

A full-page photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and blue jeans, sitting on a brown patio chair. She is smiling and looking upwards while holding a small white dog in her lap and a red and white parrot in her right hand. In the background, there is a swimming pool and some outdoor furniture. The title "Based on a True" is overlaid in large white serif font on the top right.

Based on a True

Fame has enabled Brockovich-Ellis (at home in Agoura Hills, Calif., with her cockatoo Bubbles and Fran, a bichon frise, Gabby, a Lhasa apso, and Poncho, a Lab) to step up her fight against industrial polluters. "I can speak out to a broad audience about what happens when corporations deceive us," she says. "And I embrace that."

Story

This year, *Erin Brockovich* joins the ranks of Oscar-nominated movies celebrating real people who made a difference. We track down the inspirations for *Serpico*, *The Insider*, *Music of the Heart* and more, and find out WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Erin Brockovich, 2000 Erin Brockovich-Ellis

Portrayed by: JULIA ROBERTS
Nominated for: Best Picture, Actress (Roberts), Director (Steven Soderbergh), Supporting Actor (Albert Finney), Original Screenplay

Brockovich-Ellis says that it has been a "surreal" six years since Carla Santos Shamberg, the film's co-executive producer, first heard her story from the L.A. chiropractor they shared. After meeting the former beauty queen and listening to her David-and-Goliath tale about fighting for townspeople whose water was contaminated by corporate polluting, Shamberg says she realized "this is a great Julia Roberts movie." Brockovich-Ellis, 40, a twice-divorced mother of three now wed to actor Eric Ellis, 35, is at ease with her newfound fame. In addition to overseeing an exhausting workload of contamination cases as research director for the L.A.-area law firm of Masry & Vititoe, she tours on the lecture circuit. "I didn't do anything other than just be an honest citizen who cared about other human beings," she says. "I feel funny being rewarded for that." But Erin's ordinariness, says Julia Roberts, motivates others: "It shows the potential for the best in all of us."

Photograph by Dorothy Low



Julia Roberts's performance in *Erin Brockovich* was "right on," according to Erin Brockovich-Ellis, who says of the actress: "She's very good at making you feel comfortable."