

HIGH PROFILE

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"Rather than come up with some kind of big celebration for ourselves, we decided we wanted to do something that was more fitting for us and was a way to give back to the community," Andrea Smalec of Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard says of the firm's Take Time to Give program.

Employees of LR law firm Take Time to Give to others

HELAINE R. WILLIAMS
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Since its 1954 inception, the Little Rock law firm of Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard has worked to improve the community.

Charitable work has been an unsung but prominent part of the firm's agenda.

In 2004, the firm organized its charitable efforts through a project, Take Time to Give, offering multifaceted support to nonprofits. In 2009, the program evolved into giving yearlong support to a particular charity.

Now, thanks to the coordinating efforts of Andrea Smalec, director of marketing and public relations, the project has taken another step — **TakeTimeToGive.com**. The "micro" site will be an awareness, advocacy and promotion tool for nonprofit organizations in the state. Charities can request contributions (people will be able to make online donations) and sponsorships

on the site as well as tell visitors what's going on with them.

The debut of the site will be celebrated via a "launch" party from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Clinton Presidential Center.

In addition to inviting clients and friends to the party, "we're bringing all the charities we supported over the last five years together, and we're saying, 'Come celebrate with us; it's all about you ... we want to recognize the good work you do,'" Smalec explains.

Take Time to Give also has a new logo: a heart with hands. That says it all, according to Smalec: The concept of the project is reaching out to help other people ... and doing it from the heart.

Mitchell Williams has four offices: Little Rock, Rogers, New York and Austin, Texas. There are more than 130 employees including 75 lawyers.

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Andrea Smalec of the law firm Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard pauses outside Our House, the organization the firm is supporting for 2010 as part of its Take Time to Give community-service initiative.

Smalec

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The program was begun in 2004 based on the belief that to whom much was given, much was required. Service to communities doesn't just involve getting out there in the trenches — although firm officials will do that — but also involves strengthening the nonprofit organizations that help citizens in ways that are "charitable, social, educational or cultural," according to company policy.

So over the years, in addition to financial contributions, Mitchell Williams has provided pro bono services to a diverse array of organizations. Many of the firm's lawyers serve on nonprofit boards and committees.

All Mitchell Williams employees — lawyers and nonlawyers — were initially asked to donate 20 hours of charitable work under the program's umbrella and 30 hours of community service on their own, as well as give charitable contributions. The employees responded. A total of 8,270 hours were donated

by firm members in 2004.

"We were helping everybody," Smalec says. "We were supporting all these organizations ... but we really didn't have a structure." Firm officials decided they wanted "to make a significant difference to one cause."

Smalec got in on the project in 2007, when she joined Mitchell Williams. Most of her volunteer work is done with the firm. She serves on the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Guild and has worked as a communications chairman for Race for the Cure. She has also volunteered at the Arkansas Foodbank Network, which in 2009 became the first organization to benefit from Mitchell Williams' yearlong sponsorship. Arkansas Foodbank Network delivers food to more than 400 member agencies such as food pantries and soup kitchens in central and southern Arkansas counties.

Mitchell Williams donated \$25,000 to the Foodbank Network, provided pro bono legal services, did volunteer work for the charity throughout the year and featured the Foodbank

Network in advertisements and other marketing and communications projects.

Our House has been selected as the 2010 Take Time to Give primary charity. Our House helps the homeless by providing housing, food, free child care, education and job training. Facilities and programs include an 80-bed shelter, 39-bed family housing program, education and job-training center, childcare center and feeding program.

Mitchell Williams officials will help to feed residents once a month, participate in food drives and work in Dinner on the Grounds and Tie One On, major Our House fundraisers. The organization will be mentioned in the firm's advertising efforts. Smalec is event chairman of Dinner on the Grounds at the Governor's Mansion on June 4.

"We'll continue to support others throughout the year," Smalec says. "We hope to be able to support everyone financially, if we could."

It's all about meeting those needs the community should expect from its corporate citizens, as she puts it.