

## going the distance

Marathon runner enjoys freedom of sight without wearing eyeglasses

Story by Alex Frazer-Harrison  
Photo by Dana Lyons

At age 51, Shane Bassen found himself in a whole new world when he finally decided to take the plunge and undergo laser-vision correction.

And he let everyone in the waiting room know it. "When I came out of the room and I could see, I said, 'You gotta be kidding,'" says Bassen, who underwent the procedure in January. "I came out (to the waiting room) and said, 'I can see!' I was jumping up and down."

Bassen says he'd been considering vision correction for years, but never had the chance until recently.

"I'd waited a long time to get it," says the local egg salesman. "It was always about money, but finally I saw a thing in the paper that said I could have a year to pay it off, so I went down and checked it out.

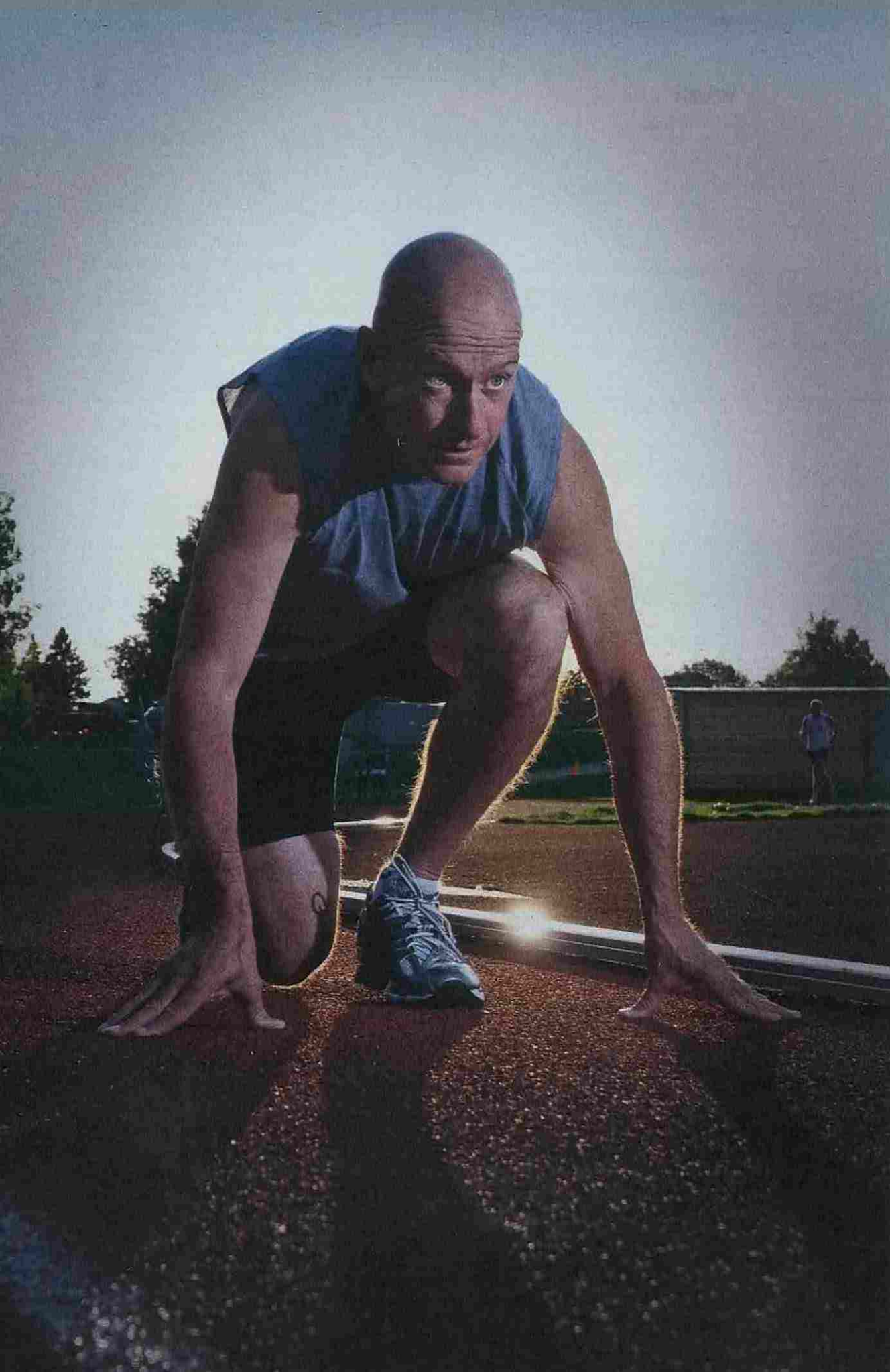
"Then my nephew got it done, and I said I've got to do this. My glasses were costing me about \$700."

Bassen went to a local office and began preparing to undergo the procedure, which at one time required significant downtime on the part of patients, but can now be done in just a few minutes.

"I felt very confident," says Bassen. "It was about one minute per eye ... I've gone from 20-400 to 20-15. The first few days I was told to lay low and rest, so for three days I took it easy."

Months later, other than the occasional need for eye drops, Bassen says his vision is much improved he no longer needs expensive glasses, and it has increased his freedom to partake in sports such as marathon running, golf and waterskiing. >

**Left:** Shane Bassen says his vision is much improved since undergoing laser eye surgery earlier this year, and it has given him greater freedom to participate in sports.



< Although laser-vision correction is not for everybody, there is no upper age limit on when you can have the procedure done, says Dr. Avi Wallerstein, ophthalmologist, corneal specialist and co-medical director with Lasik MD.

