DOVER — What began as a pain in his chest in October 2005 was eventually diagnosed as testicular cancer in March 2006. By the time of his diagnosis, Anthony Salvatore’s cancer had metastasized to a grapefruit-sized tumor which wrapped around his aorta.

Although the situation seemed grim, the Dover resident battled the cancer head on and was honored last weekend at “Celebrate Life,” an event commemorating the courage and tenacity of five-year cancer survivors at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Philadelphia, the hospital where he received his treatment.

For such a positive outcome to such a devastating diagnosis, Mr. Salvatore and his wife, Maureen, credit the care and compassion they received from the staff at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

“These days I’m living life to the fullest thanks to CTCA and the caring professionals that work there. This journey has been a great life lesson for me as well as my wife. We enjoy our grandchildren more than ever now,” said Mr. Salvatore.

When Mr. Salvatore first noticed the pain in 2005, he visited a variety of doctors and specialists in Dover. A scan taken by a pulmonologist picked up a shadow; a biopsy later revealed the heartbreaking news.

“It was like I was becoming unglued,” said Mrs. Salvatore, of hearing that her husband had cancer.

After doing some research, Mrs. Salvatore believed that going to the Cancer Treatment Centers of America was the best decision for her husband — and after going through treatment there, they both believe that with certainty.

“When I walked in, it felt like I was walking into Heaven,” said Mr. Salvatore.

“From the first day, he had a team of doctors with him. It really put your mind at ease,” said Mrs. Salvatore. “And everyone was so caring and compassionate.”

Mr. Salvatore received four rounds of chemotherapy and five weeks of radiation — and ultimately also received the news that every cancer patient longs for, that he had beaten the disease.

This year marks his fifth year being cancer-free.

He does return to the hospital each November for a scan to ensure that the cancer has not returned; a trip which can be stressful until they hear the good news.

Last weekend, though, their trip to the hospital was not stressful at all; rather it gave the Salvatores a chance to reconnect with other survivors and hospital staff members who helped them through their journey and an opportunity to celebrate health and happiness.

The “Celebrate Life” event included a welcoming reception, group meals with other survivors, a meeting with the founder of the hospital, a tree planting ceremony, and hope rounds, where the survivors met with current patients.

“It’s really great for us to be able to go back for this,” said Mrs. Salvatore.

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