



MY OPINION

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PRESIDENT, TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Happy Trails

Wow! I cannot believe it is time for my last column as president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association. This year has flown by and it has been one of the best years of my life. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to travel the state of Texas, meeting the best and brightest young lawyers in the country.

Over the course of this Bar year, TYLA has done some amazing work. We have held rural wills clinics, assisted law students in finding jobs, participated in veterans events, and worked with the Texas Special Olympics. We have addressed the serious issue of mental health in our profession with *Breaking the Silence: A Path to Mental Health* and tackled the tough issue of underage binge drinking in *The Unconscious Truth: The Legal and Physical Effect of Underage Binge Drinking*. Finally, we worked to increase diversity in the practice of law by partnering with the Supreme Court of Texas in our “Attorneys Without Borders” program and created a project for members of the public, particularly low-income Texans, to help them navigate the Texas probate process with our *Texas Probate Passport*. All of these outstanding events and projects would not have been possible without our volunteers and the amazing TYLA Board of Directors.

As we wrap up the year, we have two final projects that are hitting the printer and will also be available online. Both of these new projects are focused on helping Texas citizens with common questions they may face before they enter the judicial system. These projects stem from my role as Bosque County attorney. In this role I am blessed to work extensively with local law enforcement and to represent

Child Protective Services (CPS) in an effort to protect the children in our community. My daily work often involves answering many questions from deputies and the parents involved in CPS cases. Hopefully, these two new projects can help you address similar questions in your local area.

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The first project is titled *Remaining Civil: A Guide to Non-Criminal Disputes*. Law enforcement officers often have questions regarding the difference between civil versus criminal issues when they are on a call. Barrett Thomas, a former police officer and now a prosecutor, helped create this invaluable tool to educate law enforcement officers on where to direct citizen complaints that do not always fall within the realm of the criminal justice system. This two-part project features a Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education certified training component wherein officers will be educated on the

difference between certain criminal or civil actions including eviction, custody, lost and abandoned property, and animal control issues. The second component is a guide that officers who respond to calls can provide to the citizen to point them in the right civil direction to achieve their desired result. We are very excited about this program and look forward to taking it to counties across Texas.

The second project is titled *What You Should Know about Your Child Abuse, Neglect or CPS Case*. Many times parents going through a CPS case do not understand the timelines or the acronyms used by the agency. Kim Smith, a TYLA director from McKinney, helped to create this informative handout that not only explains the CPS process, but also breaks down the timelines in a CPS case in simple terms. We hope that this will assist CPS in working with the parents in each of their cases and will build on the beneficial resources that CPS and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services already provide.

As I ride off into the sunset, I want to give special thanks to the TYLA staff: Tracy Brown, Bree Trevino, and Michelle Palacios. These are truly amazing ladies! TYLA is extremely lucky to have such a proficient staff that enables us to continue to provide excellent programming and projects year after year. I also want to say best wishes to C.E. Rhodes as he takes office. He will be a wonderful president, and I hope he has as much fun as I have had this year.

It has been an extreme honor to serve the members of TYLA and the State Bar of Texas. Please let me know if there is anything I can ever do for you. Happy trails! ☆