



Survivor Story: Andy Kaus
Volunteer Firefighter
Moscow Rural Fire District
Diagnosed with Prostate Cancer 2008



Hi, I'm Andy Kaus, and I am a cancer survivor.

I joined the Moscow Volunteer Fire Department and the Moscow Rural Fire District (Moscow, ID) in 1987. I don't remember anywhere on either application was there a box to check that said I would accept cancer.

In 2008, at my annual FD physical in January I noticed my doc was spending a little too much time....'down there'. If you are male and over 40 or 45, you know what I mean. Four or five years previous to this, I was adamant at my physical blood draw for chem panel that a PSA be included. I had watched both my mom and sister go through breast cancer, and not knowing then, what I know now, turned out to be my saving grace. After fighting with lab staff, they did agree (as did my doctor) so I had a baseline PSA well prior to that day. My bump was followed up with subsequent PSA's and my number had doubled. I was referred to a local urologist that took biopsies. In the late spring of 2008, I got the phone call that over 50% of my biopsies were positive for cancer. My dad passed away in 1986 at a young age, and I never knew any of my grandfathers, so I had no familial history of cancer to fall back on.

Back in 2008, in rural Idaho, prostate cancer treatment options were limited. Google back then was still a new thing, but somehow, I searched 'firefighter' and 'cancer' and my first exposure to The Firefighter Cancer Support Network started. The Firefighter Cancer Support Network was still fairly new, but here came a big plastic tote full of material and I was assigned a mentor. My mentor was a godsend, I wish I would have kept in touch after the fact, and if you are out there, THANK YOU! He had a similar cancer and I was able to bounce treatment options off him.

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.



During the summer of 2008 I searched out a different urologist, and we decided due to my age (44) and prognosis, surgery was the best option. I chose less invasive DaVinci robotic surgery up in Spokane WA. Like dry cleaning, I was in on Tuesday, out on Thursday. To this day, my PSA is below measurable limits! I always told myself that I wanted to pay it back to FCSN, but life happens and I never got involved.

Four years ago, a good friend, and FD mentor to me, received the same diagnosis I had. That was the kick in the butt I needed. I reached out to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network to help and possibly mentor, and signed up as a survivor. I got my good friend, signed up with the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, and I mentored him through his procedures and follow up, and since have mentored another Firefighter Paramedic. In both of these instances, I'm not sure how much 'mentoring' I did, but was just there for both of these brothers.

Over the last few years, I have been able to participate in the annual Idaho Fire Commissioners Association (I am also the current clerk for the Moscow Rural Fire District) in hosting a Firefighter Cancer Support Network booth. I owe my state Director Craig Leigh a lot in showing me what we need to do to get the word out about our wonderful organization. My talking points at these conferences are, get tested early, get a baseline, and clean your gear! Having been a volunteer for my career, there is no way to tie my diagnosis to firefighting, but that's ok. We need to do all we can to prevent the C word, but if it comes to it, we are here for all of us. I tell people at my booth, we're not doctors or lawyers... we're firefighters..and were all in this together.

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