

QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES



Kristy Sims Piazza



Shivali Sharma

The following interview with TYLA president-elect candidates **Kristy Sims Piazza** of Plano and **Shivali Sharma** of Texarkana is included to educate young lawyers as they prepare to vote. Biographies were included in the March issue (p. 238) and are available on the State Bar website. Votes for TYLA president-elect and district directors can be cast via paper ballot or online from April 2 to May 1, 2012. Attorneys eligible to vote will be mailed an election packet that includes a paper ballot. The deadline to cast ballots is 5 p.m. CST on May 1, 2012.

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Why do you want to be president of the Texas **Young Lawyers Association?**

PIAZZA

I became a lawyer because of my ambition to help others. TYLA embodies this mission and has enabled me to help create and be involved in projects that make a difference in so many lives. I believe I am qualified to lead this outstanding organization because of my years of experience in leadership of this organization and other organizations in my community, my dedication to the legal profession, and my legal experience. I have been on the TYLA board since 2008 and have served as a director, secretary, and am currently serving as vice president. Through my years of service and leadership with TYLA, I have had the opportunity to lead committees and help create projects that have had a tremendous impact on our members, the legal profession, and the public. As for my legal experience, I have had a wide variety of experience in litigation, appellate work, and transactional matters, working at both large and small law firms, and juggling the pressures and obstacles in finding employment, meeting billable hour goals, and growing into an experienced and respected lawyer.

SHARMA

Lawyers are ambassadors for justice. I am infinitely proud to be a part of a profession that has the desire and means to shape a better world. I joined the TYLA board with the personal goal of improving the unwarranted negative image of our honorable profession through public service. My experience on the board has taught me that enthusiastic, young Texas lawyers working together toward a common goal can make a monumental impact felt throughout this state. I am running for TYLA president-elect because I am dedicated to this organization, to the concept of self-actualization through service, and to building our network of enthusiastic young lawyers who are eager to make a difference.

I have a clear vision for the future of TYLA and the experience to continue its tradition of excellence. My diverse practice as a permanent staff attorney for the Sixth Court of Appeals and former securities and class action litigator allows me to understand the needs and concerns of young lawyers in many sections of our Bar. As president, I will: (1) utilize technology to provide meaningful services to young lawyers; (2) provide solutions for attorneys and firms affected by the state of the economy; (3) create programs to serve and educate the public about their legal rights and responsibilities; (4) increase awareness of TYLA's services through collaborative partnerships; (5) facilitate communication with affiliates; and (6) allow for better opportunities for participation by all young lawyers.

What, in your opinion, are the top three issues facing young lawyers in Texas and what role should TYLA play in addressing those issues?

PIAZZA

1. The Economy. The economy has placed tremendous obstacles and stress on young lawyers. We have young lawyers who are unemployed and unable to find employment; lawyers who are employed who have had income cuts, layoff scares, and increased job requirements; and lawyers who have had to go into practice on their own with little experience or support. Providing young lawyers with tools that will help address these issues should be a top priority. TYLA should create resources and tools for young lawyers to help address these issues such as creating a job posting database and message board that targets job openings for young lawyers and law students, hosting job fairs for young lawyers and law students, and helping to create training and internships that unemployed young lawyers and law stu-



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ELECTION RESULTS

The TYLA Board of Directors has elected the following officers for 2012–13:

Cameron J. Cox, chair-elect of the board; Alfonso Cabañas, vice president; Keith L. Krueger, secretary; and Rebekah Steely Brooker, treasurer. **Alyssa J. Long** will serve as chair of the board.









KRUEGER

CONGRATULATIONS!



dents can participate in to help them gain the experience and skills needed to secure a job and segue into a permanent position. In addition, TYLA should create projects to help mentor and educate young lawyers who are starting their own practices.

- 2. Practical Skills Development. As we all know, law school does not teach many of the practical skills needed to be a successful lawyer. Most of us learn these skills through trial and error unless we are fortunate enough to have a mentor who will help show us the ropes. TYLA can help address these issues by expanding current programs such as Ten Minute Mentor, creating informational pamphlets and tool kits to help educate and assist young lawyers in their practices, hosting CLE workshops that teach practical skills and give young lawyers the opportunity to practice these skills and be critiqued, and connecting young lawyers with pro bono opportunities that will help them gain experience while also assisting people in need of legal services.
- 3. Stress. Stress has always been an issue with the legal profession. However, stress has become even more of an issue since the economy has had such an effect on jobs. TYLA should help address this issue by creating tools to educate young lawyers about the factors and effects of stress, providing them with ideas and mentorships to help manage stress and create a more balanced professional and personal life, and identifying resources available to young lawyers who are suffering from stress and need help.

