

## AOSW QOL AWARD INFORMATION FOR VICKI KENNEDY, LCSW

### TITLE:

**WEATHERING THE STORM IS NOT ENOUGH: ONCOLOGY SOCIAL WORK AS A LIFELINE FOR QUALITY CANCER CARE**

### ABSTRACT:

There is a perfect storm brewing on the horizon. In the next 10 years, there will be 18.1 million cancer survivors in the United States — 4.3 million more than in 2010. The cost of cancer care is expected to surpass \$158 billion (\$33 billion more than in 2010) and the U.S. is facing a rapidly aging population with 10,000 people a day turning 65. Entitlement programs are teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, and projected shortages of oncologists, nurses, and yes, even oncology social workers, lead even the sagest of experts to scratch their heads about what lies ahead in cancer care. No matter what your stance on health care reform, one cannot help but worry about how the lives of people touched by cancer will be impacted. In fact, it is likely that we will face these issues head on in our own families if we are not already. Cancer is up close and personal. Treatment decisions are increasingly complex. Access to quality care can be as simple as not being aware of what questions to ask or as complex as the racial, geographic and socioeconomic disparities facing the world today.

As oncology professionals, it is time to heed the call. Oncology social workers need prepare our profession and those we serve for weathering the storm ahead. Simply battening down the hatches and maintaining the status quo will no longer be enough. Do we have the skills? Can we mobilize the resources? Can we find our collective voice so that caring for the *whole* person is not only quality cancer care but a sustainable business model? Oncology social workers help patients and families translate overwhelming information and knowledge into wisdom—wisdom to find the right path no matter what the outcome of the disease. We affirm. We encourage. We teach. Now we need to step up and lead. The hardest experiences are often the ones that teach us the most. As we walk through the gateway of a rapidly transforming health care paradigm, we can be the advocate for quality of life or we can simply be swept away in the storm surge. We must decide—our patients lives depend on it!

### BIO:

As VP of Program Development & Delivery for the Cancer Support Community, Vicki Kennedy is responsible for development and oversight of CSC clinical programs worldwide. An oncology social worker for the past 27 years, Ms. Kennedy has served as Co-Founder of The Wellness Community-Central Indiana; researcher at the Walther Cancer Institute; and staff of the IU Cancer Center in bone marrow transplant/hematology. Vicki is a past-president of AOSW and has published several articles, co-authored patient education materials and serves on the board of American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS). Vicki provides consultation in non-profit development and is passionate about empowering oncology social workers in quality care.