

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2012

Lawyers are stretching themselves creatively for charity

Jazz, recording promo videos and 'adopting' families just some of the activities

By Alexandra Schwappach
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Alejandro S. Angulo believes music makes him a better lawyer. That's why the Rutan & Tucker LLP attorney took his love for jazz and formed a band to help raise money for a nonprofit focused on the arts. Angulo and "The Jazz Execs" have raised \$15,000 for the Smart Foundation, an Orange County group that assists schools and communities with access to music and arts education.

The band — which at any time has between three and seven members — was started in April 2011 by Angulo, who was "duped" into playing bass as a teenager and hasn't stopped since. What started as a fun way to blow off steam quickly turned into a means of raising money for a cause that Angulo and his fellow band members feel passionately about.

"The Smart Foundation teaches that creativity is good and can be beneficial in whatever you do," Angulo said. "As a litigator, music has helped me learn how to hold things together when everything seems to be falling apart."

"The Jazz Execs" isn't just a clever name — the band is comprised of half business executives and half legal professionals, including Judge Geoffrey Glass of the Orange County Superior Court, who has played guitar for more than 40 years. He said his support for the Smart Foundation comes from his own experience with music and the arts as a schoolboy.

"The only reason I play [an] instrument is because it was available at school," he said.

"If you put an instrument in kids' hands, it might keep them from putting bad things in their hands."

"People tend to envision lawyers as busy workaholics that are deeply entrenched in the law," said Chris Clark, founder of the Smart Foundation and trombone player in The "Jazz Execs." "But they are a very caring group of people. Sometimes they just need help understanding how they can be of benefit to the community."

Nearly \$1 in \$8 given to charity comes from California, and its residents donated more than \$17.2 billion to charity this year, according to the 2012 "How America Gives" study by the Chronicle of Philanthropy. This holiday season, law firms are going the extra mile to lend a helping hand.

Not surprisingly, Rutan is not alone in charitable giving among law firms. For its 35th



Photo courtesy of Rutan & Tucker LLP

Pictured left to right are Judge Geoffrey Glass of the Orange County Superior Court and Alejandro S. Angulo, trial attorney at Rutan & Tucker LLP.

'A lot of charities don't really have the ability to tell their stories well, so we do videos of lawyers talking about things relevant to them. It turned out to be very powerful.'

— Adam L. Stock

anniversary this year, Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis LLP bought holiday gifts for more than 35 families around the state, raising more than \$20,000 through activities like chili cook-offs, bake sales, raffles and creative inner-office games.

"We've adopted families each year, but this year we more than doubled the number we usually do, and it was far more organized in intensity," said David Osias, the firm's managing partner in San Diego. "We didn't want to fail."

Throughout the year, the firm also recorded short videos highlighting the work of various charitable organizations around California. Most recently the firm made a video for the Boys and Girls Club of Hollywood that resulted in a \$6,000 donation to the organization.

"A lot of charities don't really have the ability to tell their stories well, so we do videos of lawyers talking about things relevant to them," said

Adam L. Stock, director of marketing and business development manager for the firm. "It turned out to be very powerful."

This year, San Francisco firm Farella Braun & Martel LLP celebrated its 50th anniversary by setting a firm wide goal of delivering 5,000 community service hours within the year. As of Dec. 1, the firm had logged 4,240 hours helping more than 75 organizations. It's ramping up its efforts during the holiday season to meet its goal by the close of the year.

Over the holidays at Winston & Strawn LLP, attorneys and other staff volunteer at the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank — packaging food for those in need — and the Children's Institute Holiday Festival, assisting with holiday activity booths for children in need.

For the jazz troupe, nothing is better than playing for a good cause. The band has played at least four times in December, including a gig at the Orange County Bar Association's annual holiday party. Angulo said that come January the band will have a bit of a break, but he hopes to add more concerts soon.

"Our goal is to play about two events a month," Angulo said. "We're sort of in our infancy, but we're gaining a lot of momentum."

alexandra_schwappach@dailyjournal.com