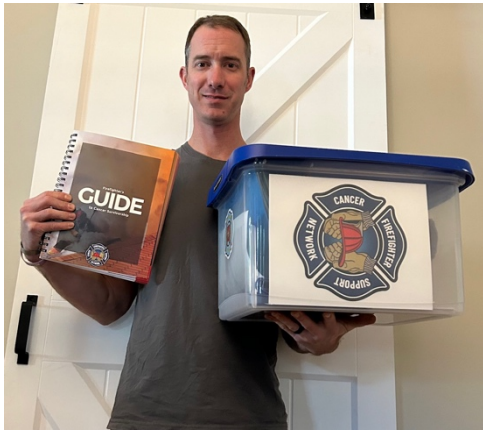




Brent Hamilton Survivor Story
Firefighter
Washington Fire Rescue, North Carolina
Diagnosed with Colon Cancer 2022



My name is Brent Hamilton. I have been a Firefighter with the City of Washington in North Carolina for 15 years.

In mid-2022 I began to experience some bowel changes and even though I'm a huge advocate of physical fitness and being in tune with your body, I passed the changes off as some random stomach bug. I continued to push through the constant cramps and other issues without the thought of anything else.

The turning point came when my wife and I returned from our anniversary trip in August. I began to experience even more severe pain and cramping in my abdomen, and yet again pushed it off as some other stomach issue. The final straw came after a fire department training in mid-September at Andy Fredericks Training Days in Virginia where I experienced these cramping attacks once again. After almost two months of dealing with these issues, I decided it was time to see my primary doctor. Upon seeing my primary doctor, I was referred to a GI specialist, who immediately scheduled a CT scan. My appointment was set for the morning of October 19th and the morning of my last shift for the next 6 months. The CT scan only took about 10 mins and I was back home around mid-morning. Within 2 hours I would receive a call that would completely flip my life upside down, Colon Cancer. The doctor wanted me in the next day first thing to confirm with a colonoscopy.

After receiving the news, I called my wife and parents. As the news spread that afternoon, my Fire Chief, RM Flowers, showed up at my house to let me know that the fire department was behind me for whatever my family would need in the coming days and months.

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.



The next day the colonoscopy confirmed that I had a full obstruction tumor in my descending colon. I was immediately sent over for a surgical evaluation and surgery was set for Monday, October 24th.

The surgery resection took 9in of my descending colon. During the 6 weeks of recovery, I was notified that the cancer was Stage 2 and I would need to start chemo. I would do 4months of oral chemo and would return to full duty on May 8, 2023. During this time my fire department family, family, and friends were at every turn and even did a fundraiser to help with the cost of medical expenses. Also, during the time I was out, I researched firefighter cancer awareness and prevention just looking for a way that I could give back, and the Firefighter Cancer Support Network kept popping up. So, I filled out the information. I was then contacted by Byron Greeson of FCSN and I explained that I wanted to be a part of spreading the word. He kindly stayed in contact and my journey to spreading the word began. Upon getting the training to teach the material I would begin reaching out to the local fire departments and even our local fire academy to ask for the opportunity to spread the word about firefighter cancer.

Though this has been a ride that I would have never expected to take in my lifetime and rather view it as a hindrance, I have taken my story and used it for the good and the spreading of awareness and prevention measures to hopefully eliminate others from having to go through what so many of us have already. Again, knowing the brotherhood of the fire service and the badge-to-badge support the FCSN has to offer I can say that I believe we can continue to make great strides in eliminating cancer from the fire service.

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