"We have a large proportion of the people who come to see us in the baby boomer range, and it's never too late." Wallerstein adds many people begin considering the procedure in their 40s when eyesight begins to naturally deteriorate and folks begin needing reading glasses or bifocal/progressive lenses.

In some cases, vision correction in older patients eliminates the need for bifocals as well as improving long-distance vision.

"They say, 'I want to look younger, feel good, and don't want glasses or the hassle of contact lenses,'" says Wallerstein, adding his oldest Lasik patient so far has been about 75.

In some older patients, perhaps in their 70s or older, cataract removal procedures may be a compliment to laser-vision correction, Wallerstein says. Just as with laser-vision correction, cataract removal has progressed from a major surgical procedure requiring hospitalization, to a quick out-patient procedure.

"It's the most common surgical procedure done in Canada," Wallerstein says. "You don't have to stay over in hospital, or wear a patch over the eye. Fifteen minutes, you're in and out.

"After the cataract surgery, we either combine it with Lasik, or we use a newer technology, intraocular lenses

— which are plastic lenses that replace the human lens, allowing precise correction of vision."

The sheer volume of vision-correction surgeries done each year — 350,000 cataract removals and 150,000 laser vision corrections (more than 50,000 by Lasik alone), according to Wallerstein — are thanks in part to improved technology and growing expertise at places such as Lasik MD.

Wallerstein says a common misconception about laser-vision correction is that it's new.

"In fact, it has a long track record," he says. "We're coming up on the 20th anniversary of laser-vision correction."

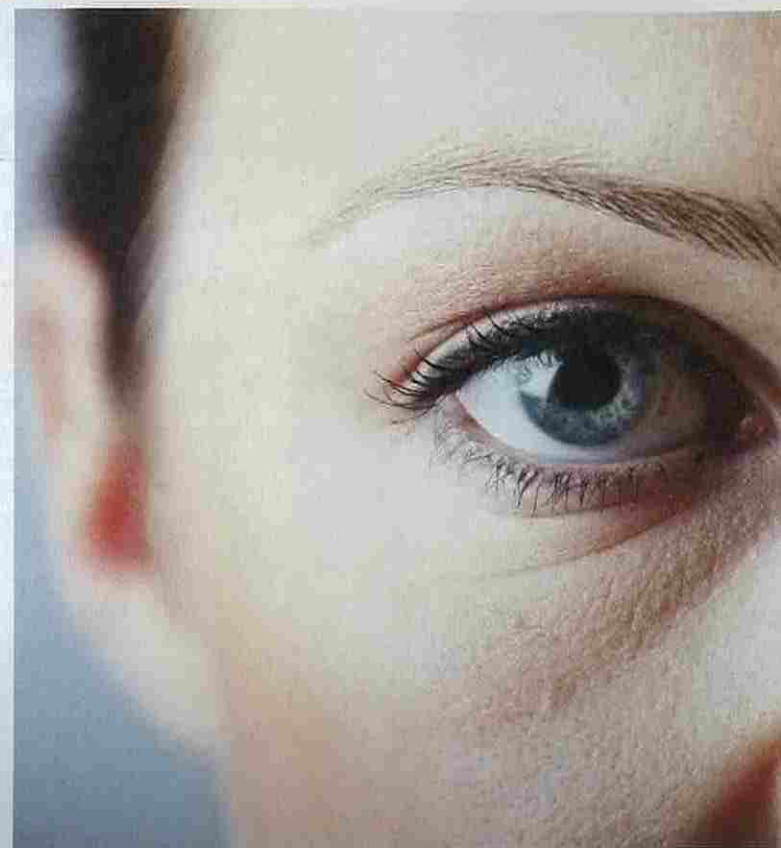
Prices have also dropped, making it more affordable. And in some cases, insurance may actually cover the procedure.

"If you have insurance coverage through your employer, it's worthwhile to check," Wallerstein says, adding in some cases it may even qualify as a tax-deductible medical expense.

Bassen says he doesn't hesitate to recommend laser-vision correction.

"I feel like I got new eyeballs — that was totally amazing," he says.

Improved technology and growing expertise has resulted in an increase in the number of vision correction surgeries performed each year.



# LASIK MD

VISION

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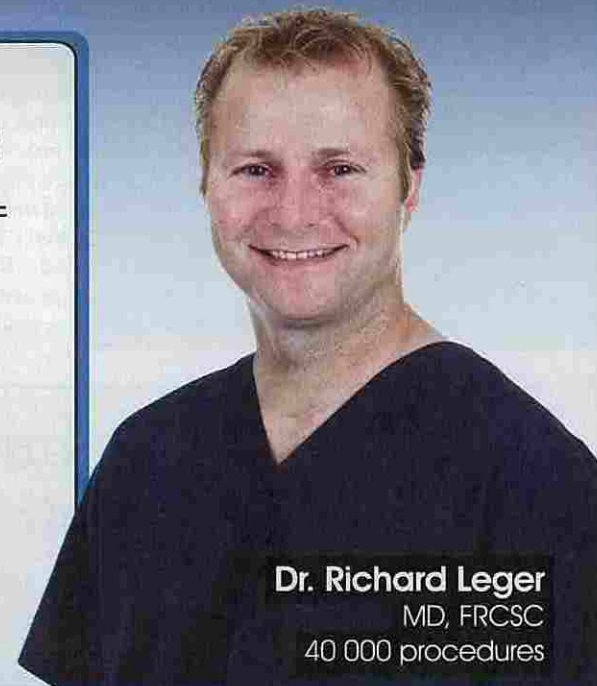
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