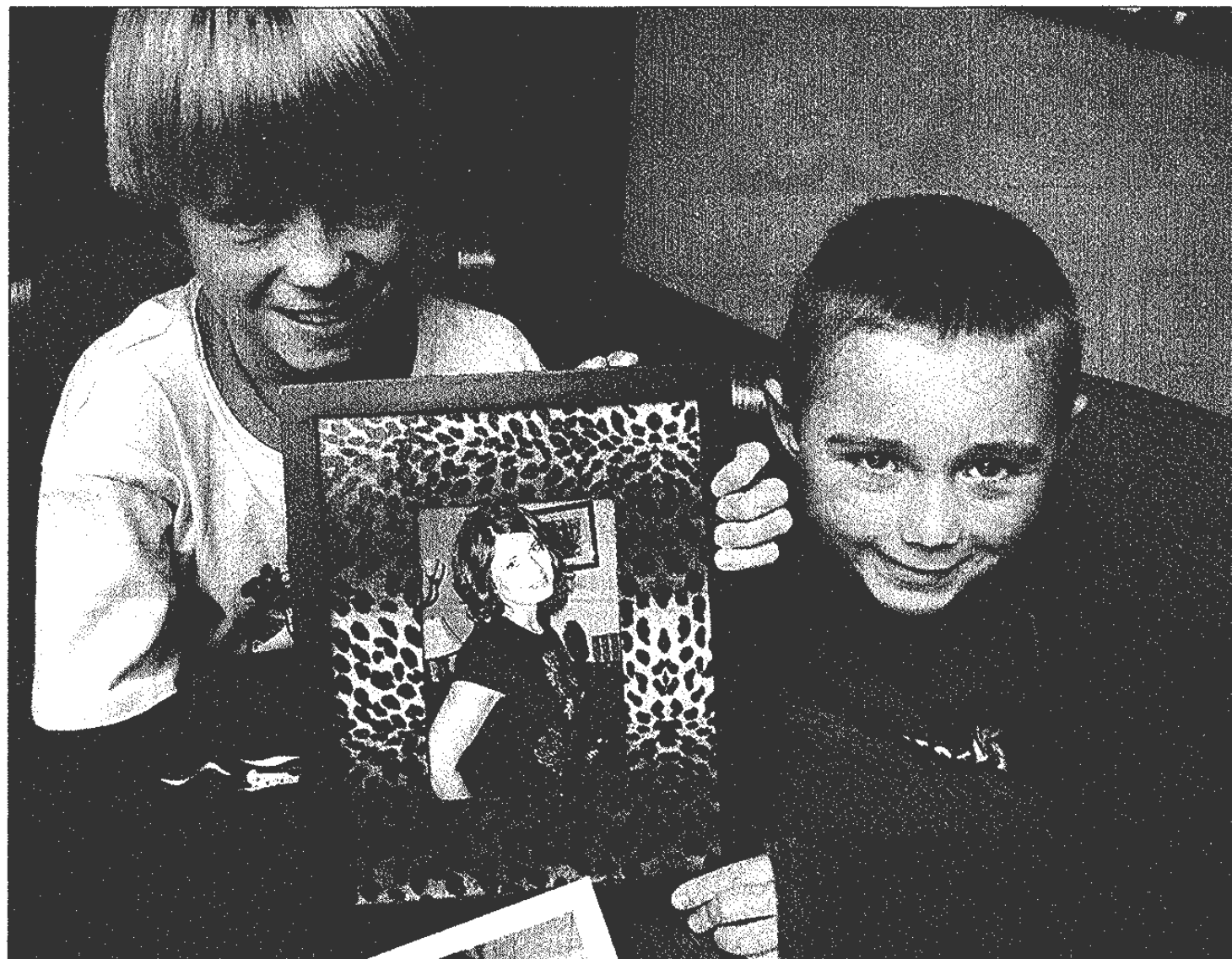
"She was so excited to celebrate," Tarter said.

After her untimely death, her friends wanted to celebrate her. Shortly after Jennie Carol's funeral, Tarter suggested to Longwill they hold a 5k in memory of her.

Longwill had the same idea.

"We've got to do a race for Jennie," Longwill said. "In my head we were going to do a race for Jennie. We knew then."

