

Pro Bono Attorney of the Month
Lisa S. Fine, Esq.

*By Ellen Krakow, Esq.
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The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is pleased to honor **Lisa S. Fine** as its Pro Bono Attorney of the Month. It is her recent work representing a disabled women in her divorce that has earned Ms. Fine this honor. The manner in which she so enthusiastically and skillfully performed her duties as her client's legal advocate warrants this distinction.

Immediately after learning how low income divorce litigants are severely underrepresented in Suffolk County, Ms. Fine approached the Project to offer her services. As the sole practitioner of a matrimonial litigation and mediation/arbitration practice, she knew she would be particularly qualified to assist the Project's clients. The Project quickly put her to work.

Ms. Fine was assigned a client in desperate need of immediate assistance. The client was seriously disabled and had been unable to work for many years. She has very limited income. She and her husband had separated many years ago. Alone, she had raised their child and had struggled to keep the marital residence from falling into foreclosure. She was the defendant in the case, and her husband had retained an attorney. At the time she came to the Project seeking pro bono assistance, the preliminary conference was about to take place.

Upon accepting the referral, Ms. Fine soon learned that the husband had a serious illness and was motivated to come to a quick resolution. She found her opposing counsel, John Toresco of Law Office of Alan Raymond Barr to be cooperative, professional and quite agreeable. Together, in fairly short order, they were able to construct a fair and equitable settlement agreement, which included a very favorable distribution of the marital assets in exchange for the husband receiving certain financial concessions.

Ms. Fine's client was extremely pleased with the outcome and appreciative of her efforts. Mr. Toresco, likewise, is quite complimentary of Ms. Fine, noting "Her willingness to craft a very workable, albeit unique resolution was instrumental in turning a very difficult case with little resources into a win-win for both clients." He adds, "More often than not, our clients have unrealistic expectations that we have the ability to be magicians. Typically they are wrong, but this time Lisa proved them right."

Lisa Fine is a graduate of Boston University (BA 1993) and Hofstra Law (JD 1996). After graduating from law school, Ms. Fine worked for general practice firms in Queens and on Long Island, where she gained significant litigation experience. Eager to break out on her own, Ms. Fine opened the Law Office of Lisa S. Fine in Smithtown in 2004, specializing in matrimonial/family law, personal injury, mediation and arbitration. She is a panel

member of the American Arbitration Association, and a certified matrimonial mediator. She enjoys the diverse nature of her practice. She explains, "I love to litigate, but I also love serving as a mediator." Ms. Fine also enjoys operating in a small-practice environment and is inclined to keep it that way because it allows her to maintain close contact with the clients.

The fact that she ran a small, solo practice is what had previously kept Ms. Fine from volunteering with the Pro Bono Project. She recalls, "It was a scary prospect for me. I was worried that it would be difficult to absorb a pro bono case into my small practice, was afraid that the judge wouldn't be understanding of my circumstances, and was concerned that opposing counsel might be difficult to deal with." Ms. Fine's fears were not realized. She notes, "The judge was truly understanding and very willing to work with me." She adds, "John Toresco and I worked well together, which allowed us to achieve a positive and quick outcome for our clients." Ms. Fine is so satisfied with her first experience with the Pro Bono Project that she is ready to receive her next referral, even with this first case only just recently ending.

Lisa Fine resides in Suffolk County with her husband and two daughters, who are 14 and 10. In the small amount of spare time she has, Ms. Fine enjoys cooking, reading, listening to music and traveling with her family.

The Pro Bono Project is most grateful for the earnest and skillful advocacy Lisa Fine provided to her very first referred client. For this reason, it is with great pleasure that we honor her as the Pro Bono Attorney of the Month.

*The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is a joint effort of Nassau Suffolk Law Services, the Suffolk County Bar Association and the Suffolk County Pro Bono Foundation, who, for many years, have joined resources toward the goal of providing free legal assistance to Suffolk County residents who are dealing with economic hardship. Nassau Suffolk Law Services is a non-profit civil legal services agency, providing free legal assistance to Long Islanders, primarily in the areas of benefits advocacy, homelessness prevention (foreclosure and eviction defense), access to health care, and services to special populations such as domestic violence victims, disabled, and adult home resident. The provision of free services is prioritized based on financial need and funding is often inadequate in these areas. Furthermore, there is no funding for the general provision of matrimonial or bankruptcy representation, therefore the demand for pro bono assistance is the greatest in these areas. **If you would like to volunteer, please contact Ellen Krakow, Esq. 631 232-2400 x 3323.***