

Lawyer advocates community commitment

By Robert Bergsvik
Staff Writer

George Tamvakis keeps photos of old Hegewisch buildings in his legal office on South Brandon Avenue to remind him of his commitment to the community on Chicago's far Southeast Side.

SOUTHTOWNERS

"People just walk in to look (at the photos), which I find is terrific," he said. "Everybody is friendlier here. You do things for them you would not do, say, in Schaumburg."

Tamvakis, 34, grew up in Hegewisch amid the Greek community that developed in the neighborhoods around Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, 13631 S. Brainard Ave., during the 1950s.

Tamvakis has been active in Hegewisch community affairs for years. He now serves on the board of the Hegewisch Chamber of Commerce and donates much time to doing legal work without charge for local groups.

He is working with the Hegewisch Sports Facility Coalition to obtain tax-exempt status for land donated by developer Don Schroud that the group plans to use for baseball and football fields for area youths.

In 1992, Tamvakis donated his legal



Jean Lachat/Daily Southtown

George Tamvakis, a lawyer in Chicago's Hegewisch neighborhood, donates much time to doing legal work without charge for groups in the community.

expertise in helping a group of East Side residents who were trying to force a landlord to repair four homes that had been in and out of city housing court for a decade.

"I got interested by talking to residents," he said. "I'd like to see housing

court held in (local) branch courts. Then the community would get more involved."

Tamvakis said he believes it is important to give back something to his community.

This year, Tamvakis and Mark

Gomolski became co-producers of a local access cable television program, "Inside the 10th Ward," which airs monthly on Channel 19. The talk show focuses on community events and local institutions.

The son of a former steelworker who immigrated to the United States in 1958, Tamvakis attended Washington High School, to which he remains fondly attached.

Since 1988, he has coached the school's "mock trial" team, which prepares and conducts a simulated legal trial, with students handling all roles, from judge to jury. The team annually places among the top in the state competition.

Tamvakis joined the bar in 1987 and began working for the law firm headed by Edward Vrdolyak, the former long-time 10th Ward alderman.

"I had a great time working there," he said. "Ed has great people skills. He is a good negotiator. I learned a lot."

Tamvakis made his own brief foray into politics, running unsuccessfully for 10th Ward alderman in 1991.

That same year, Tamvakis hung up his own shingle, opening an office with attorney Robert Allen. Eighty percent of his legal work involves workers' compensation cases.

Tamvakis lives with his wife, Georgette, another Hegewisch native, whom he married in 1994.

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