



EMBARGOED UNTIL

DATE: Monday, June 15, 2015

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Leaders Recognized for Commitment to Justice; New Board Members Elected

RALEIGH, NC —

The North Carolina Advocates for Justice (NCAJ) has recognized the following persons for their dedication to NCAJ's mission of protecting and furthering people's rights. Awards were presented at the association's Annual Convention, which began this weekend in Sunset Beach.

The Honorable **Mary Ann Tally** received NCAJ's *Outstanding Trial Judge* award. Also, the Honorable **Linda McGee** was awarded the *Outstanding Appellate Judge* award. NCAJ is grateful to these talented professionals for advancing the legal profession in North Carolina.

The *Kellie Crabtree Award* was presented posthumously to **Graham Yates** and also to his attorney **Janet Ward Black** of Ward Black Law (Greensboro). This award is given to recognize attorneys and clients in cases where the client's story and the attorney's representation have made a real difference in protecting people's rights. Graham Yates suffered from malignant mesothelioma, a fatal rare form of cancer caused by his exposure to asbestos in the workplace. Janet Ward Black was able to secure compensation for Graham upon his diagnosis. He fought tirelessly with NCAJ for his remaining three years of his life to combat and weaken a bill, supported by corporate lobbyists, seeking to cap compensation for future victims of asbestos-induced mesothelioma.

Laura Leslie, Capitol Bureau Chief of WRAL, was recognized with an *Excellence in Journalism* award for her long dedication to keeping the public informed and knowledgeable about issues important to NCAJ members and their clients.

Rebecca Britton and **M. Gordon Widenhouse, Jr.** were recognized for their tremendous dedication to educating youth about the U.S. justice system and their effort in successfully hosting the National High School Mock Trial Competition in Raleigh this May with a *NCAJ Special Award*.

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This weekend NCAJ also elected new members to its Board for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The newly elected members include attorneys practicing in cities across the state:

Andrew Banzhoff, Devereux & Banzhoff, PLLC (Asheville)
Julie Bell, Daggett Shuler (Winston-Salem)
Adrienne Blocker, Law Offices of John McCabe (Cary)
Kevin Bunn, Attorney-at-Law, P.C. (Cary)
C. Douglas Maynard, Maynard & Harris, Attorneys at Law, PLLC (Winston-Salem)
Ann Ochsner, Whitley Law Firm (Raleigh)
Sonya Pfeiffer, Rudolf, Widenhouse & Fialko (Charlotte)
Ruth Sheehan, The Francis Law Firm (Raleigh)
Deonte' Thomas, Office of Indigent Defense Services (Durham)
Joseph Tunstall III, O'Malley Tunstall, PLLC (Tarboro)
Norman Cole Williams, The Law Office of N. Cole Williams (Durham)

The Board will also include the following appointed delegates:

American Association for Justice (AAJ) Governor: **Charles Monnett**, Charles G. Monnett, III & Associates (Charlotte)

American Association for Justice (AAJ) Governor: **Douglas Abrams**, Abrams & Abrams, P.A. (Raleigh)

American Association for Justice (AAJ) Minority Caucus Delegate: **Curtis Osborne**, Osborne Law Firm, PC (Charlotte)

American Association for Justice (AAJ) State Delegate: **Cliff Britt**, Comerford & Britt, LLP (Winston-Salem)

American Association for Justice (AAJ) State Delegate: **Charles Bentley**, Bentley Law Offices, P.A. (Durham)

ABOUT NCAJ:

NCAJ provides continuing legal education for lawyers aimed at enhancing the quality of the legal profession, offers public education programs aimed at enhancing public access and understanding of the legal system, supports the writing of amicus briefs for the appellate courts, and advocacy work at the legislature in the areas of criminal and civil justice. The association has served its members for over 50 years.

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