



Survivor Story: David McElroy
Northwood Fire/Rescue, Northwood New Hampshire, Firefighter/AEMT
Diagnosed with Stage 1 Adenocarcinoma (Colon Cancer) in 2017 and Stage 3 in 2020

"Back in the day and many years to follow we hardly wore SCBA's or cleaned our gear like we do today."



I've been a Firefighter for 38 years. I began my career as a volunteer with the York Maine Fire Department in 1983. Back in those days and many years to follow we hardly wore SCBA's or cleaned our gear like we do today.

My first Colon Cancer diagnosis was October of 2017. I was having abdominal pain and experiencing irregular bowel movements, so my primary care doctor sent me for a colonoscopy and endoscopy. These scans revealed several polyps that I had to have biopsied. My diagnosis was Stage 1 Adenocarcinoma. I underwent a resection and revision of my sigmoid colon. Due to the fact I was Stage 1, no further treatment was recommended and I was followed by my Oncologist.

Fast forward to 2020. Nearing the end of March, I was again experiencing abdominal pain and unusual bowel

Our Vision: To be the global leader in firefighter cancer support, awareness, and education.

Our Mission: To assist firefighters and EMS providers and their immediate families diagnosed with cancer by providing badge to badge support, training and guidance.



movements, so I called my primary care doctor and due to COVID-19, I was delayed in getting to see her. On April 1st, yes, on April Fool's day around 6:30pm I had what I thought was diarrhea. I noticed the toilet bowl was full of blood so I drove myself to the emergency room and they found a 6cm mass in my colon in the area of the previous resection and revision procedure. I was immediately admitted and had other colonoscopies in the days following. On April 3rd, I was diagnosed with Stage 3 Adenocarcinoma but this time it was a lot more aggressive. The tumor had almost completely gone through my colon wall and four of the 15 lymph nodes biopsied were positive for Cancer.

I underwent another resection and revision procedure on the 6th and started six months of chemotherapy that ended October 6th. On October 6th, my lab results were normal. My carcinoembryonic antigen numbers were at 0.7 down from 9 when I was admitted on in April. I'm currently undergoing radiation treatments now. I should be done with my radiation treatments at the end of January 2021. I was tested for the gene for Lynch Syndrome which was negative. I received a toolbox from Firefighter Cancer Support Network which provided valuable information. I also was put in touch with an FCSN mentor who was able to answer many questions for me. I was very lucky to have a huge network of friends who were also there for me when times were very tough.

As if the health issues and treatment wasn't enough to stress over, the financial burden it just as difficult. I work full time for a private ambulance service as an AEMT and we do not have disability insurance. I received no income for six months until my social security disability kicked in. The financial stress was way worse than dealing with my diagnosis. I am now back to active duty with Northwood Fire/Rescue Department, and I am sharing my story so that others can learn and make changes to help keep themselves safe from the threat of cancer.

Our Vision: To be the global leader in firefighter cancer support, awareness, and education.

Our Mission: To assist firefighters and EMS providers and their immediate families diagnosed with cancer by providing badge to badge support, training and guidance.