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Benefits of an Ongoing Pro Bono Relationship

While the majority of Lawyers Alliance's volunteers take on discrete legal projects, with a beginning and end, sometimes a full team of lawyers from one law firm will commit to an ongoing volunteer general counsel relationship for a single nonprofit client. When that relationship flourishes, and the client and team work well together for years, it is a match to behold.

For Lawyers Alliance's clients, the volunteer general counsel relationship is an opportunity to receive continued, quality legal services from attorneys familiar with its operations. The law firm handles the majority of the client's business and transactional law needs. For the participating law firm or corporate legal department, its lawyers can develop a strong connection with an established and dynamic organization and provide sophisticated pro bono assistance. Among the core ingredients for a successful relationship are: a nonprofit client with multiple legal needs, a specific board or senior staff member to serve as the organization's primary contact and communicate the organization's legal needs, a law firm with a demonstrated commitment to the client's mission and business law pro bono, and a primary pro bono attorney contact to serve as the client's point of entry at the law firm. Lawyers Alliance seeks to foster a mutually worthwhile client-firm partnership by helping to facilitate communications between the parties and by serving as co-counsel on selected legal matters.

Case Example: **Groundswell & Davis Polk & Wardwell**

Andrés Gil and **Ron Aizen** from Davis Polk & Wardwell's Corporate Department lead such a team. With several colleagues, including **David Bauer** and **Randy Sampson**, they represent Groundswell Community Mural Project ("Groundswell"). Groundswell brings together youth, professional artists, and communities to create murals and other public art in underserved New York neighborhoods. Annually up to 500 youth participate. This client first came to Lawyers Alliance in 2006 for legal assistance updating its bylaws. That project led to another and another, and ultimately to the volunteer general counsel relationship.

During the past five years, the legal team from Davis Polk & Wardwell has helped Groundswell to update its corporate governance practices, review multiple contracts, revise personnel policies, and document its relationship related to artists, mural space, and youth apprentices.

This legal work has enabled the organization to experience a period of growth and to expedite complex relationships with its participants and partners. According to a client representative, "The members of the Davis Polk team have been invaluable and outstanding pro bono attorneys for Groundswell. I feel so much more secure, knowing I can call on them for counsel. They are professional, caring, respectful and responsive." Lawyers Alliance recognized this team's commitment and performance with a 2010 Cornerstone Award.



A Groundswell mural artist adds some finishing touches

Volunteer General Counsel Ron Aizen, third from right, participates in a tour of Groundswell murals

