

RANCHO INSIDE

C U C A M O N G A

YOUR CITY • YOUR NEWS • YOUR MAGAZINE



The Code 3 For A Cure Foundation had a booth up at the Rancho Cucamonga Bass Pro Shops last December and had many Bass Pro patrons visit their booth to express their support. Photo courtesy of Code 3 For A Cure.

Code 3 For A Cure Seeks Support for Increasing Firefighter Cancer Issue

By: Matt Komoto

Three-time cancer survivor and former Santa Ana firefighter engineer Lorenzo Abundiz is the president of the non-profit Code 3 for a Cure. Code 3 helps raise awareness about firefighters affected by work-related cancer. They also raise funds to financially support firefighters who develop cancer. Lorenzo survived leiomyosarcoma, bladder cancer and is currently fighting prostate cancer.

His wife Peggy Abundiz is Code 3's public affairs officer. Both met while they worked for the City of Santa Ana almost 17 years ago. They also lived together in Rancho Cucamonga for nine years. They

loved the beautiful climate and how everything was conveniently located. Peggy said the city still has a hometown feeling even though it has grown dramatically. Today they live in San Diego County, but their non-profit Code 3 for a Cure remains based in Alta Loma.

The organization was formed in June 2008. As Lorenzo lay recovering in ICU in 2006, he decided he wanted to do something about cancer. Two years later he obtained a fire engine and rode across the country for four weeks with a team of fellow firefighter cancer survivors. They would visit as many

as 60 fire departments, collecting names of firefighters across the nation who lost their lives to cancer. Soon after, Lorenzo and Peggy formed Code 3. Today Code 3's efforts have garnered support across the nation.

Peggy said that numerous studies have shown that cancer is directly related to firefighting. Certain states have even developed presumptive laws for firefighters, where it's presumed that certain cancers are caused by on-duty toxin exposure. Even with presumptive laws, in many cases firefighters still have to produce substantial evidence to support their claims. Many volunteer departments, especially on the East Coast, have firefighters that have more difficulties if they develop cancer.

"Out on the West Coast most [firefighters] from paid departments and have insurance benefits," said Peggy. "But it's not an even playing field across the country. That's why Code 3 for a Cure exists."

Even firefighters with benefits can benefit from Code 3. The very first firefighter they helped was a paid firefighter from Missouri who was spending his entire retirement check on medication for his liver cancer.

Code 3 continues to grow but still needs help. According to USA Today, cancer rates among firefighters are actually increasing as firefighters face toxins not just from fires but possibly from flame retardant chemicals as well. To learn more about Code 3 visit its Web site www.code3foracure.org or Facebook page.