

The National Consumer Law Center Honors

Dale Irwin



With the 2014

Vern Countryman Award

The National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) is proud to honor Kansas City, Missouri attorney Dale Irwin with the 2014 Vern Countryman Consumer Law Award. This award is presented each year to a legal services or other public interest attorney whose special contributions to the practice of consumer law have strengthened and affirmed the rights of low-income Americans.

For more than 40 years, Dale Irwin has dedicated his career to the cause of consumer protection. In the words of his Missouri colleagues Gina Chiala and Dave Angle, “Dale has helped innumerable consumers fight injustice... Dale embodies all that a Countryman winner should be.”

Dale Irwin is an avid litigator driven by the philosophy: “Just seek justice for people and good things will follow.” Growing up in a large family of limited means, Dale saw his single mother victimized by unscrupulous lenders. Resolving to fight for the people who could least afford to be cheated out of their hard-earned money, Dale has represented consumers in matters ranging from deceptive auto sales to interest overcharges on mortgage loans. He has brought several successful class actions which include cases against banks, finance companies, payday loan companies, and auto dealers for unfair and deceptive practices that harm low-income families.

A founding member of the National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA), Dale has taught consumer law as an adjunct professor at the University of Missouri School of Law, and frequently presents at continuing legal education seminars. He has been an active member of the Volunteer Attorney Project (VAP) of Legal Aid of Western Missouri since the program’s

inception in 1982, providing pro bono representation to low-income consumers and many hours of assistance to other VAP attorneys.

Dale's friends and colleagues were eager to describe his extraordinary devotion to his clients and his reputation in the legal community as a man of integrity:

"His class action settlements have been models of truly good settlements – the kind that give class actions a good name – where the class members obtain really significant individual recoveries and relief, and the attorney's fees are modest under all the circumstances...he has unimpeachable character, so that no one ever questions his integrity; and his honorable passion for this work is clear for all to see."

– Bernard E. Brown, The Brown Law Firm, Kansas City MO

"He has turned... hard times into the inspiration that has driven his career and that makes him into a tireless advocate for people of modest means... In case after case, he has doggedly fought against corporate interests that abuse their wealth to take advantage of low-income people."

– Gregg Lombardi, Executive Director, Legal Aid of Western Missouri

"Dale's talents and tenacity on behalf of his clients are well known, but his personal concern and generosity may not be. For many years Dale has taken on one after another volunteer case referred by the Legal Aid office, always with excellent results."

– Richard Halliburton, Leawood, KS

"To help payday loan trap victims recognize the power of coming forward to tell their stories, Dale told his own story about his mother's victimization by a predatory lender...Obviously, practicing consumer law is more than a career to Dale Irwin. He is undoubtedly motivated by his deep devotion to economic and social justice for poor and working people."

– Eva Schulte, Executive Director, Molly Fleming-Pierre, Policy Director, Communities Creating Opportunity

"When one considers the exponential effect of how consumers and their advocates throughout the nation have benefitted from Dale Irwin's hard work and service to consumers and their lawyers over the years, it is clear that his generosity has literally helped many millions of people."

– DeVonna Joy, Consumer Justice Law Center, LLC

Dale is grateful to his wife Terry, for her love, support, patience and understanding throughout their marriage of 25 years. Few spouses, for example, might take so lightly being wished a Happy New Year over the phone from Kinko's.

We at NCLC are honored to present Dale Irwin with the 2014 Vern Countryman Consumer Law Award.