

Pro Bono Attorney of the Month
Scott B. Augustine

*By Ellen Krakow, Esq.
Suffolk Pro Bono Project Coordinator,
Nassau Suffolk Law Services*

The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is pleased to honor Scott B. Augustine as its Pro Bono Attorney of the Month. Mr. Augustine has been a tireless advocate for many of the Project's matrimonial clients over the past three years. This distinction is well-deserved.

Mr. Augustine has a general solo practice in Bellport. He has been practicing law for over 30 years. His wide-ranging practice includes real estate and business law, commercial litigation, wills, trust and estates, matrimonial, and zoning law. He is also of counsel to Davidow, Davidow, Siegel and Stern, the elder law firm in Islandia. Mr. Augustine's career is truly impressive, not only because of the many areas of legal expertise he has developed over the years, but also because of the many divergent professional paths he has taken along the way.

Mr. Augustine attended college at the University of Richmond and then law school at Rutgers University. In 1986, soon after graduating, he joined the Patchogue law firm Mars, Sloan and Conlon, a general practice firm that also specialized in zoning law. After a few years, Mr. Augustine and another associate, Bruce Hoyt, set up their own practice, which became quite successful and eventually led to the creation of two offices in Suffolk County. Their multi-dimensional practice included zoning, real estate matters, business formation-sale, complex business financing, and personal injury. When Bruce retired in the early 1990's, Mr. Augustine partnered with attorney Harold Steuerwald, who expanded the practice even further to include code violations, criminal defense and commercial litigation.

His practice with Harold was doing well in September of 2001 when, with the events of 9/11, things took a different turn. In the weeks and days that preceded 9/11, Mr. Augustine was appearing frequently in the Court of Claims at the World Trade Center on a wrongful death claim. He came to know the judge and court employees who were in the building when the planes struck. With the sudden realization of how short and precarious life is, he decided to explore some of his passions and obtained a doctorate (Ed.D) in Education Administration and began teaching School Law at a local college. Soon thereafter, he traded in his position as Village Attorney of the Village of Bellport to be the Village Clerk/Administrator.

Mr. Augustine recalls fondly how much he enjoyed running a village, country club and golf course, marina, highway department, and ocean beach, as well as managing a staff that grew to over 150 people in the summer. He also enjoyed being able to spend more time with his wife and young children.

In 2012, politics had changed in the village and Mr. Augustine decided to return full-time to his legal practice, which he had never completely abandoned. He soon realized that although

his time away had rejuvenated his regard for the work he had been doing earlier in his career, the break from practicing full time had exacted a toll. Most of his clients had moved on.

Among the different ways he set about re-establishing his practice was to offer his volunteer services to the Pro Bono Project. “I had time on my hands and I thought that by taking some matrimonial pro bono cases I could get up to speed on the changes that had developed in that area of the law since the last time I had a matrimonial case.” It was the perfect pairing. The Project, as always, had more matrimonial clients in need of representation than volunteer attorneys to assist them. Mr. Augustine was assigned his first client, which quickly led to another, and then another... . Several of his clients were victims of domestic violence. For some, Mr. Augustine’s work began with helping the client obtain custody and child support orders and orders of protection in Family Court before then commencing the divorce action and resolving the matters of equitable distribution and maintenance.

Mr. Augustine wishes to acknowledge several people who helped him a great deal with his early Pro Bono Project referrals. These include Nassau Suffolk Law Services staff attorneys Lawrence Tuthill (Domestic Violence Family Court Unit), Patricia Caruso (Foreclosure Unit), and Lewis Silverman (former Touro Law School Professor and Pro Bono Project mentor). Mr. Augustine was also impressed with how helpful opposing counsel were. Attorneys like Bill Sweeney took time to answer questions and provide guidance.

Mr. Augustine has been moved by the expressions of gratitude he has received from his pro bono clients and members of the judiciary. “They realized I was not getting compensated, and they all were very thankful.” He adds, “Judge Glenn Murphy expresses his thanks to me both privately and publicly every time I appear before him on a pro bono case.” Maria Dosso, Nassau Suffolk Law Services’ Director of Communications and Volunteer Services, is also grateful for Mr. Augustine’s generosity. “We are in such dire need of pro bono attorneys to represent in pro bono matrimonial matters and Scott has been a lifesaver! He is making a real difference in the lives of his clients.”

Mr. Augustine lives in Brookhaven Hamlet, two towns over from Patchogue, where he grew up. His wife Lisa, teaches kindergarten. He and Lisa raised two daughters, Alexa and Carlyn. Alexa attends Stony Brook University and will graduate this month with a Business degree. Carlyn attends the University of Alabama, where she is majoring in Astrophysics and will graduate in 2018.

The Pro Bono Project is most appreciative for Scott Augustine’s generosity and the skilled advocacy he has provided to every referred client. For this reason, it is with great pleasure that we honor him 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.***