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Oakland law firm honored for good works

Text By: ©Angela Hart/The Oakland Tribune/ZUMA Press

March 19, 2009 - Oakland, CA - Greed is not a word associated with one small group of Oakland-based lawyers, tirelessly working to make their community better.

They give food, clothing and toys to needy families. They provide first-time offenders legal help without judgment. They have breathed life back into low income homes and communities.

They are the 35 attorneys at the law firm Donahue Gallagher and Woods LLP. On Tuesday, the City Council recognized the firm's more than 450 hours of pro-bono service to community organizations in 2007 with a resolution proclaiming today "Donahue Gallagher Woods Day" in Oakland.

"It is an official thank you to Donahue Gallagher Woods on their 90th anniversary," said Marisa Arrona, policy analyst for Councilwoman Nancy Nadel (Downtown-West Oakland), who presented the honors.

Located in downtown Oakland, the firm has given its time and money to organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club of Oakland, The American Lung Association and Friends of the Oakland Public Library.

Small organizations like Bananas, a group of 40 counselors working to help families raise their children, also have been the recipients of the firm's good deeds.

When Bananas - which provides myriad training and support groups for families and a library of more than 800 books on parenting issues - wanted to purchase its building, it needed a non-profit benefactor in order to sustain its lease. Donahue Gallagher and Woods stepped in to help.

"They were incredible," said Arlyce Currie, program director for Bananas. "They treated us like any paying client. We'd call, and they'd



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answer."

Currie added her organization wouldn't have been able to keep its offices without the help of the pro-bono lawyers. "It was a real gift for them to share their expertise."

Jonathan Wong, head attorney for the firm's pro-bono program, said he does free work because it's the right thing to do. Wong and the firm's chief software piracy attorney William Hill accepted the award resolution.

Wong said he believes it is the obligation of every lawyer to give back to the community in which they practice. He said a good example of their work was during the disastrous 1991 Oakland hills fire storm, which took homes, businesses and lives. "We set up booths right on the site and helped homeowners with insurance issues."

During the past year, the firm's pro-bono work primarily has included immigration, debt-collection defense and helping establish non-profits.

"Community work is always gratifying," Wong said. "And frankly, it provides an opportunity to remind others of the need for community service." □