



Members of the inaugural class of Leadership SBOT celebrate after completing a service project at McKinney Roughs Nature Park near Bastrop.

State Bar and TYLA Launch Leadership Academy

BY KEVIN PRIESTNER

When **Brad Hancock** started practicing law in Houston, he noticed that the same people were showing up for all of the meetings of the Houston Young Lawyers Association. He and other members realized that they needed to do something to shake things up. Hancock, a shareholder in Greenberg Traurig, L.L.P., signed up to help develop HYLAs Leadership Academy. When he joined the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors earlier this year and learned that President **Harper Estes** was planning to create a statewide leadership academy, Hancock quickly volunteered his services.

In October, the inaugural class of Leadership SBOT convened near Bastrop. Hancock was one of several members of the board of directors on hand to welcome the 19 members of the new class and offer their insights on leadership. Hancock implored participants to follow three rules for being a successful lawyer: “First, have the basics of law down so you can volunteer and do pro bono. Second, make sure you are an effective businessman or businesswoman. Third, do nothing in half measures. Take affirmative steps. If you choose to lead, it will have a ripple effect.”

When Estes was planning the leadership academy, his models were the successful leadership academies in Houston and Dallas and other states. He decided to enlist the help of the Texas Young Lawyers Association to establish a leadership academy

that would help develop bar leaders in parts of the state that were not necessarily served by existing leadership programs and to attract participants who had not necessarily been involved in bar work. Estes and TYLA President **Sylvia Cardona** wanted to ensure that the participants reflected diverse practice areas and life experiences and matched the demographics of the state, not the demographics of the legal profession, which remains less diverse than the population it serves.

Nominations were sought from around the state. Texas judges and lawyers responded by identifying potential leaders in their communities. Based on those nominations, prospective leadership class members were asked to provide a personal statement on why they wanted to participate in the academy and what leadership means to them as a Texas lawyer. The responses varied, reflecting the fact that leadership means different things to different people, but the following definition is representative:

Leadership requires vision. Action in the absence of purpose serves no one. ... Leadership searches for opportunity. Being result-oriented requires the skill to know when and how to seek opportunity. ... Leadership looks to serve. Leadership requires selflessness because it demands that individuals serve in order to advance the whole, rather than to merely advance the self. ...

Leadership **SBOT**





Pictured, left to right, are Leadership SBOT participants Lawrence Brown of Round Rock and Patsy Lopez and Tracy Almanzan of El Paso.

Leadership challenges. Leaders seek to challenge not only themselves but, more important, leaders seek to challenge others to realize their own innate potential in ways that serve the public. To ensure that class members have the opportunity to implement what they learn, each was asked to commit to attend all three of the sessions of the leadership class and to agree to serve for one year on a bar or community committee or board.

Over the course of three days in October, the members of the inaugural class attended interactive sessions on understanding their leadership style and learning about opportunities for service as bar leaders. On Friday evening, Karen Johnson, CEO of the United Way of Texas and former executive director of the State Bar of Texas, delivered an impassioned speech on the importance of leadership. During the closing session on Saturday morning, Cardona presented class members with what she called the Leadership SBOT Challenge. Thanks to a generous grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, each member of the class would receive \$500 to develop a community service project of his or her choice, building on existing initiatives or starting from scratch.

The inaugural members of Leadership SBOT are: **Tracy Almanzan** (El Paso County Attorney's Office); **Lawrence Brown** (Brown & Davis, Round Rock); **Adrian Castillo** (7th Court of Appeals, Amarillo); **Brandon Clarke** (CB Richard Ellis, Inc., Houston); **J. Patrick Cohoon** (Cozen O'Connor, Houston); **Murray A. "Trey" Crutcher III** (Stubbeman, McRae, Sealy, Laughlin & Brown, Midland); **Shannon Dacus** (Ramey & Flock, P.C., Tyler); **Nakia Davis** (Beck, Redden & Secrest, L.L.P., Houston); **Ami D. Desai** (Desai Law Firm, P.L.L.C., Austin); **George Edwards III** (The Gallagher Law Firm, Houston); **Stephen M. Gerdes II** (Gerdes Law Firm, Uvalde); **Sallie Godfrey** (Lone Star Legal Aid, Angleton); **Kendall K. Hayden** (Cozen O'Connor, P.C., Dallas); **David Fowler Johnson** (Winstead P.C., Fort Worth); **Patricia "Patsy" Lopez** (Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, El Paso); **Josué Martinez** (Josué Martinez, Attorney, Boerne); **Evelyn Njuguna** (City of Houston); **Pedro "Pete" Serrano** (Sprouse Shrader Smith, Amarillo); and **James O. "Khayan" Williams** (Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office, Fort Worth).



State Bar President-elect Roland Johnson of Fort Worth, left, and President Harper Estes of Midland offer their version of "American Gothic."

At the conclusion of Saturday morning's session, class members traveled to McKinney Roughs, a nearby environmental education center, to participate in a service project. They mulched and staked newly planted trees and carted wheelbarrows around. They also brainstormed about their projects. On June 24, during the State Bar Annual Meeting in Dallas, lawyers will have the opportunity to hear what a new generation of leaders came up with. ✨



Solicitation of Nominations for the **CINDI LAZZARI ARTIST ADVOCATE AWARD**

The Entertainment and Sports Law Section Council is now soliciting nominations for the recipient of the 2009 Cindi Lazzari Artist Advocate Award. The award is named for the late Cindi Lazzari, a Texas attorney who went far beyond the call of duty in her efforts to protect the rights of artists in the music industry. Each year the Council recognizes an individual working in Texas who has been actively involved in advocating and supporting artist's rights in the music business. Nominees need not necessarily be attorneys. Nominations should be sent by e-mail only to LazzariNomination@gmail.com and should include the following information: (1) the nominee's name; (2) the nominee's employment and contact information; (3) a brief statement (not to exceed 100 words) as to why the individual believes the nominee should receive the award; and (4) a short bio of the nominee (if available). Nominations will be accepted through December 31, 2008.