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## Shook Hardy & Bacon partner helps better KC because 'someone has to'

Kansas City Business Journal - by [Steve Vockrodt](#) Staff Writer

A couple of years ago, Greg Wolf and two well-placed friends were facing barriers in places one would least expect.

The thirtysomethings — Dan Fromm, president of ad agency Barkley, and David Dickey of Sprint Nextel Corp. — were simply looking for entry into the philanthropic community to try to make a difference in the town where they lived and worked.

But they found that the big hitters of the local philanthropic scene at the time, an old guard of business executives and civic leaders, did things the way they were used to when it came to philanthropy. And to the gang of three, that meant seeing the same names pop up on different boards that handed out money with little or no outside influence.

"Six years ago or longer, I had been getting involved in the community, and I found it somewhat difficult for someone my age to get involved in the level I would like to get involved," Wolf said. "I had some contemporaries who felt similarly."

Seeing how they wanted to cut their own path and encourage others their age to follow, Fromm decided that the three should form an organization. He knew exactly who would be able to piece the group together.

"The reason I reached out to Greg is he is incredibly bright, and I knew this is something he was interested in, and if he was interested in it, he would put everything in it," Fromm said.

That made Wolf, Fromm and Dickey the founding members of ImpactKC, an organization that receives money from each member and awards it annually to a number of organizations that apply for a grant. Dollar amounts for typical recipients range from \$20,000 to \$30,000.

ImpactKC works differently from most other organizations in Kansas City. Each member can vote for which applicant receives a grant, rather than a small cadre or family group deciding who gets how much.

"You're going to have as much say at where this money goes as I do, and a lot of people were surprised by that because the older generation didn't really function that way. ... It was more of one person and a family that makes the decision," Wolf said.

Today, Wolf finds himself the president of ImpactKC, an experience he has found to be fulfilling beyond his regular work as a litigator for Kansas City-based law firm Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP.

Laura McKnight, president of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, said Wolf is one of the up-and-coming leaders of the town's philanthropic scene to succeed the Jan Kreamers and Betsey Solbergs as they hand over the city's philanthropic reins.

"Greg has done a great job of cultivating a new group" of philanthropists, McKnight said.

The Yale undergraduate grew up in the Kansas City area with two parents who were similarly community-minded, a trait that rubbed off on Wolf.

"Both my parents when I was growing up were involved in various organizations, various different types of organizations. That was something early on I knew I was supposed to do," Wolf said. "It became abundantly clear that not as many people give back to the community as they should."

After a two-year stint with U.S. District Judge John Lungstrum in Kansas, Wolf took up work with Shook Hardy.

His peers will say that beyond his community efforts, he makes a good lawyer during his day job.

"In my mind, I would characterize him as somebody that epitomizes what lawyers should be," Shook Hardy Chairman John Murphy said. "He's smart, he's a good lawyer, but he has been very involved in the community."

Since he became chairman, Murphy has impressed upon his lawyers the importance of giving back to the community.

Wolf, Murphy said, does it as well and as voraciously as anyone else in the 500-lawyer firm.

"I think he does it because he wants to do it," Murphy said. "More often than not, I find out about things he's doing through others outside the firm."

Wolf isn't one to sound his own horn on his philanthropic efforts. He views what he does more pragmatically.

"I came to the conclusion a long time ago that if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," Wolf said.

And although he's not a braggart about his philanthropic approach, he's clear on what he hopes to accomplish in that role.

"I look at the community I live in, especially with my involvement with the Overland Park Chamber, and I realized there were a lot of people who gave their time and energy," Wolf said. "I feel an obligation to give time and energy to make the community a better place to live for my children, and someone has to do that."

Part of the beauty of ImpactKC, Wolf said, is that it doesn't require a time-consuming regimen of meetings and fund-raisers to distract and deter people from joining the group.

"It really takes away the excuse that 'I don't have time to give back to this community,'" Wolf said.

He is more open about some of his lawyering accomplishments. Primarily a commercial litigation lawyer, one of the cases Wolf is most proud of is a pro bono case he handled for a prisoner who had converted to Judaism while incarcerated. The prison chaplain had decided the prisoner couldn't have kosher meals.

Wolf obtained a \$3,500 verdict for the prisoner — \$50 for each day he was denied the kosher meals.

Although a \$3,500 verdict may seem like a pittance compared with other decisions that get widely publicized, Wolf said he knows it's not always the amount of money that makes the difference.

"If my generation doesn't step up, what kind of community is this going to be for my kids?" Wolf said. "Someone has to do it, and if I don't do it, I am not in the position to complain about what my community has become."

#### **GREG WOLF**

**Title:** Partner, Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP

**Age:** 38

**Education:** Bachelor's, Yale University, 1992; law degree, the University of Kansas, 1995

**Family:** Wife, Kelly; twins, Kennedy and Ethan, 5

**Hobbies:** Golf, politics

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