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## **Erica F. Wood Honored With Fred Kretz Cornerstone Award**

During the National Guardianship Association's Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., Erica F. Wood, JD, received the Fred Kretz Cornerstone Award. One of the highest honors bestowed by the Center for Guardianship Certification (CGC), the award recognizes the recipient's significant contributions to CGC and the promotion of guardianship certification.

Wood's achievements are legion and they demonstrate both the breadth and depth of her knowledge of and dedication to the promotion of the rights of all older adults, especially those with diminished capacity. She has devoted her three-decade career to promoting elder rights at every level, working in her local county, serving as a volunteer on multiple statewide stakeholder groups and task forces, and advocating for vulnerable adults at the national level through her work at the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging.

One of Wood's greatest contributions has been serving as a bridge between national, state and local resources and advocacy efforts. Just one example of her bridge-building skills is her outstanding work in guardianship law. She is recognized as perhaps the nation's leading advocate on guardianship issues, having written prolifically on the topic. She has contributed significantly to guardianship scholarship on courting monitoring, public guardianship, health care decision-making for the unbefriended elderly, as well as mediation and dispute resolution in nursing homes. She successfully combined her expertise at the national level with her contacts at the state level to achieve a major rewrite of Virginia's guardianship statute in 1997.

On the local level, her inspiration and determination led Arlington, VA, to begin a volunteer guardianship program in the late 1980's. Within a year of the amended state guardianship statute, she worked to establish a pre-guardianship interdisciplinary panel in Arlington. She served for eight years on the Public Guardianship and Conservatorship Program Advisory Board (a gubernatorial appointment) and six years on the Virginia Guardianship Association Board. She was a founding member of the Northern Virginia Aging Network and of the Consumer Consortium on Assisted Living, a member of the Arlington Commission on Aging, the Arlington County Commission on Long-Term Care Residences, Advisory Council to the Arlington Agency on Aging, and the Elder Readiness Task Force.

In April 2010, the Virginia Elder Rights Coalition (VERC) named its annual Elder Rights Award after Wood in recognition of this "giant in her field" because of her selfless and tireless advocacy on behalf of Virginia's older adults. In naming this award for her, VERC noted that "it is safe to say that very little that is innovative and good for Virginia's elderly and very little that has to do with advocating for the rights of Virginia's most vulnerable seniors has been accomplished over the last three decades without the direct or indirect efforts of Erica Wood."

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*CGC was founded in 1997 by the National Guardianship Association and is headquartered in Harrisburg, PA. CGC has more than 1,850 National Certified Guardians and 61 National Master Guardians. For more information about national guardianship certification or to find a guardian, conservator or fiduciary in your area, please visit [www.guardianshipcert.org](http://www.guardianshipcert.org).*

As the nation's leading advocate on guardianship reform, Wood has demonstrated her unwavering devotion to ensuring that guardians practice with the highest possible level of performance and ethical standards, protecting the due process rights of alleged incapacitated individuals, promoting the use of less restrictive alternatives, limiting the scope of guardianships to maximize the cognitively impaired person's right to retain maximum decision-making authority, enhancing the ability of courts to effectively monitor guardianship cases, creating linkages between the aging network and the courts, and influencing state and national policy-makers to improve the lives of vulnerable adults with impaired function capacity.

In the midst of all these activities, Wood has also been an instigator and leader for all three of the major national guardianship conferences. She initiated the concept for the first Wingspread conference, molded the creation of the second Wingspan conference, and now is the key planner, as well as author of the significant background paper on surrogate decision making for residential placement, for the soon to be launched Third National Guardianship Summit.

Considering this long list of accomplishments in the guardianship arena, it is hard to imagine anyone who is more deserving of the Fred Kretz Cornerstone Award. But her achievements aside, Wood's personal characteristics make her an even more worthy candidate. She's an amazing engine of energy, intelligence and wisdom. In all her endeavors, she demonstrates unflappable good will, eternal optimism, and unfailing respect for others. She is always available to all for consultation on how best to make the guardianship system work to the advantage of those vulnerable adults she cares for so passionately. Plus, she's a wonderful colleague for those who have the privilege to work with her and a faithful friend to all she meets.

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*(Photo of Wood available upon request)*