



PRO BONO CHIEF: Assistant General Counsel Mark Parnes says Wilson Sonsini did an estimated \$14.3 million in free legal work last year.

VICKI THOMPSON

Valley nonprofits have a multimillion-dollar legal partner

BY ELI SEGALL

Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence provides emergency shelter, crisis counseling and other services to battered partners and their families throughout the Bay Area. And like many nonprofit groups, it spent more money than it received last year, ringing up a \$62,000 deficit.

Impact Award Winner
Wilson Sonsini
Goodrich & Rosati PC

But thanks to the free services of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC, the San Jose-based group avoided going even deeper in the red to afford its legal bill. Kathleen Krenek, executive director of Next Door, estimates that the Palo Alto law giant gave her organization more than half a million dollars of in-kind counsel services during the year ending June 30, 2009.

Among the free services provided by Wilson Sonsini was sexual harassment training for Next Door staff, as well as human resources and employment law counsel. It has also represented foreign-born Next Door clients who need to petition U.S. authorities to gain independent residency status, free of their abusive partners.

Wilson Sonsini provided roughly 36,300 hours of free

legal counsel and support services in the year ending Jan. 31 for dozens of nonprofit groups and low-income individuals, said Mark Parnes, assistant general counsel. The work was valued at \$14.3 million.

Most of the hours, at 31,500, were provided by lawyers, said Parnes, who oversees the firm's pro bono work.

Clients include the Palo Alto Humane Society, Japanese American Museum of San Jose and the East Palo Alto Boxing Club, as well as the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits and Palo Alto Elite Volleyball Club.

Another client, Oakland-based Reading Partners, has received more than \$100,000 of free legal work over the past four years, according to CEO Michael Lombardo. The organization was roughly \$22,000 in the red for the year ending July 31, 2009, according to the most recently available data, and posted a \$27,500 profit the year before that.

Wilson Sonsini has helped the group with a corporate name change, develop an employee manual and provide legal counsel on all of its contracts.

"We feel we can always consult with them and follow best practices," Lombardo said in a statement.

Wilson Sonsini also represents "indigent" clients, or people who cannot afford to pay legal fees. For example, the firm might try to secure asylum for someone after getting the case from a local nonprofit lawyers group, which itself got the client from a refugee organization.

In one current case, Wilson Sonsini attorneys Leo Cunningham, Lee-Anne Mulholland and Nema Milani are suing an alleged drug trafficker and paramilitary leader from Colombia, Carlos Mario Jimenez-Naranjo, aka "Macaco," for extrajudicial killing, tor-

ture, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Macaco was extradited to the U.S. in May 2008 to face drug trafficking charges.

The war crimes lawsuit, filed this past June in Florida federal court, seeks unspecified monetary damages for the relatives of two Colombian nationals who, in the summer of 2001, were allegedly brutally murdered by Macaco's forces.

One victim, Eduardo Estrada Gutierrez, was allegedly shot three times in the back of the head on his return home from a party one night. The other victim, a human rights lawyer named Alma Rosa Jaramillo Lafourie, was allegedly abducted by Macaco's forces. Her torso was discovered in a river three days later, and according to the lawsuit, her head, arms and legs were never found.

The Wilson Sonsini attorneys are joined on the case by Julie Ferguson, a lawyer in Miami, and Kathy Roberts, an attorney at San Francisco-based Center for Justice & Accountability.

Meanwhile, at San Jose's Next Door, Wilson Sonsini is one of three law firms to provide pro bono legal work, alongside Latham & Watkins LLP and Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP.

Helping the foreign-born domestic abuse victims is critical, said executive director Krenek. Their immigration status is often tied to their abusive partners, and to cut those ties they need to petition the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

Without Wilson Sonsini, said Krenek, this option may never be accomplished — or even explored.

"They don't know of its existence," she said, "and it's very expensive to get an attorney to help you."

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