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## ConFire donor meets his bone marrow recipient

By Nick Marnell



From left: ConFire Batt. Chief Rob Lutzow, Richmond Fire Capt. Elizabeth de Dios, ConFire Safety Chief Pete Marshall, Daniel Andrade, Tom Darst, Sheila Darst, Be The Match Rep Jennnifer Sawle Photo courtesy ConFire Firefighters rarely have the chance to enjoy the positive outcomes of their work let alone meet a person whose life they saved under such a dramatic, unique circumstance.

After a 2015 training session, Lafayette Station 15 firefighter Daniel Andrade and his comrades stopped at a booth sponsored by Be The Match, a bone marrow transplant registry, and entered their names. A representative swabbed the inside of Andrade's mouth, tested his tissue and once approved he became a nationally registered bone marrow donor.

As befitting the fire service, the call came quickly and with no notice. Incredibly, in two months, Andrade's DNA had met its match; typically, matches take two years or more. "We had just moved to South Carolina," said Tom Darst, a retired Wisconsin PPG Industries factory worker. "I got sick about an hour and a half after we arrived. The doctors told me I had three months to live." Darst, 57, who had leukemia, received Andrade's stem cells and two years later, on Sept. 15, Darst stood inside Fire

Station 1 for a reunion - of sorts - with Andrade and his family.

"What started out as a night to educate firefighters turned out to save somebody's life," said Lon Goetsch, ConFire assistant chief.

Those who knew Andrade had no doubt that he would respond as he did. "He's always been a team player," said Andrade's father, Alonso. "This doesn't surprise us."

"With Daniels's stem cells, you're smiling more, laughing more and pulling practical jokes," said Battalion Chief Rob Lutzow, confirming what Darst was beginning to figure out the more time he and his donor spent together.

Andrade and Darst said they hoped that by telling their story, others would sign up with Be The Match and donate their bone marrow. To join the bone marrow registry, go to join.bethematch.org/swaboutcancer.

"When somebody needs your help, you answer the call," said Andrade, a response second nature to those in the fire service.

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