

American Cancer Society Honors Exemplary Cancer Caregivers

Providers Recognized for “Warm Hand of Service”

Atlanta 2009/03/25 -Fifteen outstanding cancer care providers from a variety of backgrounds and regions have been chosen to receive the 2009 American Cancer Society Lane W. Adams Quality of Life Award, a prestigious national prize for cancer caring. The Lane W. Adams Quality of Life Award recognizes individuals who have made a difference through innovation, leadership, and consistent excellence in providing compassionate, skilled care, and counsel to persons living with cancer and their families. They will be presented in a ceremony in Atlanta on Friday, May 8, 2009. This year, the Society honors:

- **Britta Newcomer, R.N., B.S.N., O.C.N.**, oncology community outreach nurse, Memorial Hospital System Cancer Center, Colorado Springs, Colo. Ms. Newcomer works to link patients, caregivers and families to key community support services including several American Cancer Society programs. She is known for her compassion, dedication and service to local cancer patients in Colorado.
- **Daniel Armstrong, Ph.D.**, professor of pediatrics and psychology, University of Miami School of Medicine, Miami, Fla. Dr. Armstrong has worked on several studies and clinical trials investigating treatment of childhood cancers. Dr. Armstrong has also previously served as chair of the Childhood Cancer Advisory Council of the Society's Florida Division.
- **Haley A. Schwartz, J.D.**, attorney, Atlanta Legal Aid, Atlanta, Ga. Ms. Schwartz is the director of the Breast Cancer Legal Project, a two-year Equal Justice Works fellowship which has provided thousands of people with free information, legal advice, and community education. She is known for her dedication and empathy for the clients she serves.
- **Heidi Schultz Adams**, founder, Planet Cancer, Austin, Texas. Ms. Adams, a Ewing's Sarcoma survivor, speaks nationally about the unique needs of young adult cancer survivors, provides weekend retreats for survivors in the Austin area, and is described as an inspiring person. Through her work, she ensures that young-adult cancer survivors have a community to provide much needed support to these survivors.
- **Hen-Vai Wu, M.D.**, past chair, Asian Initiatives board of directors; oncologist, Somerset Medical Center, Somerville, NJ. Dr. Wu, a resident of Warren, has been a major force in the Chinese American community in New Jersey, providing much needed cancer information and serving as a dedicated and effective leader. Dr. Wu has played a pivotal role in the growth and strategic direction of the Society's Asian Initiatives Unit in New Jersey, and has also traveled to China to teach in medical schools and treat patients in rural areas.
- **Karline Peal, B.S., RT(T), M.B.A.**, administrative director, Center for Advanced Radiation Medicine, Lake Forest Hospital, Lake Forest, Ill. Ms. Peal has been working with cancer patients for over a decade, and is known for her inspirational spirit. As a strong proponent of many Society patient services, she is described as having a warm and personable approach to the patients she works with.
- **Kathryn W. Visneski, R.N., M.S.N., A.P.N., A.O.C.N.**, oncology nurse specialist, Wellmont Holston Valley Medical Center, Kingsport, Tenn. Ms. Visneski has worked in oncology nursing for over twenty years, and has been a coach and advocate to the patients and survivors she has worked with. Through her passion for her work Ms. Visneski has implemented numerous patient support groups to encourage cancer awareness and provide support to those who face a cancer diagnosis.
- **Mark C. Johnson, M.D.**, medical director, Hospice of North Iowa, Mason City, Iowa. Dr. Johnson's role in establishing levels of excellence in the care of patients and families facing a terminal illness was vital to the foundation of the hospice program at Hospice of North Iowa. He is known for his caring nature, his commitment to cancer care, and for relieving emotional pain that so often accompanies a terminal illness.

- **Mary Sharpe O'Donnell, R.N., B.S., M.H.M., C.B.C.**, palliative care educator, VITAS Innovative Hospice Care, Miami, Fla. As a hospice pioneer, Ms. O'Donnell was a relentless advocate for the hospice concept in her community until she became a co-founder of the first hospice program in Southeast Florida. Her care and compassion serve as a model for families, caregivers, and health care providers who recognize the value of her work.
- **Page Tolbert, L.C.S.W.**, senior clinical social worker, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, New York. Ms. Tolbert has been in the field of oncology for over 20 years, and has been a leader in both counseling and group leadership in cancer survivorship. She is known for her sense of humor and her ability to help patients gain insight and face their own anxiety about their cancer journey.
- **Tina Cull, R.N., B.N., C.H.P.N.**, palliative care coordinator, Carolinas Medical Center-Northeast, Concord, NC. Ms. Cull is known for her heart and her laugh, as her passion is to share peace and compassion with those fighting cancer. Ms. Cull provides hope and guidance to those facing cancer, and is recognized by her peers and her community as an inspirational force in palliative care.
- **Sandy Chen Stokes, R.N., M.S.N.**, executive director, Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care, Shingle Springs, Calif. As a dedicated Society volunteer for many years, Ms. Stokes also led the American Cancer Society-California Chinese Unit from 2000-2001. Her leadership led to the creation of the Quality of Life Handbook, which was the first Chinese cancer resource book for patients and families on end-of-life issues ever to be published in the United States. Ms. Stokes' tireless energy and work demonstrates her innovative approach to educate and empower patients, caregivers and their families.
- **Reverend Thomas W. Johns**, pastor, St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Mentor, Ohio. As a lung and prostate cancer survivor, Reverend Johns offers hope and spiritual support to others facing a cancer diagnosis. Reverend Johns is known for his compassionate ability to relate to people not only as a priest but also as a cancer survivor.
- **Bernie Axenfeld**, retired, patient and family service, regional volunteer, American Cancer Society, Central New York Region, Syracuse, New York. Mr. Axenfeld, a head and neck cancer survivor, started volunteering for the American Cancer Society Central New York Region in 2005, and is now considered one of their hardest working volunteers. Known as a remarkable, caring and dedicated person, Mr. Axenfeld has worked to implement multiple patient service programs to benefit others facing this life-changing disease.
- **Robert W. Stone, R.N.**, nurse, Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, Roanoke, Va. Mr. Stone is a nurse who is described as being a great mentor and teacher to his peers and patients alike. His tireless dedication to providing the latest oncology information to his patients is comparable only to his compassionate patient care.

"Going above and beyond the call of duty to extend the 'warm hand of service' to cancer patients is a top priority for these dedicated individuals," said Elizabeth T.H. Fontham, M.P.H., Dr.P.H., national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. "These extraordinary awardees deserve to be recognized for their efforts to provide hope, inspiration, and support on a daily basis to those touched by cancer."

The American Cancer Society has recognized cancer caregivers through the Lane Adams Quality of Life Award since 1988. The awards committee includes long-time national Society volunteers, including Vicki Adams Quan, the daughter of Lane W. Adams, the former executive vice president of the Society who coined the term the "warm hand of service" and made attention to compassionate care a legacy of his service. Individuals like this year's Lane Adams recipients are critical to helping the American Cancer Society save lives from cancer.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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