

**Pro Bono Attorney of the Month**  
**Edwin L. Smith**

*By Ellen Krakow  
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The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is very pleased to honor **Edwin L. Smith** as its Pro Bono Attorney of the Month. Mr. Smith, a recently retired attorney, has been an integral part for the Project for the past year-and-a-half, assisting with the screening of the Project's numerous prospective clients. It is his impressive contributions to the Project that has earned him this distinction.

For many years, Edwin Smith practiced complex, multi-party litigation in the New York City metropolitan area. His areas of expertise included products liability, contractors' liability, construction defect, professional errors and omissions, premises liability, fine art losses, and complex insurance coverage. During his years of active practice, Mr. Smith completed more than 50 jury trials, authored several insurance related articles, and on numerous occasions was a featured speaker on insurance topics. Having represented excess and reinsurance carriers, Mr. Smith developed a keen awareness of claims handling from a broader perspective than that usually available to trial counsel. He also served as a per diem Administrative Law Judge for the Bureau of Adjudication of the New York Department of Health and as an arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association.

Two years ago, upon retiring from full-time practice, Mr. Smith was motivated to volunteer his legal services in the community. He learned of Nassau Suffolk Law Services upon joining the New York State Attorney Emeritus Program. Although not sure, at first, how his professional background and experience would fit with the legal work at Law Services, he soon discovered he could meaningfully

contribute by assisting with the Project's intake process. After a brief training period, Mr. Smith was put to work interviewing and screening the Project's prospective matrimonial and bankruptcy clients. Mr. Smith quickly learned about the needs and circumstances of people with low income and people with disabilities (the community that Law Services assists) and in very little time acquired a base knowledge of both Chapter 7 bankruptcy law and New York divorce law, substantive and procedural. Now, well-versed in these areas, Mr. Smith screens numerous prospective clients of the Project every week and, where needed, gives important instructions and guidance to callers. The demand for free legal services through the Pro Bono Project is always high, with hundreds of people calling for legal assistance each month. Thanks to Mr. Smith's reliable assistance, the Project's staff is able to dedicate their time and attention to their many other administrative demands, such as attorney recruitment, case assignment, and reporting.

Mr. Smith commutes from his home in Nassau County to Law Services' Islandia office to interview prospective clients. During the interviews, Mr. Smith assesses the caller's financial eligibility for the program and evaluates the nature and complexity of their legal action. His conversations include providing callers with information regarding their legal rights, including those seeking help with consumer debt. His responsibilities recently expanded to training new volunteers and law students on how to conduct the client interviews.

"We are honored to have an attorney of his experience and caliber assisting us in the provision of pro bono services to the community," said Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Director of Communications and Volunteer Services, Maria Dosso. She added, "Ed brings a professional commitment to his volunteer responsibilities, and we are so grateful to have him as part of our team."

Asked about his volunteer experience at the Project, Mr. Smith stated, “It’s rewarding to assist people in need who are appreciative of the help they receive from the various legal services programs that are available through this agency. It’s allowed me to give back to those members of our community that truly need our help. In that respect, it’s been a very meaningful experience.”

Mr. Smith has been involved in the community in many other ways. He has been a member of the Jericho Volunteer Fire Department, a Trustee and officer of the Birchwood Civic Association and a Trustee and Chairman of the Board of the Jericho Jewish Center. Among Mr. Smith’s affiliations are his memberships in the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, the Defense Association of New York, the Nassau County Bar Association, The New York County Lawyers Association and the New York State Bar Association. He’s also an active outdoorsman who frequently enjoys golfing, kayaking, hiking, and biking. Mr. Smith and his wife, Laura, have three adult daughters and seven grandchildren.

The Pro Bono Project has benefitted greatly from Mr. Smith’s involvement. Due to his efforts, the Project has been able to connect with and serve more clients. It is with great pleasure that we now honor him as 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.*

