

Every day, thousands of people are diagnosed with serious and life changing diseases. Many times, the people affected by these diseases become advocates, raising awareness about the specific condition they have been diagnosed with. This is exactly the case with Dan “Drydock” Shockley. In 2012 Dan was 51 years old and knew that he needed a routine colonoscopy. That routine screening resulted in Dan being diagnosed with Attenuated Familial Adenomatous Polyposis or AFAP. He then had surgery to remove his entire colon, and now he has a permanent ostomy.

From the time Dan was diagnosed he started to research as much as he could about the disease. There was no family history or symptoms leading to his diagnosis. He learned that there is no cure for this rare gene mutation which affects less than .03% of the global population. While researching AFAP Dan met Dr. Henry T. Lynch, who is credited with discovering the genetic mutation which caused Dan’s disease. Dr. Lynch considered Dan a colleague and was tracking his case. Educating the world about hereditary colon cancer syndromes and ostomy awareness became Dan’s calling.

Throughout this difficult journey, Dan has maintained a positive outlook. His 22 years of military service in the Navy prepared Dan for the trials that were ahead. To him, AFAP stands for something much different than his disease. It has become his life mantra- “Always Forge Ahead with a Purpose.” This phrase has become a way of life for Dan. When speaking with Dan, his positive energy and enthusiasm about raising awareness for these conditions is laudable. A positive outlook towards a difficult condition is something Dan strives for every day, and he shared that “My mindset is, I tend not to think about things I’m unable to control, such as medical issues.” He goes on to state that, “What I can control is my positive attitude. And after five decades on God’s green earth, my positive attitude has brought me this far. Why change now?”

Dan recently reached out to his state senator, Roger Niello to help raise awareness for Ostomy Awareness Day. Dan was hoping for a symbolic proclamation, which he has helped to create in Hawaii, Idaho, and Texas. Senator Niello, however, had something more significant in mind. He introduced SCR 85, proclaiming October 7, 2023, Ostomy Awareness Day in the state of California. This is unusual because the Senator does not normally introduce resolutions for individuals or organizations. Dan’s story and attitude moved Senator Niello to help raise awareness that ostomies save lives. Click the following link to watch the resolution being read on the California Senate floor.
<https://vimeo.com/859554263>.

NAWCO would like to thank Dan for his unwavering mission to spread the message that ostomies save lives. There are so many clinicians who treat and care for ostomates every day, and Dan is helping to shine a spotlight on the important care they provide.

For more information on ostomy awareness, visit the [United Ostomy Association of America Inc.](#)

If you would like more information on becoming certified in Ostomy Management, please visit www.nawccb.org.