



Nowak

Funeral & Cremation Services



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS • SPRING 2015

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NowakFuneral.com

Sun Protection Important Now that Spring Has Arrived!

Anthony Nowak Shares his personal experience with Skin Cancer

Anthony Nowak, Funeral Director at Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services, has always been very active and enjoyed outdoor activities. Among his many hobbies are jet skiing, boating, and riding his Harley Davidson. Like many of us, he used tanning beds during his younger years. None of these activities included wearing sunscreen. **“I didn’t think I needed sunscreen,” said Anthony, “but four surgeries later I wish I had worn it.”**



Anthony Nowak
Licensed Funeral Director
and Owner

Anthony was diagnosed with melanoma in 2013. What Anthony thought was an insect bite on his arm, turned about to be the most dangerous form of skin cancer. “I discovered the mark in January of 2013. I ignored it, thinking it was a mosquito or spider bite. Over time it changed in color and increased in size. In May of that same year I went to my primary care physician.” If melanoma is recognized and treated early, it is often times curable. If it is not caught early, the cancer can advance and spread to other areas of the body making treatment more difficult, and can even result in death.

Anthony’s primary care physician sent him on to a dermatologist, where a biopsy was performed on his left arm. Anthony recalled getting the news: “I received a call back that the spot was in fact cancerous. It was a deep melanoma. I needed to be scheduled with an oncologist immediately. Hearing the news was hard to process. I was almost in a panic.” Anthony was sent to the D’amour Center for Cancer Care in downtown Springfield. *“I remember thinking to myself; I go there all the time to pick up death certificates for the funeral home. This is very real.”*

Initially doctors removed one lymph node from Anthony’s left armpit to check for metastasis. The **lymph system** is a network of vessels and nodes that works with the body’s immune system. Cancer cells can travel through the lymph system. **Metastasis** is the spread of cancer or another disease from one area of the body

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The Springfield Boys & Girls Summer Camp Registration

The Springfield Boys & Girls Club at Indian Orchard Summer Camp, located at Indian Orchard Elementary School, will run June 29 through August 14, 2015.

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Veterans and Spouses Can Receive Aid & Attendance Benefit

Wartime veterans and their surviving spouses, 65 years of age and older, may be entitled to a benefit provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs called **Aid and Attendance**.

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to another. Anthony's cancer had shown signs that it had begun to travel, and he underwent another surgery to remove 22 additional lymph nodes. The cancer had metastasized to the third lymph node as well as the first.

According to the American Cancer Society, when cancer comes back after treatment it is called a **recurrence**. The cancer may come back in the same place, or elsewhere on the body. A few months after his second surgery, Anthony felt a tumor on his left arm during self-examination. An ultrasound was performed to confirm the tumor and he underwent another surgery to have it removed. Eventually Anthony found another tumor. After this second recurrence and subsequent removal, Anthony's doctor decided he needed radiation treatment to hopefully eliminate another recurrence and eradicate any remaining cancer cells.

Radiation therapy can be an effective treatment option for melanoma patients. It uses high energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells. Radiation can be given externally or internally. Dose and the number of days the treatment is administered are determined by your radiation oncologist. Anthony explained, "I had to go four weeks, five days a week. I would lie in bed while this machine was placed directly over my left arm area and blasted it with radiation. The area got very red over time, like a sunburn, which is the most common side effect and considered normal. Towards the end of the treatment I found myself very tired in the mornings, although this eventually waned in time."

Anthony is now one year without incident. "After an initial occurrence of melanoma, you are more susceptible," informed Anthony. "I have learned a lot through this whole process. A patient isn't considered to be in the clear until five years from the incident. For the first year after my diagnosis I had to go to my dermatologist every three months. Now I go every six months."

"Now that I am educated, if I saw another spot on my skin start to develop I would be off to the dermatologist. It was very sobering," said Anthony. Anthony's life has now changed with a few easy adjustments. "I don't leave the house without at least 50 block sunscreen. I have learned most of the lower numbers aren't very effective. My friends are pretty good about making sure I have my sunblock on, and I am pretty good about throwing out friendly reminders to others about the importance of sunblock."

Many factors can contribute to your odds of getting skin cancer. Skin type is a contributing factor. The more moles you have the more susceptible you are. People with fair skin and lighter eyes are at greater risk. Sun exposure greatly increases your risk of skin cancer. Blistering sunburns in early childhood seriously increase risk. Heredity also plays a major role. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation about one in every ten patients diagnosed with melanoma has a family history of it. Anthony said, "I have no history of melanoma that I am aware of. I know my cancer was a result of regular tanning bed use for years, and being out in the sun without sunscreen. **I was 40 when I got the original diagnosis, it was one of those things where you think it's always going to happen someone else.** In retrospect I can't believe I was even shocked by my diagnosis knowing the dangerous game I was playing with my health."

