The Unclassified Story

BY JUDY L. MARCHMAN

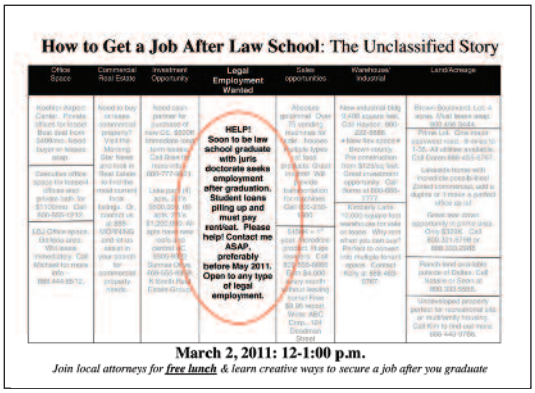
Many lawyers — young and old, new and experienced — are finding themselves in search of a new job or are testing the waters of a solo office in this tightened economy due to downsizing, career change, relocation, or any number of factors. But what about those currently in law school, especially 2Ls and 3Ls, who are facing a shrinking but highly competitive job market?

Law students are having to focus much earlier on determining a career path post-law school as well as being more aggressive in networking and job hunting. However, when it comes to the nuts and bolts of searching for that first job or going out on their own, many law students still need plenty of practical guidance.

(From left) The panel at St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio included oil and gas lawyer Brian O'Gorman; general practitioner Alfonso Cabañas; in-house lawyer Alyssa J. Long; estate planning and probate lawyer J. Barrett Shipp; criminal defense solo Bill Clanton; commercial litigation lawyer Tiffanie Clausewitz; and appellate litigation lawyer Sam Houston.

That's how the Texas Young Lawyers Association program, *How to Get a Job After Law School: The Unclassified Story*, came to be. **Kendall Hayden**, an attorney with Cozen O'Connor in Dallas and a co-chair of TYLA's Law Student Outreach Committee, gave a presentation on career tips at a recruiting seminar at Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law last year and thought that a similar program would be an easy way for TYLA to reach out to law students throughout the state.

This spring, the Law Student Outreach Committee and other volunteers coordinated one-hour on-campus seminars at six Texas law schools — Texas Tech University School of Law, Texas Southern University, Texas Wesleyan School of Law, St. Mary's University School of Law, South Texas College of Law, and Baylor Law School. Each seminar was held at lunchtime and consisted of five to 10 panelists in various practice areas, usually within five to seven years of being licensed, who discussed ways to search for a job, tips on networking and interviewing, and how to build a strong resume. Students were encouraged to ask questions. Attendance ranged from 50 to 60 students at each seminar.



"It's a very inexpensive project. We had a TYLA representative in each location who helped organize that particular seminar and arrange for speakers," said Hayden. "Every school had a different panel. We tried to get as diverse a group of speakers as possible — attorneys from the public and private sectors, solos, law firms."

J. Barrett Shipp, an attorney with Heinrichs & De Gennaro, P.C. in San Antonio, was instrumental in bringing *The Unclassified Story* to St. Mary's University in March.

"We tried to give students a better understanding of what experiences they should look for in law school to prepare them for a job," said Shipp. "We are trying to bring the knowledge we've gained in practicing law back to students."

The opportunity to interact with young lawyers and to learn from their real-world experiences helped imbue students who participated with a greater sense of confidence as they near the beginning of their legal career.

"The program provided outstanding information, tips, and advice on how to begin to make a name in the legal community," said Desireé C. Slaybaugh, who attended the seminar at Texas Wesleyan this spring prior to her graduation. "I have already made several contacts at my local bar association and have not even received my bar results yet."

The career services offices of the participating law schools have responded enthusiastically to the program, with several assisting with sponsorships of the program this spring. "*The Unclassified Story* was such a valuable program," said Julie Sams, the career counselor and program coordinator at South Texas College of Law. "I particularly appreciated the panel's reinforcement of the importance of networking in a student's job search and the panelists' willingness to share their particular job search experiences."

TYLA plans to work with Texas law schools to continue this valuable resource for students. In addition, TYLA is creating business-sized tip cards for students on Top 10 tips for networking, interviewing, and other career-related suggestions, so students have resources to carry with them as they journey ever closer to a career in the law.

For more information about *The Unclassified Story*, contact TYLA at (800) 204-2222, ext. 1529.