

MINNESOTA LAWYER

Legal News

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Minnesota Lawyer names the 2009 Attorneys of the Year

by Patrick Thornton Staff Writer

The four attorneys who prosecuted the largest fraud case in the state's history are among a diverse and talented group of recipients selected by Minnesota Lawyer as the "Attorneys of the Year" for 2009.

Minnesota Lawyer presents its Attorney of the Year awards annually to a select group of attorneys who distinguished themselves during the year through their accomplishments. The criteria for selection include leadership in the profession, involvement in major cases or other newsworthy events, excellence in corporate or transactional services and public service.

The attorneys recognized this year come from diverse areas of practice, including criminal law, litigation, intellectual property and in-house legal services. While the legal community faced many challenges in 2009, it was also a year that featured some first-rate legal work, according to Minnesota Lawyer Editor-in-Chief Mark A. Cohen.

"Despite the struggling economy, local lawyers racked up a highly impressive array of accomplishments in 2009," said Cohen. "Bad times seem to bring out the best in the bar. While there weren't many large verdicts or mega-deals locally in 2009, this year's Attorneys of the Year are among the strongest group of honorees we've had in the 11 years we've been bestowing these awards."

Four of the honorees — assistant U.S. attorneys Joseph T. Dixon, John R. Marti, Timothy C. Rank and John F. Docherty — were the leaders of a hard-working legal team that successfully prosecuted Tom Petters for running a \$3.5 billion Ponzi scheme.

Four other honorees — Alan S. Milavetz, Robert J. Milavetz, Barbara N. Nevin and Chad W. Schulze, all of Milavetz Gallop, & Milavetz, P.A. — spearheaded the Edina-based law firm's challenge to a federal bankruptcy law that limits the advice that attorneys can give to debtors. They prevailed before the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and had their case argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Also being honored this year are:

Kenneth J. Abdo of Lommen, Abdo, Cole, King & Stageberg for his work as chair of the 5,000-member American Bar Association Forum on The Entertainment and Sports Industries and for his successful negotiations on behalf of several nationally recognized musicians;

Cooper S. Ashley of Maslon Edelman Borman & Brand, LLP for obtaining a unanimous defense verdict in favor of 3M in a groundwater pollution case tried before a Washington County jury;

Joan Bibelhausen of Minnesota Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers for her leadership in assisting lawyers with stress and life-balance issues during what's turned out to be a stressful year for the legal community;

Leo I. Brisbois of Stich, Angell, Kreidler & Dodge, P.A. for his leadership in the Minnesota State Bar Association and for his hard work on thwarting a legislative attempt to impose a tax on legal services;

Alan G. Carlson of Carlson, Caspers, Vandenburg & Lindquist for procuring a \$22 million verdict in the Minnesota patent infringement case, Spectralytics v. Cordis, involving equipment used to make stents;

John M. Degnan of Briggs and Morgan for his success in Peterka v. Dennis, a case in which the Minnesota Supreme Court determined that court-appointed neutrals are entitled to immunity, for his leadership in the Hennepin County Bar Association Bench & Bar Committee, for his pro bono work on behalf of a veteran and for obtaining a \$2.7 million wrongful death settlement;

LB Guthrie of Lindquist & Vennum for his pro bono work in assisting Project Pride in Living with its foreclosure recovery program;

Michael K. Johnson of Goldenberg & Johnson, PLLC for his success before the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in a case involving pre-emption and generic drugs and for procuring substantial settlements in cases involving a drug that discolors skin;

David L. Lillehaug of Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. for his work representing Al Franken in the highly newsworthy Franken/Coleman litigation;

Edward Matonich of Matonich & Persson for his work obtaining a \$9 million recovery for the family of a pilot killed in a small plane crash;

Daniel O'Fallon of Robins Kaplan Miller & Ciresi for his work in obtaining a \$7.4 million verdict for the family of a passenger killed in a small plane crash;

Former Borown County Attorney James R. Olson of Berens, Rodenberg & O'Connor, Chtd. for his work prosecuting the case involving Daniel Hauser, the 13-year-old who refused chemotherapy treatment for cancer;

Richard T. Ostlund of Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie P.A. for securing a recovery of more \$73 million in a case involving alleged financial self-dealing by the developer of a residential complex;

Jeffrey S. Sheridan of Strandemo, Sheridan & Dulas, P.A. for scoring a victory from the Minnesota Supreme Court on the discoverability of the Intoxilyzer source code in DWI cases;

Jonathan E. Singer of Fish & Richardson, P.C. for his work representing Allergan in a patent infringement suit with a \$240 million market on the line;

Jan Szymych of Medtronic, Inc. for her work as in-house counsel in securing victories in state and federal litigation involving the alleged failure of medical devices in defibrillators;

Lynne Torgerson of Torgerson Criminal Defense for successfully representing a client before the 8th Circuit in a difficult habeas corpus case;

Kay Tuveson of HealthPartners Inc. for her leadership with the Minnesota Defense Lawyers Association and for her work as in-house counsel for HealthPartners.

Five honored for their longtime service to bar

Minnesota Lawyer's Attorney of the Year awards recognizes achievements within a particular calendar year. However, some individuals and groups year-in, and year-out over a lengthy period of time work toward the betterment of the profession and those whom it serves.

To recognize these individuals, Minnesota Lawyer started its Outstanding Service to the Profession Awards in 2007. No more than five of these highly prestigious awards are given out a year.

Minnesota Lawyer Editor-in-Chief Mark Cohen referred to this year's five honorees as "pillars of the Minnesota legal community" who have been "models of service."

"Each of these individuals has left — and continues to leave — an indelible mark for the better on the legal profession in this state," Cohen said.

The 2009 recipients of Minnesota Lawyer's Outstanding Service to the Profession Award are:

Larry Buxbaum of the Hennepin County Bar Association for his decade of service to the profession as executive director of the largest county bar association in the state;

Barbara Golden, retired state law librarian, for her more than 25 years of service to lawyers and judges in the state's law library system with the last six as the state law librarian;

Paul A. Melchert of Melchert Hubert Sjodin for his 50-plus years of work as a small town lawyer and for his dedication to his community;

Robert A. Stein, of Gray Plant Mooty and the University of Minnesota School of Law, for taking on the presidency of the Uniform Law Commission and other leadership roles throughout his career, including serving as dean of the U of M Law School and as executive director of the American Bar Association;

William J. Wernz of Dorsey & Whitney for his 30-plus years of service to the profession, particularly in the area of ethics, including his six years of service as director of the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board.

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