Michael F. Finkel, MD, FAAN, of Naples, FL, was named 2011 Kenneth M. Viste, Jr., MD, Patient Advocate of the Year. The award recognizes an outstanding patient advocate who embodies the leadership and advocacy qualities exemplified by Viste, who served as AAN president and chair of the AAN Foundation before his untimely death in 2005.

Finkel was honored for his lifelong commitment to patient advocacy within his community and internationally. Finkel’s efforts to rejuvenate the Florida Society of Neurology (FSN) and establish the Florida NeuroAlliance have improved neurologic care within his state. As president of the FSN from 2005 to 2007, Finkel rebuilt and rejuvenated the society by improving and expanding educational opportunities and initiating local and global advocacy efforts. Due primarily to his efforts, Florida now boasts one of the largest state neurological societies in the US.

Finkel also launched the Florida NeuroAlliance, a state advocacy project that brings together neurologists, patients, and patient support groups to work together to identify and obtain the needed services for patients with chronic neurologic disorders.

As chair of the FSN Outreach Committee from 2009 to 2010, Finkel developed the Nigeria Florida Neuroscience Partnership to help develop and improve neurologic services in Nigeria through the exchange of expertise and ideas. The inaugural meeting of the Nigerian-Florida Partnership was held in November 2010. It included presentations on stroke, epilepsy, neurocritical care, movement disorders, and advocacy training by both American and Nigerian faculty. It brought together people from different professions and states within Nigeria and inspired new ideas and hope.

As current president of the World Neurology Foundation, Finkel has promoted the Toolkits for Africa program, which improves the diagnosis and treatment of neurologic disorders in sub-Saharan Africa by providing health care workers with the basic medical equipment needed to perform a neurologic examination. Each tool kit includes a reflex hammer, tuning fork, stethoscope, penlight, Snellen eye chart, and NIH stroke scale card.

The Viste Advocate of the Year Award is sponsored by the AAN and its Foundation and endowed by gifts from Viste’s friends and colleagues to the Kenneth M. Viste, Jr., MD, Leadership Fund. Award recipients are honored with a $1,000 honoraria and recognition during the AAN Annual Meeting. Finkel will donate his award to the World Neurology Foundation.

Nominations for the 2012 award will be accepted from August 1 to November 30. For more information, contact Derek Brandt at dbrandt@aan.com or visit www.aan.com/visteaward.