



Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness and Prevention



SURVIVOR STORY: TRAVIS YOUNG

Chino Valley, CA Local 3522 / Fire Captain

Diagnosed with tonsillar cancer (invasive squamous cell carcinoma) in 2020

Several years ago, I attended a wellness symposium with a coworker of mine in hopes of gathering information about starting a cancer prevention and wellness program at work. It was at this symposium I was introduced to the FCSN.

After leaving this conference, my buddy and I were very impressed with what the FCSN had to offer in terms of support and the information that was available via the website. We always thought this would be a great tool should anyone in our department get a cancer diagnosis.

Fast forward to January 2020, after a couple months of treatment for what my ENT and myself thought was just tonsillitis, I went in for a tonsillectomy to remove the tonsil that was causing me much discomfort. Minutes after going into surgery, my doctor came out to the waiting room and told my wife that it was the worst looking tonsil he had ever seen. He said he was unable to remove it, so he sent in a sample for a biopsy. Three days later on January 31, 2020, he called me into his office for a follow up. It was then he gave me the devastating news that I had CANCER.

Words could not describe how I was feeling or what was going through my head. I was 40 years old and in great shape. I have a beautiful wife and two amazing young daughters who need me. The road ahead was going to be challenging. My doctors were very optimistic that we caught it early, but they stated treatment for this cancer is very rough. The plan for me was 30 rounds of a high-dose radiation.

After my cancer diagnosis, my friend, whom I attended the wellness symposium with, reminded me of the FCSN and that I should reach out and see what they can offer. I contacted the network and within a few days I received my tool box. This was a great tool that offered a ton of information and helped me organize my paperwork and appointments. But what I can't thank the FCSN enough for is the mentor program. I was connected to Craig. He helped me get through my darkest moments. He was there as an ear to listen and a voice to help cheer me up. He was always just a phone call away or a text. This program was essential to my cancer journey and my road to recovery. I didn't have to be the tough guy for him, I didn't have to put on





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a smile and act as if I'm ok when I wasn't. He understood and supported me throughout. This mentor program was exactly what I needed. To this day, Craig and I are great friends and I consider him family.

It's been just over a year now and I am in remission. I have since gone back to work and received a promotion to captain. I still suffer from the effects of radiation and, yes, the journey was every bit as horrible as the doctors said it would be, but I continue to move forward and better myself.

Craig and the FCSN played such a huge role in my journey that I have since become a mentor myself and hope I too can help a fellow fire fighter with their cancer journey. Thank you FCSN for all your help throughout my diagnosis and recovery