It was no foreign concept to Jennie Carol's friends, they all are runners, too. They often



Stephanie Schell/sschell@amnews.com

Above, Evan, left, and Mason, hold a photo of their late mother Jennie Carol Tarter.

At left and below, submitted photos of Evan and Mason with their mother.



ran together, and said Jennie Carol's beauty was hard to hide — even while exercising.

"There's the three of us looking like moms and then there's Jennie," Clark said.

Longwill remembered a day when she and Jennie Carol went for a run. Longwill said Jennie Carol came out of the house in a pair of pink and black running shorts and matching top, and a polka dotted sweatband — "looking like a millions bucks." She had a great sense of style, according to her friends.

"You look too good to be running with me," Longwill said she told her. "She was beautiful, natural"

And they hope the race mimics that.

"It needs to be a pretty race because she was such a pretty person inside and out," Longwill said.

She added that downtown Danville will be a great place to have it for that reason.

"We are working really hard to make this a really nice event," she said. "We want this to be a very well-done, nice (race)."

The date for the 5k is May 9, the Saturday before Mother's

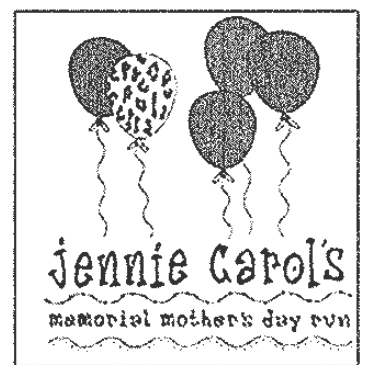
Day. Clark said it's all about "promoting family and moms with a fun family event"

"I think it's just like the best time of my life," Evan said. "It's for my mom."

It's hoped that enough sponsors come forward to help fund the event so every entry fee can go toward the charity Backpack Kids, a program that provides nutritional support to low-income school children during weekends and school holidays when they may otherwise go without.

"I think (Jennie Carol would) love it," Longwill said of the charity.

Jennie Carol spent a couple of years as a school teacher at Hogsett Elementary School. Her friends said she had a special place in her heart for



kids. "We definitely picked the right charity," Tarter added.

They hope to register around 300 people for the 5k, which will could potentially bring in about \$4,500 for Backpack Kids. Chris Elsea, an organizer for Danville-Boyle County's program, said it takes about \$300 to fill 19 backpacks a week. He said the program currently has enough funds to fill those 19 backpacks a week for the remainder of the school year, but the donation from the race will ensure those backpacks get filled throughout the summer, too.

"Of course we're thrilled to have the income coming into the program," Elsea said. "They're doing it, of course, in memory of someone and I think that's important."

Another important aspect of the event will be the Evan and Mason Kids' Fun Run.

"I'm really happy about it," Mason said about the race named after him and his

brother."

Evan added that even though the race is named for him and his brother, it also is about every kid who runs it.

It will take place at the Centre College Colonels track immediately following the 5k, and is free to children 8 years old and younger.

"We want to show kids what an inspiration she was and to hopefully inspire them to make healthy choices for themselves and to celebrate her life," Tarter said.

Although the name of the event suggests it's a 5k running race, Tarter said everyone — especially walkers — should feel welcome and are encouraged to participate.

"We want everyone to feel like they can do this," she said. "This is a celebration of Mother's Day and a mother's life."



Stephanie Schell/sschell@amnews.com
Jennie Carol Tarter's friends who are organizing the 5k show off shirts designed by Alison Craig of Myrtle's Market for the memorial race. From left, Amy Longwill, Julie Cox, Lori-Anne Clark and Jenny Tarter.

So you know

■ There will be age divisions and a stroller division. Awards and door prizes will be given.

■ To find out more about race day events, to register, check out the course map, see a list of sponsors, learn about Backpack Kids and to read Jennie Carol's bio, log on to www.jenniecarols5k.com.

■ The race is a USA Track and Field sanctioned event.

■ John's Run/Walk Shop will facilitate the start and finish of the race.

Start prepping now

A running class will be held to help people prepare for Jennie Carol's Memorial Mother's Day Run starting March 10 at McDowell Wellness Center. It will be taught by Amy Longwill. The time and other details are pending.

The class is for beginning runners or anyone who wants to get their time down. Longwill said the class may be extended over the summer.