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**Girardi, Brockovich Spur on Greenpoint Residents
in Fight against Oil Companies**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BROOKLYN (December 13, 2005) – Celebrated trial attorney Thomas Girardi, famed activist Erin Brockovich, and local counsel Stan Alpert will speak Saturday at a public meeting to address a recent lawsuit filed by Greenpoint residents against the world's three major oil companies.

The law firm Girardi & Keese, which specializes in environmental litigation against large polluting corporations, is representing residents of the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York who have filed a lawsuit against ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco and BP Corporation North America. The lawsuit accuses the companies of allowing millions of gallons of oil to seep under residents' homes and into nearby water sources, potentially exposing the area to deadly methane gas.

At the public meeting, Greenpoint residents will learn about the history of the spill, their rights, and what they can do to protect themselves and affect change in their community. Thomas Girardi, President of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and

lead counsel in the *Erin Brockovich* trial, will tell how he and his firm have repeatedly forced large corporate polluters to accept responsibility for past bad behavior. Erin Brockovich, who became famous for her determination to help regular people achieve justice against big corporations, will tell how Greenpoint residents can similarly meet the challenge against ExxonMobil, Chevron and BP. Finally, Stan Alpert, former federal prosecutor and Chief of Environmental Litigation in Brooklyn, will discuss his experiences with polluters and share an ex-environmental prosecutor's perspective on the importance of this civil case.

ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco and BP have known about the Greenpoint oil spill since at least 1978, when a United States Coast Guard helicopter spotted a large oil slick in Newtown Creek, which empties into the East River and eventually New York Harbor. A subsequent study revealed the full extent of the oil spill—17 million gallons under 55 acres of land containing active industrial sites and hundreds of homes. The Coast Guard later stated that the spill may be as large as 30 million gallons. Either estimate dwarfs the famed Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, estimated at 10.8 million gallons.

Little was done over the following decade to clean up the spill. Finally, in 1990, ExxonMobil (then just Mobil) agreed to install monitoring wells and booms in the creek, and to start pumping some of the oil out of the ground. In 1995, Mobil installed a handful of offsite wells to recover the oil that had migrated underground away from the spill site. The residents' lawsuit alleges that these actions were insufficient and unreasonable given the size of the spill.

During a boat patrol in 2002, Riverkeeper, Inc., an advocacy group that monitors the Hudson River and its tributaries, discovered oil seeping uncontrollably into Newtown Creek. The organization's subsequent investigation revived public scrutiny of the spill and its handling by the oil companies and state agencies. In 2004, Riverkeeper, along with six local residents, filed a federal lawsuit against ExxonMobil on behalf of the environment and the

citizens of the United States for the pollution of Newtown Creek and the threats posed to human health. New York City Councilmembers David Yassky (D-Brooklyn) and Eric Gioia (D-Queens) and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz joined as coplaintiffs to the lawsuit.

The new lawsuit brought on behalf of Greenpoint residents by Girardi & Keese contends that the oil spill poses a direct danger to the lives and homes of local residents. Over time, the oil has made a subterranean migration onto the plaintiffs' properties and under their homes. This trespassing oil spill creates a nuisance and health hazard to those living in the area. Over time, oil and oil by-products release gases that can build up underneath concrete foundations and pavement, creating combustible pockets of gas beneath homes and driveways.

Tom Girardi, founding partner of Girardi & Keese, has been described as a "Goliath slayer" and "king of the class action lawsuit" by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*. The list of Goliaths that Girardi has taken on over the years includes some of the nation's biggest firms, including Lockheed (now Lockheed Martin) Corporation, Pacific Gas & Electric, and Warner Brothers Studios. His law firm, Girardi & Keese, has successfully recovered over \$1 billion against the largest companies in the world, including PG&E, Unocal, ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, and Shell Oil.

Erin Brockovich achieved worldwide fame through her defeat of PG&E and its depiction in the Oscar-winning 2000 film bearing her name. A PG&E facility had been leaking Chromium 6 into the groundwater used as drinking water by the residents of Hinkley, California for over three decades. Brockovich's lawsuit resulted in a ruling that awarded \$333 million in damages to more than 600 Hinkley residents—the largest toxic tort injury settlement in United States history. Brockovich has extended her fight against corporate injustice and malfeasance in similar suits against PG&E (on behalf of Kettleman,

California residents), Lockheed Martin, Dole and Delmonte Foods, Aerojet, and Betz/Dearborn, as well as numerous other cases in California, New Hampshire, New York, West Virginia, and other states. Brockovich has earned many awards for her courageous work, hosts television specials and shows on the ABC and Lifetime networks, speaks regularly to audiences across the nation and the world, and recently published a book entitled *Take It From Me: Life's a Struggle But You Can Win*.

"What inspires me and who I think are the heroes," Brockovich says, "are the people who suffer at the hands of corporations."

As Assistant United States Attorney and Chief of Environmental Litigation for New York's Eastern District (Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and Long Island), Stanley Alpert went to trial against Phelps Dodge on Newtown Creek and litigated against ExxonMobil on Staten Island. In the ExxonMobil case, on the eve of trial, Alpert obtained a settlement with the largest per day penalty under the RCRA hazardous waste law that the government had ever received. Alpert was twice awarded the Department of Justice Director's Award for Superior Performance, in addition to receiving two awards from the department's Environment & Natural Resources Division. In 1997, the New York City Bar Association awarded Alpert the Henry L. Stimson Medal, given to one Assistant U.S. Attorney in the district, for his performance in a number of environmental litigation cases. Entering private practice in 2003, Alpert was Liaison Counsel against polluting oil companies in MTBE litigation. He has now started a new law firm in New York City, The Alpert Firm, which specializes in environmental law, municipal water district cleanup cases, and property owner pollution suits against contaminating industries.

"The citizens of Greenpoint have a right to live without the odor of toxic gases entering their businesses and homes," said Alpert. "By filing a lawsuit we aim to speed the cleanup and make these companies pay for this assault on the neighborhood, people and their properties."

The Concerned Citizens Public Meeting hosted by Girardi & Keese will take place on Saturday, December 17, 2005, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Swinging Sixties Senior Center located at 211 Ainslie Street in Brooklyn. Those seeking further information about this meeting or the case are requested to call (718) 383-8980 or visit www.greenpointvexxon.com.