



**Survivor Story: Stacy Gerlich  
Los Angeles Fire Department, Battalion Chief.  
Diagnosed with Breast Cancer in 2020.**



In

September of 2021, I began my 36<sup>th</sup> year with the fire service. Back when I began my career, technology was very different than it is today. As a career paramedic, I was exposed to numerous hazardous materials some known and many unknown. Living in the fire station ten days a month for 24 hours each of those days, we were exposed to diesel exhaust and other products of combustion.

When we are young and very enthusiastic about starting our careers, we aren't thinking about the long term affects we might experience in our older years. I know that I was so passionate about what I do for a living that I wasn't worrying about my future medical issues so much. Well, October 2020, my world was rocked. I went in for my annual mammogram and they saw something suspicious in my right breast. Well, you can imagine where my head went next. I was scheduled for a needle biopsy within a few days. That came back "CANCER!" I couldn't believe it. Not me. I am in shape, I eat well, never miss my annual check-ups and I felt great.

November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, I had a double mastectomy. I went into surgery thinking, "I am a survivor." I will get through this just like my wife did a year before!! I was fortunate that we caught it early but it was a definite stomach punch. Because of the early stage and the mastectomy, I did not require radiation or chemo. This was truly a blessing from God.

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**Our Mission:** To assist firefighters and EMS providers and their immediate families diagnosed with cancer by providing badge to badge support, training and guidance.



I remember laying on the couch while healing and thinking of all the exposures I knew of that I had documented. I was a responder to the WTC terrorist attack in 2001. Myself and twenty-two colleagues flew to New York to help our brothers and sisters of FDNY with Critical Incident Stress Management. Those two weeks were life changing and sobering. My heart aches and eyes fill with tears just thinking about it. When I reached out to get some support, I found the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN). That was a phone call that really gave me a boost. The professionalism and continued calls really make a difference. The tool box they sent to my house really helped with answers and contacts for my continued healing. I will never be able to repay the FCSN. Thank you FCSN for being here for all of us!! It means more than you might realize.

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