

Pro Bono Attorney of the Month
James M. Corcoran

*By Ellen Krakow
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The Suffolk Pro Bono Project is pleased to honor **James M. Corcoran** as Pro Bono Attorney of the Month. Mr. Corcoran has been a consistent and stalwart participant in the Suffolk County Pro Bono Foreclosure Settlement Conference Project (Foreclosure Project) since 2010. The commitment and diligence he has brought to the Foreclosure Project is unsurpassed. For this reason, it is with great pleasure that we recognize him for his outstanding pro bono service.

The Foreclosure Settlement Conference Project is a joint project of Nassau Suffolk Law Services and the Suffolk County Bar Association which assists Suffolk County homeowners, who cannot afford to pay for an attorney, obtain pro bono legal assistance during the settlement conference stage of the foreclosure proceedings. Through an attorney-of-the-day system, attorney volunteers provided limited legal assistance to clients by appearing with them at their settlement conferences.

Raised on Long Island, Mr. Corcoran is a graduate of Adelphi University and New York Law School. His legal practice is Mr. Corcoran's second career. Impressively, he attended law school, beginning in 1998, as a night student and earned his J.D. in four years while, by day, serving as a firefighter with the New York City Fire Department.

The son of a NYC firefighter, Mr. Corcoran joined the NYC Fire Department immediately after graduating from Adelphi in 1980. He rose to the rank of Captain, and remained with the NYC Fire Department for twenty-two years, before leaving the Fire Department to start his legal career.

While a law student, Mr. Corcoran worked as paid intern with the Manhattan personal injury law firm, Altier & Vogt. He became an associate at Altier and Vogt upon graduating from law school in 2003. There, Mr. Corcoran primarily represented railroad employees with Workers' Compensation claims pursuant to the Federal Employers Liability Act ("FELA" claims). He was trained by one of the nation's most preeminent experts on FELA claims, Joe Altier. In the aftermath on 9/11, while still working in Manhattan, Mr. Corcoran did a substantial amount of pro bono work as a volunteer attorney with the Trial Lawyers Care Program, an organization that helped police officer who were victims of 9/11, and their families, submit claims to the 9/11 Victim's Compensation Fund.

In 2003, Mr. Corcoran left the City to establish a solo practice in the Northport Area. After learning the fundamentals of tax certiorari work from tax grievance specialist, Sean Acosta, Mr. Corcoran's began his Long Island practice assisting homeowners with their residential property tax grievances. He later expanded his practice to include commercial property tax grievances. He continues to do tax certiorari work, but his practice now also includes foreclosure defense. It was the Foreclosure Project that provided Mr. Corcoran with the necessary training and experience to add foreclosure defense work to his practice.

Mr. Corcoran first connected with the Foreclosure Project in 2003, shortly after joining the Suffolk County Bar Association (SCBA), after attending an SCBA CLE program on Foreclosure Law. Answering the call of Barry Smolowitz, then Coordinator of the Foreclosure Project, who addressed the CLE audience that day and urged them to volunteer with the Foreclosure Project, Mr. Corcoran signed right up. Having no prior experience with Foreclosure Proceedings, he first shadowed other Foreclosure Project attorneys, and later began representing the Project's clients on his own. Mr. Corcoran praises the Foreclosure Project and, specifically its Coordinator, Smolowitz. "I give all the credit in the world to Barry," says Corcoran. "Whenever I've called or emailed him with a question, he's responded right way. I'm constantly amazed by how responsive he is. He's been very supportive and encouraging."

Mr. Smolowitz, similarly holds Corcoran in high regard. Smolowitz describes Corcoran as "diligent, reliable, dedicated, and invested." According to Smolowitz, Corcoran is extremely organized "and can always be counted on to take a case."

Mr. Corcoran believes the Project provides an important service to its clients. Corcoran has successfully negotiated loan modifications for several clients and saved the homes from foreclosure. Although many Project's clients do not obtain loan modifications, Corcoran believes they, too, benefit from the legal assistance they receive. As he explains, "The clients are under a tremendous amount for stress and strain. We're able to put their minds at ease by answering their questions, by helping them collect and organize the necessary documents, and by simply being with them at court during what is, for many of them, an overwhelming process."

Mr. Corcoran works and lives in the Northport area. His wife of twenty-six years, Domenica, works with students with special needs as a para-professional in the Dix Hills School District. They are the proud parents of four children, James (a psychology graduate student at Florida Institute of Technology), Katherine (a college junior attending Binghamton University on a soccer scholarship), Andrew (a freshman at SUNY Cortland), and Christopher (a junior at Northport High School). When he's not working, Mr. Corcoran enjoys boating and fishing on the Long Island Sound.

The Pro Bono Project is extremely grateful for Mr. Corcoran's generosity, dedication and professionalism. It is with great pleasure that we 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.*