January 26, 2011

Letter to the Editor,

This is an update to Alia Wilson’s cancer survivor article “Fighting Spirit...” that included John Tripodi from July 18, 2010. [http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/ci_15543483?IADID=Search-www.santacruzsentinel.com-www.santacruzsentinel.com](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/ci_15543483?IADID=Search-www.santacruzsentinel.com-www.santacruzsentinel.com). While more than a few medical professionals are incredulous that John continues to beat seemingly impossible odds, he is now facing additional setbacks due to cancer’s relentless onslaught. Is there a lesson for those of us who have rarely, or perhaps never will, experience such difficult life challenges? Perhaps it is this: hold fast to this gift of life, keep on keeping on and never give up.

When one’s resolve is tested and challenged as long and as many times as my friend and neighbor John, one has to be awe-struck by the limitless fortitude that this remarkable human being displays. Firefighting is known to be a stressful and demanding occupation that necessitates commitment, perseverance, resilience and fitness in all manners. John displays these in spades in addition to a depth of spirit and tenacity that is beyond the norm. He is measured on the gold standard of never backing down from a fight or declining a trial. Known as “Superman” for his physical strength and conditioning, John is in far-better shape than many of the Fire Technology students at Cabrillo that he helped instruct and motivate. But more notably, it is John’s indomitable spirit that rises again and again to meet the required mental, physical and emotional challenges with a grace, dignity and gratefulness for this life.

In the fire service, “having heart” is one of the highest compliments that one firefighter may bestow upon another. John’s “having heart” is one of our community’s best examples of a “force of soul” that we all can learn from. Thanks for the lessons, partner.

Craig Schwinge