



CONSUMER ATTORNEYS OF CALIFORNIA

Seeking Justice for All

Broillet, Carr, Lanzetta, McKibben selected as CAOC's Consumer Attorneys of the Year

Simon and Seck named Street Fighter of the Year at Awards Dinner

SACRAMENTO (Nov. 12, 2016) – **Bruce A. Broillet, Scott H. Carr, Tobin M. Lanzetta** and **Molly M. McKibben** of Greene Broillet & Wheeler in Santa Monica are Consumer Attorneys of California's 2016 Consumer Attorneys of the Year for their work winning protections against stalking and cyber-crimes in a high-profile case involving sportscaster Erin Andrews. The announcement was made Saturday night at the awards dinner as part of CAOC's 55th Annual Convention at The Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

Robert T. Simon of The Simon Law Group in Hermosa Beach and **Ibiere N. Seck** of The Cochran Firm in Los Angeles were honored Saturday night as CAOC's Street Fighters of the Year for holding a cleaning services company accountable for not supervising an employee who sexually assaulted a teenage girl he lured into working with him.

Consumer Attorney of the Year is awarded to a CAOC member or members who significantly advanced the rights or safety of California consumers by achieving a noteworthy result in a case. Eligibility for Street Fighter of the Year is limited to CAOC members who have practiced law for no more than 10 years or work in a firm with no more than five attorneys. To be considered for either award the case must have finally resolved between May 15, 2015 and May 15, 2016, with no further legal work to occur, including appeals.

In *Andrews v. West End Hotel Partners, et al.*, Broillet, Carr, Lanzetta and McKibben represented Erin Andrews, who was working for ESPN in 2008 when she stayed at a Marriott hotel in Nashville while on assignment. Before Andrews arrived at the hotel, Michael Barrett asked Marriott whether she would be staying there. Marriott confirmed that, in fact, she would be staying at the hotel. He then requested a room next to her, and the hotel gave it to him without notifying Andrews of the request. Barrett then altered the peephole on the door to Andrews' room and secretly filmed her naked after she got out of the shower, as she was getting dressed for work. He later uploaded the video to the internet, and more than 16 million people have viewed it online. As a result, Andrews suffered intense feelings of embarrassment, shame and humiliation, and at trial she testified about the long-term emotional impact. Earlier this year a Nashville jury found both Barrett and the hotel at fault in a verdict that has led to significant changes in the hotel industry to protect safety, security and privacy. The case has prompted lawmakers in California and other states to address stronger protections against stalking and enact heavier penalties for unlawfully photographing another person for sexual gratification.

In *S.W. v. U.S. Metro Group Inc., et al.*, Simon and Seck represented a 15-year-old who was convinced by her best friend's father, Luis Morales, to work with him cleaning office buildings at night so she could earn money to buy a cheerleading outfit. Morales then had sexual encounters with the girl at work sites and at his home over a four-month period. She reported the sexual abuse, and since then she has been diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Simon and Seck pointed out that there had been two allegations of sexual misconduct against Morales by two adult female janitorial employees of the company two years before his abuse of the 15-year-old, so U.S. Metro was on notice of his behavior and Morales should have been watched, but the company did not even know the girl was

working with him. The attorneys noted Morales had his own vehicle and would drive from work site to work site, unsupervised, when he should have been supervised. A Los Angeles County jury found that Morales' actions constituted sexual assault and battery, that U.S. Metro was negligent in the hiring, training and supervision of Morales, and that the actions of both Morales and U.S. Metro constituted negligent infliction of emotional distress. Their verdict demonstrates that employers must take action when they know employees could be perpetrators of sexual abuse.

Also honored at Saturday's dinner were:

Roger A. Dreyer (partner, Dreyer Babich Buccola Wood Campora, Sacramento), winner of the Robert E. Cartwright, Sr., Award, given "in recognition of excellence in trial advocacy and dedication to teaching trial advocacy to fellow lawyers and to the public." Even though his busy law practice finds him constantly in trial all across California, Dreyer always makes time to participate in continuing education seminars whenever he's asked by CAOC and other organizations, as he recognizes the importance of training other consumer attorneys in order to improve consumer protection.

Valerie T. McGinty (Law Office of Valerie T. McGinty, San Mateo), winner of the Marvin E. Lewis Award, given "in recognition of continued guidance, loyalty and dedication, all of which have been an inspiration to fellow attorneys." McGinty has been a trail blazer and the life force of CAOC's Women's Caucus and has been very active in contributing her time and skills to benefit her fellow consumer attorneys, whether as a board member of CAOC and various local trial lawyer associations or as a presenter at continuing legal education seminars.

J. Gary Gwilliam (founding partner, Gwilliam Ivary Chiosso Cavalli & Brewer, Oakland), winner of the Edward I. Pollock Award, given "in recognition of many years of dedication, outstanding efforts and effectiveness on behalf of the causes and ideals" of consumer attorneys. A past president of CAOC (1988) with 50 years experience as a trial lawyer, Gwilliam has handled major cases in every area of consumer law, including employment discrimination and harassment, wrongful termination, serious automobile and construction accidents, products liability, medical malpractice, bad faith insurance and civil rights.

The awards dinner also included the installation of CAOC's 2017 President **Gregory L. Bentley**, partner of Bentley & More in Irvine. Bentley was one of the attorneys honored as CAOC's Consumer Attorneys of the Year in 2014 and has won "Trial Lawyer of the Year" awards from several local trial lawyer associations. He has earned election to membership of the prestigious International Academy of Trial Lawyers, is a Fellow in the International Society of Barristers and a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

Also during CAOC's 55th Annual Convention, the CAOC Women's Caucus honored **Kathryn A. Stebner**, of Stebner & Associates in San Francisco, with its Consumer Advocate Award. Stebner specializes in protecting senior citizens who are victims of elder abuse.

Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs' attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.

For more information:

J.G. Preston, CAOC Press Secretary, 916-669-7126, jgpreston@caoc.org
Eric Bailey, CAOC Communications Director, 916-669-7122, ebailey@caoc.org