

Brockovich carries on off-screen

By Cecilia Chan
Staff Writer

WESTLAKE VILLAGE — It's a sunny Friday afternoon and Erin Brockovich is in Barstow chit-chatting with clients involved in a record-setting environmental settlement case.

She had stayed overnight in the desert community after viewing the umpteenth premiere of "Erin Brockovich," starring Julia Roberts in the role of the brash, twice-divorced, single mom who brought a corporate giant to its knees. About 480 of the plaintiffs attended the premiere.

"I think the media attention is overwhelming and tiring," said Brockovich, who took time out for an interview before heading on a three-hour drive back to her Agoura Hills home. "But overall the movie has changed my life in a good way because I am so excited the public is interested. And

Hit movie's real-life heroine still has a lot of issues to fight for

truly what happened in Hinkley doesn't stop there. There is corporate arrogance in the system, corporate deceit and we all have environmental issues."

Business as usual

Despite seeing her name plastered on movie posters, her photographs in national publications and an appearance on "Oprah," Brockovich said it's business as usual. This weekend she will prepare for her presentation Tuesday before the Thousand Oaks City Council as it discusses a controversial, 1,200-foot dam planned at Lang Ranch.

"I'm the same person I was three years ago," said Brockovich, who was struggling to put food on the table for her three children when she was hired in 1991 as an \$1,800-a-month, inexperienced file clerk at the then-North Hollywood law firm of Masry & Vititoe. Albert Finney plays attorney Ed Masry in the movie.

Her tenaciousness in uncovering information, coupled with Westlake Village attorney Masry's legal know-how, resulted in Pacific Gas & Electric Co. forking over \$333 million to 640 residents of Hinkley, near Barstow. Masry's 1992 lawsuit charged the company with knowingly contaminating the community's water supply, resulting in a host of illnesses including respiratory diseases and cancer.

Although she said she hasn't felt the full effect of her notoriety yet, Brockovich, now

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"I like my short skirts and cha cha heels. And my plunging neckline got me through the door of the water board."

— Erin Brockovich
Subject of movie