



Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness and Prevention



SURVIVOR STORY: CURTIS MCCLENDON

Pinellas County, FL Local 4966 / Fire fighter & EMT
Diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2012

“My life was at a standstill. What do I do? Where do I go from here? Will I die?”

Hot and sunny alongside fun times and making new memories, this is a daily lifestyle many endure while living in Florida. Loving to hear the sirens and horns of a fire truck as an adolescent, I am now living a childhood dream while being a role model for younger generations. Being a firefighter has encouraged me as individual in various ways.

The department that I worked for gave yearly physicals where they would perform tests such as blood draws, ultrasounds, chest X-rays, stress test, among many others. There is where the first spot or growth was spotted. Having strong vitals and bloodwork the previous year, this came as a shock.

Overlooking this unexpected news, I continued to work. Loving to work outside, having a part-time lawn care business became a significant part of my off time from the department. Planting plants, trees, mowing grass, creating beautiful landscape areas, while living my lifelong dream of being a firefighter, I was living a content life.

In June of 2012, during my department-provided annual physical, they informed me that they found what seemed to be a fatty growth in my kidney. As previously stated, I brushed it under the rug and continued on with my life.

Fast forward to December of the same year, I go for my annual physical with my personal doctor. All labs were within normal range. While at my annual physical with my doctor, I proceeded to tell her about the growth that I was informed about in the duration of my department annual checkup. Agreeing on scheduling a CT scan, uncertainty began to arise.

After missing multiple calls from the doctor's office because I was partaking in my part-time job, I was then informed that I needed to come in for a stat CT scan of the abdomen. After the scan was done and the results were given to my doctor at once. Still had not dawned on me what was going on, I am waiting anxiously in the waiting room for any kind of answer at what is going on. The doctor comes out and says we must go upstairs and speak with the urologist which causes a sense of worry and nervousness. Stressing out because I was falling behind on lawns and having to return to the station tomorrow, I become impatient on the results.





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After meeting the urologist, he ordered another CT scan and labwork to be completed that day. I brought my wife with me to this appointment and we both spoke with the doctor and that is when we got the shocking news. He explained to me that I had a fatty growth [a cancer tumor] on my left kidney that could be taken out with laparoscopic surgery (in my case, laparoscopic surgery could not be done because of my body's anatomy, I would have to go under the knife).

My life was at a standstill. What do I do? Where do I go from here? Will I die? This became the most abrupt and unanticipated circumstance during my lifetime. The scariest thing for me was when you stand back and look at the situation and possibilities of not being on this earth anymore or not being able to work anymore — it changes your entire outlook and or perspective on life.

As a result, my surgery was conducted in January 2013, which removed the cancer tumor. Since then, I have been living cancer free and able to live my life in content in addition to prospering and achieving lifelong goals.