

Nassau Suffolk Law Services (NSLS) is pleased to honor **Val Cherkoss** of Blumberg, Cherkoss, Fitz Gibbons & Blumberg, LLP as the **Suffolk County Pro Bono Attorney of the Month**. As a long-standing volunteer with The Suffolk County Pro Bono Project, which operates as a collaboration between NSLS and the Suffolk County Bar Association, Mr. Cherkoss and his firm have been recognized previously for their commitment to providing assistance in matrimonial and family law matters.

Mr. Cherkoss has routinely handled pro bono matters since law school. At Syracuse University Law School he participated in legal clinics. Since law school he has functioned as a law guardian in addition to his work with NSLS. He sees pro bono work “as a part of practicing law” and “a constant in his career.” His firm is also a model of the pro bono spirit. All the attorneys at Blumberg, Cherkoss volunteer their time and the senior partners have been individually recognized as Pro Bono Attorneys of the Month. The firm was also honored with a special award for its commitment to pro bono in 1990 and again in 2006.

Mr. Cherkoss joined the firm in 1985 and is now a senior partner where he focuses most of his work in matrimonial and family law litigation. He is admitted to practice in New York and in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. He is also a member of the Suffolk County and New York State Bar Associations.

His motivation to do pro bono work is the same as his motivation to become a family law attorney. He wants to give back to the community and to others less fortunate. “There is a tremendous need in our community for family and matrimonial attorneys,” he says. Clients are often at the mercy of the more moneyed spouse, and the family issues are often linked to other problems. Cherkoss comments that family law is a difficult area, and in the pro bono context requires a particularly intensive effort and high level of skill. It was not the area he thought he initially would practice in, but is the one he is strongly committed to and it gives him the opportunity to give back to others.

As an example, Mr. Cherkoss related one memorable pro bono case involving a divorcing couple with significant debt. The wife had over \$300,000 in unsecured debt in her sole name and a \$75,000 lien on her premarital home. With the assistance of pro bono bankruptcy counsel, this client was able to discharge her unsecured debt and negotiate a significant contribution from her husband towards the lien on the house. It was gratifying to be able to help someone in dire straights. Like so many cases, however, it was complicated by the myriad financial and personal problems of the parties. “Matrimonial and Family Law attorneys have to develop a thick skin,” he says. “It is a tough practice, highly specialized and contentious, but rewarding.”

Maria Dosso, Director of Communications and Volunteer Services at Nassau Suffolk Law Services asserts, “The Pro Bono Project could not function without attorneys like Mr. Cherkoss. His generosity of spirit and expertise in this time-intensive and emotional area of the law, easily earns him this distinction in service. He is a person who shares our vision and the pro bono mission.”

Congratulations to **Val Cherkoss** for volunteering his time and expertise to helping families in need. NSLS is proud to recognize these efforts and his consistent support with the Attorney of the Month award.