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JOB HAZARD: CANCERS LINKED TO FIREFIGHTING



Jennifer Stanley (left) is hugged by Peggy Abundiz who is part of the crew with her husband, Lorenzo (far right), and John McKnight.

JOURNAL PHOTOS BY LAUREN CARROLL

Not by Fire

Code 3 for a Cure is honoring firefighters who died of cancer

By Elizabeth DeOrnellas
JOURNAL REPORTER

Two-year-old Beau Stanley of Greenville always wanted to be a firefighter. When Beau contracted cancer of the adrenal glands, the Greenville firefighters rallied around his family, bringing food to the hospital and parking their truck outside so Beau could see the ladder raised to his window.

After Beau died, four firemen served as his pallbearers. A firetruck led the funeral procession. On the back of the truck hung a canvas mural showing Beau in his very own fire hat, waving.

Beau's mother, Jennifer Stanley, and a 4-year-



John McKnight of the Code 3 for a Cure crew puts a picture of Beau Stanley in an empty seat of the engine in which the crew is traveling across the U.S.

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JOURNAL PHOTOS BY LAUREN CARROLL

Retired firefighter Lorenzo Abundiz, who has had two kinds of cancer, is touring the U.S. to raise awareness of firefighting-related cancers.

CODE 3

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old cousin did their part to return the favor, traveling to Winston-Salem yesterday to greet the "Code 3 for a Cure" crew, a group of firefighters who came to town as part of their cross-country tour to honor firefighters who have died of cancer.

The crew is trying to raise awareness of cancers linked to firefighting and to spur donations to nonprofit groups battling cancer.



LORENZO ABUNDIZ

The firefighters started in Los Angeles on June 13 and traveled to New York, stopping along the way

to collect the names of active and retired firefighters who died of cancer.

On June 23, the crew read the nearly 400 names during a ceremony at Valentino Pier, which is named after a firefighter who died on the job.

The crew, which stayed in Winston-Salem for a night, will return to California by July 13. Winston-Salem is the 43rd stop out of 60 total on their cross-country loop.

"It's been, in my experience, an eye-opener for all of us," crew leader Lorenzo Abundiz said. "Just the openness and camaraderie involved in the station, and embracing us as brothers and sisters, it's just incredible."

Abundiz, who retired from

the Santa Ana Fire Department after 27 years, has battled two types of cancer in the past 10 years. After successfully fighting off a high-grade leiomyosarcoma, he was found to have bladder cancer that has been linked to his on-the-job exposure to tar.

"They do the best they can to protect themselves, but unfortunately you do have a higher risk of cancer," he said, adding that it's important to recognize those who have already suffered the consequences of those on-the-job hazards.

"We also want to honor and remember those firefighters who lost their lives because they're the ones who paved the way for better equipment, better procedures for firefighters of today, like my son who's a fireman-medic," he said.

Abundiz's son, Jeremy, traveled with the crew to New York before being called back to California to help provide medical support to those fighting the raging wildfires.

Abundiz's wife, Peggy, is also part of the crew, acting as a spokeswoman and helping to manage the large e-mail response to the crew's work.

"Sometimes I, I just sit there and cry," she said. "That's all I can do, really."

"Code 3 for a Cure" will expand its mission next year. The crew plans to follow two new routes, designed to cover as much of the United States as possible. It will also make stops in Canada.

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