

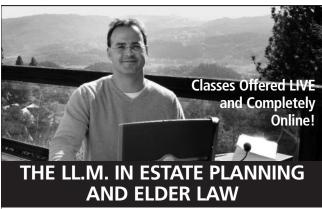
Breaking the Silence

A PATH TO FINDING MENTAL HEALTH

BY ELLEN CARNES

hen Natalie Cobb Koehler began her term as president of the Texas Young Lawyers' Association, she knew she wanted to help people suffering from depression and mental illness. Koehler, who lost a friend and colleague to suicide in 2009, recognizes that many people struggle in silence and are reluctant to seek the help they need. To help address this, TYLA has launched Breaking the Silence: A Path to Finding Mental Health.

Breaking the Silence is a series of podcasts featuring experts, such as psychologists and psychiatrists, who deal with different forms of mental illness and depression. Over two days in October, TYLA filmed 30 segments with more than 20 doctors donating their time and expertise. The podcasts will be posted to TYLA's website (tyla.org) beginning in January and Koehler expects to add more as the bar year progresses. Topics include work/life balance, coping with stress and pressure, anxiety and paranoia, per-



Left: John Hollister attended class from his home in Napa Valley.

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sons with disabilities or special needs, obsessive-compulsive disorder, addiction, drug and alcohol abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic illness, financial or unemployment issues, eating disorders, depression, and schizophrenia.

Breaking the Silence isn't just for lawyers — it's for anyone struggling with or wanting to learn more about mental health issues. "The goal here is to have a resource that these individuals can find on the Internet by searching 'mental illness' or 'depression' or any other related searches and create something they can watch without having to tell anyone they are struggling, that will provide them with courage, information, and resources to get help," TYLA vice president **Kristy Piazza** said.

Podcasts will target groups as diverse as career professionals, children and adolescents, veterans, the elderly, social service agencies and staff, parents and foster parents, university and school staff, and victims of abuse. One element of the initiative will focus on people who have a family member or loved one struggling with mental illness. "There are many resources targeted at people that suffer, but not many resources for the people living with those who suffer," Koehler said. "TYLA hopes to help people learn how to spot the signs of depression and mental illness and give tips on how best to deal with these issues."

Suicide claims the lives of nearly 30,000 Americans every year. Many who attempt suicide never seek professional help. The death of Koehler's colleague and friend, Brad Newsom, stunned Bosque County. "Brad was a young lawyer and many of us missed the signs of depression. It rocked our little legal community. We were all shocked," Koehler said. "Breaking the Silence provides a chance to assist those who might not be able to ask for help."

TYLA has partnered with Texas Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP) to produce the podcasts. TLAP, led by Director Ann Foster, provides confidential help for lawyers, law students, and judges who have problems with substance abuse or mental health issues. TLAP's staff is always available to answer questions at (800) 343-8527. More information and additional resources can be found at texasbar.com/tlap.

The Breaking the Silence team includes Koehler and Piazza and TYLA Directors Kim Smith of Plano, Erin O'Driscoll of Houston, **Dustin Howell** of Austin, **Clint Harbour** of Austin, Sam Houston of San Antonio, Lance Currie of Dallas, Robert Booth of Galveston, and Rebekah Brooker of Dallas. For more information, visit tyla.org.

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