

**WILSON SONSINI GOODRICH & ROSATI**

# Wilson Sonsini's legal advice boosts nonprofits

**BY KRYSTAL PEAK**

San Francisco Business Times Contributor

**W**ilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati is best known as one of the premier legal advisers for technology, life sciences and other growth industries. What it's less well known for is its support of nonprofits that provide legal services to those who would otherwise be unable to afford counsel.

Wilson Sonsini established the WSGR Foundation more than 20 years ago to better collect and contribute funds to various nonprofits, such as Bay Area Legal Aid, the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, National Center for Youth Law, La Raza Centro Legal, Child Advocates of Silicon Valley and Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence. To date, the WSGR Foundation has donated over \$10.5 million to more than 600 nonprofits nationwide.

The foundation and firm combined gave \$764,085 to Bay Area charities in 2011. Gail McFall, community affairs manager at WSGR, said her firm has created a culture that is excited to give back to the community.

"Wilson Sonsini has a long history of supporting the causes that our partners and clients are devoted to," McFall explained. "And we supported 170 causes firm-wide last year, but our passion is

clearly in legal nonprofits. That is where more than half of our dollars and hours go."

In 2011 Wilson Sonsini employees participated in more than 60 projects, including monthly food sorts at local food banks, home and community facility renovations, backpack/school supplies drives, food/fundraising drives for food banks as well as health-related organizations.

And employees themselves donated \$158,000 that isn't counted in the firm or foundation total.

One local organization that provides free legal services is the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley. Over nearly four decades, it has helped more than 80,000 clients in civil cases related to housing discrimination, disability claims and other issues.

Law Foundation Executive Director Jim Bower has been working closely with Wilson Sonsini to bring on board more pro bono cases and to assist in legal disputes involving some 6,000-10,000 people per year that the foundation handles.

"The Law Foundation of Silicon Valley has worked very closely with Wilson Sonsini for many years, but that relationship has grown stronger over the last three years as (the firm) has constantly topped giving opportunities," Bower said. "And more than just paying for or participating in pro bono work, associates have



**WILSON SONSINI  
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**Rank on the list:**  
 38

**What it does:**  
 Law firm

**Chairman:**  
 Larry Sonsini

**HQ:** Palo Alto

**Bay Area cash giving:** \$764,085

**Bay Area giving per employee:**  
 \$910

**"We make it a point to prioritize these charitable efforts," says Gail McFall, with Terry Johnson.**

also brought cases to our attention that we then pursued for the greater good of Silicon Valley residents."

Wilson Sonsini's foundation boosted donations to the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley by \$5,000 since 2011.

The team at WSGR is driven to assist these legal nonprofits partially because of the results they see from pro bono cases they work on.

For example, they assisted the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the Nature Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League and the Sempervirens Fund in a \$30 million purchase to preserve a large expanse of unprotected redwoods and wildlife habitat in Santa Cruz County last year. Conservation of the property will link 26,000 acres of contiguous lands.

In addition to these legal nonprofit efforts, Wilson Sonsini has also participated in various health-related charities and the firm sends employees each month to volunteer for Second Harvest's Share Your Lunch Program, which helps during the summer to give fresh meals to kids who rely on free lunches during the school year for nourishment.

"It's easy to get bogged down with the level of work that we complete at our firm, but we make it a point to prioritize these charitable efforts," said McFall. "And we can be proud that we continue to participate in 80 percent of our programs year after year and grow an understanding and a rapport with them so that we can continue to improve our work with them."

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