SHARMA

- 1. The Economy. To adequately provide meaningful, relevant service to our Bar, it is imperative for TYLA to initiate programs that can offer real opportunity for those struggling in these tough economic times. If elected, I plan to create a series of free online court-appointment training webinars for unemployed and underemployed young lawyers. Addressing concerns of high cost of overhead, I intend to create step-by-step instructional videos to teach law firms, associates, and those wanting to hang out their own shingle how to set up and manage virtual offices. I will also produce online educational seminars to coach young lawyers in financial planning.
- 2. Pressures of the Profession. Lawyers are under considerable amounts of pressure to produce efficiently. TYLA is in a unique position to harness technology to offer tools that will ease the stress of practice. I will start with projects that can provide last minute assistance, such as smartphone apps that will give directions to courthouses, names of judges, and local rules. I envision great value in an online community where Texas young lawyers can anonymously blog about issues related to the pressures of the profession, mentor each other, and share helpful resources. TYLA YouTube announcements will also spread awareness of resources available to young lawyers seeking to manage stress, depression, and substance abuse issues.

3. Personal Fulfillment. While most of us are fortunate enough to take great satisfaction in our professional lives, we are constantly seeking the path to personal fulfillment. Volunteering our time is a step in the right direction and can help those struggling to find their place in the practice of law. Yet, billing expectations and family responsibilities can keep us from achieving this goal. TYLA can assist in this area by making it easy for all young lawyers to participate in meaningful projects. Opening up the lines of communication between individuals, affiliates, and TYLA will create a community of attorney volunteers by uniting those who have project ideas with volunteers having the time to see those ideas become reality. This open communication and project support will benefit the public while promoting individual personal fulfillment. Creating short, customizable PowerPoint presentations of TYLA's written projects will allow anyone to make an impact with minimal time commitment. Partnering with nonprofit organizations to conduct public service projects will also aid this purpose. We can make a difference together!

Discuss the TYLA project or program in which you most enjoyed participating.

PIAZZA

I have had the fortunate opportunity to be involved in the creation, implementation, and production of numerous outstanding projects through my years of service with TYLA so I find it extremely difficult to choose just one. As secretary, I was instrumental in the creation and production of *The Little Voice: Recognizing Child Abuse and Your Duty to Report It. The Little Voice* is an award-winning DVD and pamphlet designed to educate professionals and the public on the signs to look for that may indicate that a child is being abused, the process of reporting and investigating suspected child abuse, and the legal requirements to report suspected abuse. This is one of my favorite projects because we all have family, friends, or clients that have been affected by child abuse and can benefit from this project.

SHARMA

Although I have had the opportunity to help create many amazing TYLA projects, there is one that holds a special place in my heart. My mother was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer shortly after my graduation from law school. In addition to the stress and depression suffered by my family while trying to cope with my mother's diagnosis, I felt guilty for being unable to answer some of the legal questions my parents asked me relating to my mother's insurance. A colleague learned of my situation and mailed me a copy of the *Legal Guide for Cancer Patients*. My parents and I read this valuable

resource together and found the answers we were looking for. From that point, I was committed to spreading the word of this publication. My first order of business as president of the Texarkana Young Lawyers Association was to create a booth to distribute the Legal Guide for Cancer Patients at a local Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. As a TYLA director, I created push cards for the guide, distributed it to hospitals and patients, created presentations to facilitate roll outs of the guide, and spoke to groups to raise awareness of the project. The Legal Guide for Cancer Patients is the reason why I devoted myself to TYLA, and I am thankful for those individuals who had the vision for this program and gave their time to create it.

How do you balance your personal life with your professional life?

PIAZZA

Balancing my personal and professional life is a constant struggle. However, I have learned a few key things through the years that have helped me to maintain a healthy balance between the two. These elements include having a passion for what you do, prioritizing your time, and spending time with family and friends.

My passion is helping others. The work that I am able to do in my profession and service through TYLA are the reason I became a lawyer. So, when I am doing these things, I am fulfilling my passion and my work doesn't ever really feel like work at all because it is what I love to do. Second, I have had to learn to prioritize my time. When I commit to an organization or project, I am taking time away from something else. Therefore, I try and prioritize the things that I commit to and make sure it is something that serves my passion of helping others. My work with TYLA and my community has allowed me to use my law degree to fulfill this passion. I have found that when I am able to serve others, I am able to be a better lawyer, wife, and all around happier person. Third, I always set aside time to spend with my family and friends.

Being an attorney and working with TYLA have afforded me the opportunity to be fulfilled professionally as well as given me the opportunity to help others. It is really the best of both worlds. Thankfully, I have a very supportive husband and employer that share the same values and commitment to public service that I do, which allows me the flexibility to do both.

SHARMA

By being patient with myself and having gratitude for what I am able to do. While I love my job and cannot imagine doing anything else, I remind myself that my profession is only one aspect of what defines me. To avoid spreading myself too thin, I choose a few meaningful activities that I enjoy and give them my all. I try not to take my work home or discuss my professional life with friends, so I can make time for the people who matter most. I relieve any stress I might have from my day by working out, having a good sense of humor, and using any excuse to celebrate. No matter what I am doing, I make sure that I am happy doing it. I recognize that finding the perfect work-life balance is a constant battle, and I fight to preserve it. 3



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