

## **Pro Bono Attorney of the Month: Ashka Patwa, June 2015**

It is with great pleasure that Nassau/Suffolk Law Services' Volunteer Lawyer Project (VLP) and the Nassau County Bar Association recognize Ashka Patwa as our most recent Pro Bono Attorney of the Month. This month's award honors an attorney who has displayed incredible passion and dedication for the clients she represents. Ms. Patwa has volunteered for Nassau Suffolk Law Service's VLP Landlord/Tenant Attorney of the Day Project since 2012, providing tenants with much needed representation which they would not otherwise be able to afford. Ms. Patwa has devoted over 30 hours in the past year assisting tenants with their disputes, helping many remain in their residences who would otherwise be faced with eviction and rendered homeless.

Ms. Patwa graduated from SUNY Binghamton in 2005, earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Law, with a minor in History. She earned her J.D. from Hofstra University School of Law in May 2008, and became a legal intern at Horing Welikson and Rosen, P.C. She joined the firm as an associate in June 2009 concentrating in Real Estate/Landlord-Tenant Litigation. Ms. Patwa currently oversees the firm's Nassau County Landlord-Tenant practice in the Nassau County District Court, which resolves residential and commercial summary proceedings. She is also a part of the firm's Administrative Law Department, where she has succeeded in assisting clients challenge proceedings before the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DCHR).

While Ms. Patwa and her firm represent landlords in litigation, her work at the VLP is on the opposite side of the case representing tenants. What she finds most rewarding about her work at the VLP is getting the chance to understand both sides of landlord-tenant disputes. Ms. Patwa's work at the VLP allows her to see all perspectives involved in landlord-tenant litigation and more deeply understand the tenants' position. The tenants are indeed grateful for her assistance.

Ms. Patwa encourages more attorneys to provide pro bono legal services to help those who cannot afford an attorney. Not only does pro bono service help clients in dire need of an attorney, but it can also provide the attorneys with important new perspective on a case. Best of all are the personal rewards of helping individuals who may not be able to navigate the courts and advocate effectively for themselves.

"Pro bono service helps you understand the position that the clients are in and the difficulties they are experiencing and helps you sympathize with the client. Also, pro bono service may provide you with the opportunity to represent another side of litigation allowing you to understand all aspects of the law you work in."

According to Roberta Scoll, Staff Attorney and Coordinator of the Attorney of the Day Program: "Ashka brings a special talent with her when she volunteers with the Attorney of the Day Project.... She is always cheerful and her exuberance is contagious. We are so lucky to have her share her landlord/tenant experience with

us and her passionate representation of our clients can be seen in the settlements that she obtains."

In addition to her incredible commitment to pro bono service with the VLP, Ms. Patwa is a member of the Nassau County Bar Association and Nassau County District Court Committee. She is admitted to practice in the U.S. District Courts of the Eastern District of New York and Southern District of New York. Ms. Patwa is also fluent in Gujarati and Hindi.

Ms. Patwa is best known to the Volunteer Lawyer's Project for her tremendous work ethic and dedication to aiding clients with their landlord-tenant disputes. Her devotion to helping Nassau County residents in need is indeed admirable; we are very proud to honor Ms. Ashka Patwa as Pro Bono Attorney of the Month.

by Michael Heffernan, Law Student Intern

*The Volunteer Lawyers Project is a joint effort of Nassau Suffolk Law Services and the Nassau County Bar Association, who, for many years, have joined resources toward the goal of providing free legal assistance to Nassau County residents who are dealing with economic hardship. Nassau Suffolk Law Services is a non profit civil legal services agency, receiving federal, state and local funding to provide 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 residents. 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 Susan Biller, Esq. 516-292-8100, ext. 3136.*