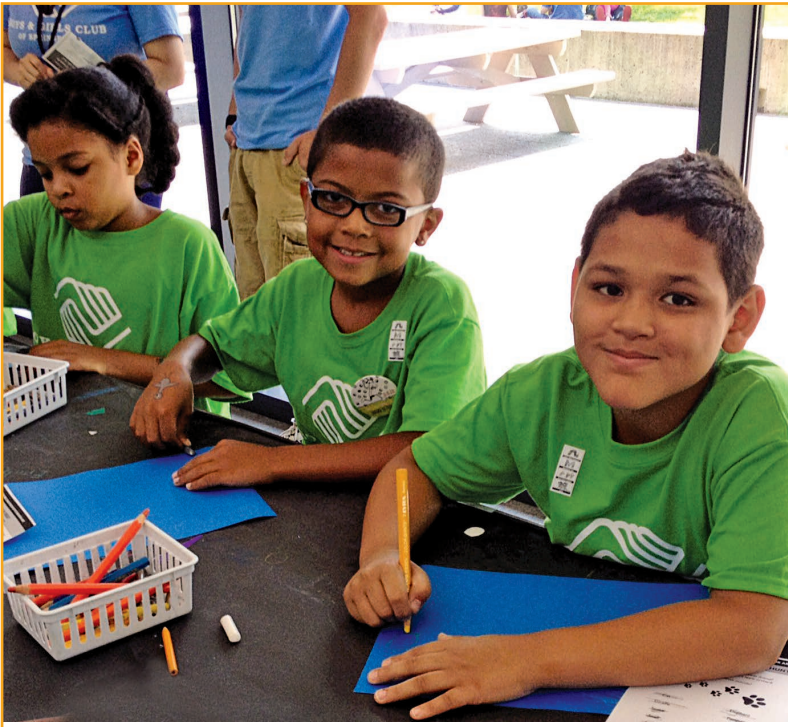
According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, outdoor activity is the key to any healthy lifestyle. Taking the proper steps to protect yourself from harmful UV rays, such as taking a few moments to apply sunscreen, will help keep you sun safe.

Sun Safety

Spring is here and everyone is ready to be outdoors soaking up the sun and fun. The Skin Cancer Foundation has put together a quick and easy check list of skin cancer prevention tips. Sunscreen alone is not enough!

- ☀ Find shade during the hottest hours of the day, between 10 am and 4 pm.
- ☀ Avoid burning.
- ☀ Never use UV tanning beds.
- ☀ Hats and UV blocking sunglasses are great tools to help cover sensitive areas
- ☀ Use a broad spectrum sunscreen. For extended activity in the sun make sure your sunscreen is water resistant with an SPF of 30 or higher. Apply the sunscreen before you go outside and reapply every two hours.
- ☀ Examine your skin head to toe every month. Pay special attention to new spots, and to moles that change size, shape and color.
- ☀ Schedule yearly exams with a skin care professional.

For more information, visit the Skin Cancer Foundation at www.skincancer.org or the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org.



Area children enjoy a project during the 2014 Indian Orchard Summer Camp.

The Springfield Boys & Girls Summer Camp Registration

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The program is available for youth ages 6 to 18 years old, and will run Monday through Friday, 9 am to 4 pm. The cost for the program is \$50 a week and a free lunch is provided to all members through the Springfield School Department. The program provides educational, social and recreational programming to motivate youth and adolescents in enhancing their interest in school and the community. Activities include arts & crafts, sports, weekly swim and field trips. For more information on registration, **please contact Lucy Jones at (413) 478-1700 or email indianorchardbgc@gmail.com.**

Veterans and Spouses Can Receive Aid & Attendance Benefit

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The Benefit is designed to provide financial aid to veterans or their spouse to help offset the cost of in-home care, assisted living communities, or nursing home care. This benefit is tax free and does not have to be paid back. You do not have to have sustained service related injuries to apply.

According to NBC News, 36% of veteran families are unaware this benefit exists. Families that have heard of it may be unsure if they qualify. A healthy veteran may overlook this benefit not realizing it pertains to his or her ill spouse. Qualifications are based on need. The formula takes income and medical expenses into consideration, but the recipient does not have to be impoverished to receive help.

Aid and Attendance honors our wartime veterans, as those same veterans have honored our country with their service.

Application forms must be filled out. Other documentation may be requested. **Please call the Department of Veterans Affairs for more information, 413-787-6141.**



With the Aid and Attendance Benefit you or your spouse will be better able to afford the care you need.

Frequently Asked Question

What Funeral Benefits are Available to Veterans?

Military honors are available to all honorably discharged veterans regardless of rank. The funeral service can include an active duty honor guard or one provided by a local volunteer veterans group. Arrangements can be made for a Chaplain to speak, flag folding and presentation, rifle salute and the playing of TAPS. Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services makes all the arrangements for these ceremonial activities. We also obtain a burial flag and grave marker for our veterans.

Veterans and armed forces members who die on active duty are eligible for burial in one of the Department Of Veterans Affairs national cemeteries. Similar eligibility applies to state cemeteries. “We have done many services at the Massachusetts Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery in Agawam. The services are held in the military chapel. They are always beautifully done with the utmost respect and dignity,” said Nydia Gallagher, Funeral Director at Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services.

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the US Armed Forces.

Veterans’ burial allowances may be available, which are partial reimbursements of an eligible veteran’s burial and funeral costs. The amount of the payment depends on whether the death was service-related. Your funeral director can help you determine eligibility and will assist in completing the appropriate government forms.

Dependents of a veteran who died during wartime may be eligible for a death pension. Again, there are specific eligibility rules that your funeral director can help guide you through. Resources are also available



through the **Veterans Service Office** in your town. A representative at the veterans office will meet with you personally to review your benefits.

Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services has a long history of commitment to veterans who come to us for their final tribute. “We are honored to plan the service of a veteran. We once held the funeral for a 23 year old member of the National Guard. Military servicemen took turn keeping watch over the casket throughout the service. Military honors were rendered, including having a firing party, as well as playing TAPS and the presentation of the flag to his mother,” recalled Anthony Nowak. “It was a very moving tribute.”

Our staff is fully trained to handle every detail of a veteran’s funeral service. This includes answering questions about military protocol, assuring that legal requirements are met, and providing whatever equipment, facilities, and technical services may be needed.