

FINDING BALANCE

*“I’ve bought a big bat, I’m all ready you see;
Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!”*
- Dr. Seuss

Colorectal cancer and the repercussions of extreme surgery, chemotherapy and radiation would have slowed most 29-year-olds down. But not Ben Moon – rock climber, surfer, adventure photographer. With the help of his friends, Ben persevered through treatments and got “back up on the wall” with chemo pump line dangling and a new lease on life.

In a world where most people aren’t comfortable discussing colostomy products, Ben makes the perfect spokesman.

Ignoring symptoms

In the winter of 2003, Ben was often exhausted and noticed occasional blood in his stool. Because he was living out of his camper van on the Pacific Coast and in Mexico and making trips to Hawaii while building up his photography business, he blamed it on travel or parasites.

In the spring of 2004, things got decidedly worse. Ben mentioned his symptoms to a friend in the medical field, Dr. Jeanne Young. “She really did save my life,” says Ben. “It’s tough when you’re living in a van to go to the hospital – I didn’t even have a doctor.” Jeanne ordered a couple of simple tests to check for anemia, thyroid function and parasites.

Around that same time, another friend, Byron, was going through a hard time and wanted some company. He invited Ben to stay at his house, which would turn out to be serendipitous.

Scoped

When the first tests came back negative, Jeanne sent Ben to a nurse practitioner, Gail Riffle, who did a thorough examination and then recommended a colonoscopy. “I was only 29 and a lot of people my age don’t get scoped,” says Ben. “The fact that she sent me for a colonoscopy was huge.”

Waking up from the procedure, Ben heard the G.I. doctor say something about how women with colostomies could still wear ...