



Victoria Eslinger Answers Questions on Her Work to Promote Social Justice

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SCJustice.org

Come Join Us In Honoring

Victoria L. Eslinger

On Wednesday, September 16, 2009, SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center will host its fourth annual Advocate of the Year award ceremony at the First Citizen's building in downtown Columbia, home of Nexsen Pruet Law Firm.



Victoria Eslinger... in Her Own Words.

SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center is proud to honor Victoria L. Eslinger as our 2009 Advocate of the Year. Her work over the years has not only made many positive changes to the low income community but has been an inspiration to fellow lawyers around the state.

We talked to Ms. Eslinger about her distinguished career, and we share some of her thoughts with you.

You are being honored for the social justice you have achieved in your career. How do you feel about that?

I am particularly honored to receive this award from SC Appleseed, an organization dedicated to helping those without the legal, financial or political power to help themselves. SC Appleseed's work serves as an inspiration to all of us and I believe it's work embodies something Daniel Webster once said: "The Law: it has honored us, May we honor it."

What got you interested in social justice law?

My parents taught us that people should be treated fairly and that it is wrong, in the face of injustice, to do nothing. (I must say that, as often happens in parent-child relationships, we sometimes-actually fairly often-- had different perceptions of what constituted an injustice so we went through some tumultuous times). My own situation, in being denied work opportunities based solely on my gender, was certainly a

Victoria L. Eslinger, Esq.

Our honoree this year is esteemed attorney Victoria Eslinger of Nexsen Pruet. Ms. Eslinger practices in the areas of general business and business litigation, labor and employment as well as in the firm's international practice.

As the first women honored as SC Appleseed's Advocate of the Year, we site not only Ms. Eslinger's outstanding career that shattered many glass ceilings, but we also honor her history of pursuing equal right for all.

In 1970 Ms. Eslinger filed a lawsuit which ultimately won women the right to serve as pages in the State House.

In 2004, Ms. Eslinger was recipient of the University of South Carolina's School of Law Complete Lawyer Platinum Award in recognition of her professional and civic accomplishments over 30 years of practice.

Ms. Eslinger's accolades and accomplishments are many. We invite you to join us in toasting to her fine work and character on Wednesday, September 16th, from 6-8pm, at the Nexsen Pruet offices.

For more information on this fundraising event or if you would like to contribute to SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center's work in Ms. Eslinger's honor, please contact:

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factor in ensuring that I would maintain a permanent interest in social justice causes.

Was becoming a lawyer something you always wanted to do?

As soon as I saw the impact that lawyers could have on civil rights and social justice, I knew it was the career I wanted to pursue but I knew it would be difficult. When I started law school only 3% of the nation's lawyers were women and the profession in SC had even fewer-although the women who did practice in SC were excellent. My class had 5 women, which at that time was the largest class of women the law school had ever had, so the timing was good to be able to enter the profession of my choice.

What do you consider your biggest 'win' thus far in your law practice?

That is a very hard question to answer. I have been fortunate to have handled a lot of diverse issues related to social justice over the years. Each "win" is very big for the person it affects directly, and often times for the impact it has on law or society in general. The most recent matter was an appointed case involving an undocumented non English speaking woman who was threatened with losing her parental rights in her child who was 3 months old when she was taken from her because the woman was incarcerated on completely unsubstantiated charges and kept in jail for over a year. At least 4 other lawyers, Jack Duncan, Patricia Ravenhorst, Danny Vega, Charles Phipps, (all from outside counties) worked pro bono on this matter and gave enormous amounts of their time, ultimately arranging for the Guatemalan government to assist in righting a potentially devastating wrong. It is clear that the result could not have been obtained without each of the lawyers giving their time and expertise. I think these lawyers embody SC Appleseed's goals and I am proud to have worked with them on this case.

Does your career meet your expectations? What might you have done differently in your law practice?

I have been very very fortunate in my career. I have practiced law in 2 countries. I returned to the US because I love the system of justice here and I LOVE the US constitution which I believe all lawyers are under an obligation to protect, regardless of the popularity of the issue or cause. I could have done many things differently in my law practice but I am happy I chose the path I did. That being said, my career is not over yet so who knows what I may ultimately do differently.

If you could change one law in SC, what would it be? In federal law?

I cannot single out one federal or SC law I would change. There are many changes needed in numerous areas. I do believe that most Americans will be terribly harmed by a lack of meaningful and substantive reform in access to health care.

Is there another career you considered or daydreamed about?

Doesn't everyone dream about being the president or CEO of

the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation?

Do you have hobbies that balance the demands of being part of a major law firm?

I travel internationally, spend time in the mountains and have just taken up fly fishing (but I am a rank beginner and not very good at it.)

Did you ever aspire to be a judge? A judge on the Supreme Court?

Long ago I decided that I am too much of an advocate to be a judge, so I have never aspired to that position.

Any Dancing with the Stars ambitions?

Not that I can think of.

Mission Statement:

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is dedicated to advocacy for low income people in South Carolina to effect systemic change by acting in and through the courts, legislature, administrative agencies, community and the media, and helping others do the same through education, training and co-counseling.

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