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CCU Relay for Life

Friday, April 17, 2009
7pm-7am on CCU Track
Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back.

Thomas Wilson: Fighter

Thomas Wilson is a fighter. For the past thirty eight-years of his life that is all that he has known. Now everyday he wakes up, it is a fight for life. That is because not only is Mr. Wilson a firefighter, he is a cancer survivor.

Thomas was born October 23, 1970 in Plymouth, Maine to parents Gerald and Thelma Wilson. He had a typical childhood filled with football in the fall and baseball during brisk spring days. Becoming a firefighter was his childhood dream. Thomas was not interested in making a ton of money, helping people was his calling.

When he graduated from high school in 1988, he began chasing his dream. Through a cousin he heard about a job opening in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. To Thomas this was an opportunity that could not be passed up. With the beautiful weather and the hopes of landing his dream job on his mind, Thomas packed up all he could into his beloved 1982 faded blue Chrysler New Yorker and headed south.

Thomas Wilson would graduate from the Fort Lauderdale Academy in the top ten of his class. For the next twenty years he would be stationed in Battalion 2, Station 2, Engine 8 on the 528th block of NW 2nd Street. The hours he worked were long and grueling, but for Thomas it was all in a days work.

He would later marry a woman he met his first month in town named Skye. Together they would have three beautiful children—a pair of twins named Mark and Travis and a girl named Ava. His life was unfolding like a storybook of sorts. They took family vacations to Disney World and went skiing in West Virginia. The furthest thing from his mind was cancer.

Early in 2008, Thomas began to have sharp pains in his upper abdomen that would shoot all the way down his back. He did not think anything of it until about a month later he noticed tremendous weight loss. On February 2, 2008, Wilson was diagnosed with aggressive case of pancreatic cancer. The doctor at the University of Florida told him that he had less than two years to live and should undergo Chemotherapy.

After consulting with his family, Thomas made a choice some would find questionable. Instead of enduring the pains of Chemo, he would pack up yet again and move. This time he would move to San Pedro Town, a peaceful island off the coast of Belize. His plan was enjoy the last years of his life in peace and tranquility with his family.

On a peaceful beach in Belize sits a frail man wearing a straw hat. His body is at war with itself, but his mind his calm. His dream of fighting fires is fulfilled. Surrounded by the people he loves, he lives to fight another day.

Students Taking Active Responsibility, S.T.A.R., will be hosting its annual Relay For Life at Coastal Carolina University's Track Field on April 17th. S.T.A.R. is working with the American Caner Society to raise money and promote cancer awareness within the campus community.

The event will begin at 7_{PM} and continue through the night until 7_{AM}. As Marianne Long, event co-chair for Relay for Life, puts it, "cancer never sleeps, so neither will we."

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to join in and participate. They can join together and form a team to raise the maximum amount of money possible.

By: George Taylor

Meet a Peer Leader

Steven Roberts is originally from a "nice small town" called Aynor, South Carolina. He is currently a sophomore.

Steven is a Marine Science major. His favorite course at Coastal Carolina University is Marine Biology. "I really like to play with the critters and learning about conservation and preservation of the marine life." Also he enjoys the benefits of learning about Ecology. His favorite thing about the University is the size, "I come from a small town and the Coastal Carolina University community is similar to that."

Steven identifies himself as an avid reader, who enjoys fantasy and science fiction. The most recent book he completed was *Brisingr* by Christopher Paolini. His favorite movie is *Night at the Roxbury* staring Will Ferrell and Chris Kattan. However, his favorite actor is Jason Statham of the Transporter and Crank series. Steven enjoys many different types of music that vary week to week; his two favorite genres are country and heavy metal. He does state, however, that although he is not a huge fan, he does manage to tolerate three rap songs.

Steven is currently serving in the National Guard. He scored the highest possible score on the military entrance exam known as the ASVAB with a 99. While on duty, Steven works on the technical aspects of repairing guns, missiles, and helicopters. The helicopter that he regularly works on is the AH-64 Apache, "the deadliest helicopter," as he puts it.

One attribute that he thinks will benefit him as a peer leader is his leadership ability and not being afraid to speak up for what is right. Steven is a very capable leader. He balances compassion with strength that his peers respond to in a positive fashion. Steven has a sister named Sophia who will also be a peer leader for the fall semester.

Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill come to mind when choosing his favorite quote. But in the end he settles for "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time" by Abraham Lincoln. Clearly, Steven has been inspired by great leaders, and they serve as a source of inspiration.

By: George Taylor and Agatha O'Brien-Gayes