

# AGEOPTIONS NOW

April 2012

## Advisory Council Member Betsy Essex Receives Oak Park Award

Elizabeth (Betsy) Essex, Ph.D., a member of the AgeOptions Advisory Council, has been named a Celebrating Seniors "60 Over 60" honoree for 2012.

AgeOptions nominated Betsy for the award, which is given in recognition of individuals' contributions to the communities of Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park.

In his nomination letter, Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions CEO, stated: "Dr. Essex is known in both the social services and academic communities for her high integrity and honed evaluation and leadership skills. An educator and researcher, she is also committed to community involvement and volunteer work."



After they were selected, the honorees were asked to submit their personal philosophy, or "Words to Live By." Betsy's were "Stand up for what you believe in. Together we can make a difference."

At AgeOptions, Betsy is secretary of the Advisory Council and a member of the Visioning Committee. "She consistently shows willingness to test an idea, refine it and articulate an improved version based on the comments and reasoning offered within the group," Lavin said. "We appreciate her dedication to older adults and the community, as well as her wonderful sense of humor and infectious warmth."

Betsy is an associate professor in the Department of Social Work at Governors State University. She contends that social work emphasizes social justice, and that professionals can't really help individuals without also advocating for change at the local, state and national levels.

As a scholar, her research has primarily been in the fields of disabilities, aging and family caregiving. Prior to her doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she was a social worker with aging parents of adults with disabilities, which led to her interest in older adults and family caregiving. She was one of the first researchers to give attention to older fathers of adults with developmental disabilities.

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She is a recipient of the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholar award, which included \$100,000 for community-based research and her development as a teacher, scholar and leader. Her recent research includes a study of the needs of Arab-American older adults.

Betsy is also a consulting editor of School Social Work Journal and is on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Community Practice. She is a member of the Governors State Faculty senate and chairs its Educational Policies Committee. Her community activities include involvement in the Seventh District West MoveOn Council.