



MY OPINION

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Making History in the Future

No one sets out to make history. We aim to make our future better.

Looking back on 80 years of the Texas Young Lawyers Association (or the Junior Bar, as it was called in earlier years), I am struck by two things. First, almost without exception, each year TYLA puts out at least one exceptional project (and usually more than that!). Second, each year young lawyers see the potential in these projects and work hard to transform an idea on paper into something about which we can all be proud. In the future, someone might look back and talk about these young lawyers and their projects as “groundbreaking” or “visionary.”

Or maybe they’ll just say, “Those folks made a difference.” Which is enough for me.

This year, I’ll be focusing on four projects that I hope will make a difference in the lives not only of young lawyers, but also of the people we serve. Those projects are: a child abuse recognition and reporting project; *Office in Your Pocket*; a job message board for young lawyers; and *Partnering for Pro Bono*.

The first, a child abuse recognition and reporting project, is a three-part project addressing a vital need in Texas — educating the public about its obligation to report child abuse and providing tools to illustrate how to recognize abuse when they see it. First, we plan to create a 30-second public service announcement. Second, we will also create a video targeting Texas citizens who care for children (e.g., educators, child care workers, health care workers, church workers, and volunteers), addressing resistance to reporting child abuse, giving practical tips on how to recognize abuse, and

explaining the legal process of reporting and investigation. Finally, the video, along with targeted pamphlets, will be sent to various groups that care for children. This project will be an important part of National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

Office in Your Pocket will give young lawyers everything they need to know to open their own law practice — CLE podcasts, checklists, and forms — all on a flash drive.

The next two projects focus on providing practical resources to meet the needs of young lawyers in a down economy. *Office in Your Pocket* is an exciting tool that will go well beyond currently available resources. Many young lawyers, especially in this economy, hang out their own shingle. Unfortunately, many of those lawyers lack practical experience in running a law firm. *Office in Your Pocket* will give young lawyers everything they need to know to open their own law practice — CLE podcasts, checklists, and forms — all on a flash drive.

The job message board for young lawyers will involve an online forum where young lawyers around the state can share information regarding job opportunities and other important issues. Look for more about both of these projects at the July Bar Leaders Confer-

ence in Houston and on our website at www.tyla.org.

Finally, through *Partnering for Pro Bono*, we hope to increase the provision of legal services to those who need them most by pairing in-house counsel with young lawyers in law firms on pro bono cases. We hope to work with those who support pro bono work, including the Texas Access to Justice Commission, as well as corporate counsel committees, pro bono agencies, and bar and law firm committees to make this exciting project successful.

While these four projects will be my main focus, TYLA will also work in conjunction with the State Bar on exciting projects, such as State Bar president-elect Terry Tottenham’s *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*. This initiative will educate lawyers interested in taking pro bono cases for veterans about some of the issues unique to veterans and will pair lawyers with a veteran in need of legal assistance. Specifically, we will be creating resource materials for veterans about their rights and for lawyers interested in taking pro bono cases. We will also continue producing public education and consumer pamphlets and providing free CLE to young lawyers. Finally, we will continue TYLA’s tradition of educating students about important legal issues and their rights and responsibilities. This effort will be even more important this year as the American Bar Association focuses on civics in our schools.

I believe it will be an exciting year! Will we make history? Time will tell. However, I can assure you that this year, as in years past, TYLA will make a difference in the lives of its members and the citizens of Texas. ★