

## Kim Darrow, lawyer for psych patients, dies

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Photo credit: Joseph D. Sullivan  
Attorney Kim Darrow outside the Riverhead Supreme Court  
*File photo from August 29, 2006.*

Kim Darrow -- hiker, self-styled guardian of the great outdoors and lawyer for the mentally afflicted -- has died of pancreatic cancer.

Darrow, of Huntington, retired in 2010 as a principal attorney for the [Mental Hygiene Legal Service](#), a state agency that represents people subject to involuntary psychiatric commitment. He died Thursday at age 64.

Dennis Feld, deputy director of special litigation and appeals for the legal service, said Sunday Darrow was an unwavering, dedicated lawyer for the psychiatric patients who were his clients.

"He just felt his clients were being mistreated by hospitals and psychiatrists who seemed to feel it was more important to manage these patients rather than respecting their rights," Feld said.

Tina Minkowitz, of the [Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry](#) in upstate New York, said, "Kim often struggled to get his words out and to be heard, and he was very careful as an attorney to be accurate in what he was saying.

He cared a lot about his clients' freedom -- he knew they deserved it and hated when the system took them back in spite of his efforts."

Family and friends said Darrow also had a passion for the preservation of open space. He was a founder of the [Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference](#), a nonprofit

organization that has created more than 200 miles of hiking paths. Darrow was also an avid hiker who carried a stash of books in a rucksack with him on the trail.

"He would take people on nature walks in the Pine Barrens and if anyone asked what's that little flower, the books came out," said Darrow's wife, Sherry, who married him in 2009 and described him as "the most sweet-natured person I have ever known."

"He was, for me and for others, he was such a strong, sheltering presence," she said, adding that his grave will be marked by a white pine tree, his favorite tree, in honor of his spirit.

Nancy Manfredonia of Central Islip, a past president of the Greenbelt Conference, said Darrow helped preserve thousands of acres of open space.

"Kim was very instrumental in all of that work," Manfredonia said.

Kyna Darrow-Barr of Howell, N.J., Darrow's daughter by a previous marriage described him as a patient swimming instructor, master gardener and wine expert.

"My father taught me to always be kind and respectful to all people, care deeply for the environment, protect wildlife, always tell the truth, never give up on a goal and always do the right thing even if it is the hardest option," Darrow-Barr said.

And Darrow's sister, Gail Darrow Ross of Charlotte, N.C., said he had "a great sense of humor, very dry, but he didn't make fun of people, except for me."

Darrow was born in Buffalo on Sept. 29, 1946, and grew up in the upstate hamlet of Collins Center. He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University at Buffalo and a law degree from St. John's University School of Law. He was a conscientious objector during the war in Vietnam.

Other survivors are three grandchildren: Aidan Barr, 13, Maya Barr, 12, and Johnna Barr, 10, all of Howell, N.J.

A graveside service at Huntington Rural Cemetery in Huntington Village is planned for noon on April 4, where Darrow's ashes will be buried.