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# Warrenton mayor reflects on life-changing diagnosis

By Kaitlyn Salazar Staff Writer
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Photo by Doug Stroud

When Warrenton Mayor Carter Nevill pulled into an urgent care on May 31, fatigued and lightheaded, he had no idea that his next stop would be the emergency room, or that a tick bite was about to change his life.

“I went in and walked into the room and explained my symptoms and they put an EKG on me. The doctor came in and said, ‘How did you get here?’ And I said, ‘Well, I drove’ and he said, ‘Well, you're not driving out of here. I've called an ambulance and you're

going to the hospital,'" Nevill said.

Within hours, Nevill, who's 55, was in the intensive care unit, hooked to a crash cart, preparing to have a temporary pacemaker implanted. He was diagnosed with Lyme disease at the hospital.




Today he has a new perspective on life, health and stress. His encounter with Lyme disease has helped persuade him not to run for reelection as mayor.

"Eight years is certainly enough for anyone, especially in this political climate," Nevill said.

Nevill and his wife walk their dogs daily at Laurel Ridge Community College, where he said the tick population has skyrocketed in the last five years.

"There are days we pull 10 ticks off each of the dogs and we do tick check ourselves, but still one bit me," Nevill said.

Nevill said he was aware of the risk of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses but wasn't too concerned about his bites since he had no immediate symptoms. He never developed the most well-known sign of Lyme: the bullseye rash.

"I had probably four or five bites last year and I always thought that ... it's 24 to 48 hours for the transmission of Lyme disease. So, the thought never really crossed my mind that I was infected with Lyme disease," Nevill said.

According to the Virginia Department of Health, the state had 555 reported cases of Lyme disease in 2020. In 2024, there were 1,400.

Jenny Hall, an associate professor of public health and healthcare leadership at Radford University, said a bulls-eye rash makes Lyme disease easy to diagnose, but it doesn't show up in every case of Lyme.

Lack of the rash makes it "harder to make the diagnosis," Hall said, "because it's more flu-like symptoms, maybe fevers and chills, malaise, or just feeling really fatigued. ... It's going to present a little bit differently for each [person]."



Carter Nevill's three dogs. From left: Whiskers, a pug; Dusty, a French bulldog; and Rocky, also a French bulldog.
Photo by Doug Stroud

Last fall, Nevill had a fainting spell that he attributed to blood pressure medication. But his fainting became more frequent, and he began experiencing chronic fatigue and malaise. First he chalked it up to stress, then diet, then allergies. Finally, after his wife saw him faint once, and then twice, she persuaded him to get checked out.

By the time he arrived at UVA Health Prince William Hospital via ambulance on May 31, his heart rate was less than 40 beats per minute and he was diagnosed with stage 3 heart block.



Nevill shows of the scar from when he had a temporary pacemaker implanted in May 2025 due to heart complications linked to Lyme disease.

Photo by Doug Stroud

Nevill said he was surprisingly calm in the emergency room.

“I knew if I panicked, my wife would panic, my son would panic, my parents would panic, and it was sort of surreal, you know?” Nevill said.

A test result showed Lyme disease was the issue.

Lyme carditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, occurs in 1 to 5 percent of Lyme disease patients, and can be fatal in rare instances, according to the National Library of Medicine.

“Two more days of not paying attention to this may have been a very different outcome for me,” Nevill said.

After Nevill started a monthlong course of antibiotics and received a permanent pacemaker, his mysterious symptoms eased up.

“Now that my heart is working as it should, I feel better than I have in months. ... I feel I've got my energy back,” Nevill said. “Interestingly, now my blood pressure has gone back to normal, so I'm off my blood pressure medication.”



Warrenton Mayor Carter Nevill now uses bug repelling socks or leg gaiters when spending time outdoors. Photo by Doug Stroud

The ordeal has caused Nevill to reevaluate his priorities and the level of stress he takes on as mayor.

“I realized that accepting that amount of stress was unhealthy," Nevill said. “I’m coming out of this with a fresher perspective. I've got to not be as beaten down by the responsibilities and some of the negativity that comes along with it.”

Nevill will continue his daily walks at the community college, but with far more caution. And, he has some advice about ticks.

“If you think you've checked well enough, check again,” Nevill said.

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**Ticks are flocking to Virginia and increasingly spreading disease**