



## Attorneys of the Year: Frederickson and Skubitz

By: [Nancy Crotti](#) February 20, 2017

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Bloomington criminal defense attorney Marsh Halberg believes trials can favor big-city lawyers in private practice. He nominated for Attorney of the Year Pine County prosecutors Reese Frederickson and Michelle Skubitz, who opposed him and partner David Risk in a high-profile case.

Fugitive cult leader Victor Barnard faced 59 first- and third-degree assault charges for years of raping teenage girls placed in his care by members of his River Road Fellowship. After being charged in Pine County in 2014, Barnard fled to Brazil and fought extradition. He returned in 2016, pleaded guilty to two counts of felony sexual assault, and received the 30-year prison term prosecutors had sought.

Unlike a typical state case, this one frequently made front-page news and some victims appeared on television. Frederickson and Skubitz could have litigated the case in the media, but kept it strictly legal, Halberg said.

“There were State Department policy issues and extradition treaties and international law,” said Halberg, who has known the prosecutors for years. “That was certainly a challenge for both sides. ... There’s as much good lawyering going on in the outskirts of the state as in the metro.”