



## QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES



**Jeff Chandler**



**Natalie Cobb Koehler**

The following interview with TYLA president-elect candidates **Jeff Chandler** of San Angelo and **Natalie Cobb Koehler** of Meridian is included to educate young lawyers as they prepare to vote. Biographies were included in the March issue (p. 230) 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 1 to April 30. 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 April 30.

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

### CHANDLER

From an early age I learned the value of serving and giving back to my community. Admittedly, during law school and my first years as a “baby” lawyer, I certainly set aside my “pay it forward” mentality. However, serving at the local bar level and on the TYLA Board has truly resurrected my belief in our capability as young lawyers to make monumental positive impacts on the people in our great state, all the while also helping each other as young lawyers by providing tools to improve our abilities and experiences as lawyers.

Due to the hard work and dedication of the young lawyers of Texas, TYLA is one of the premier young lawyer associations of our country. I want to work hard to create new public service projects, expand the reach of TYLA’s current projects and I will listen closely to the needs of young lawyers as we all encounter the challenges that accompany difficult economic times.

I have the time, energy, desire, and commitment required to continue and expand TYLA’s award-winning public service projects, as well as increase our member services to address the growing needs of young lawyers across Texas.

### KOEHLER

I truly love this wonderful organization. Its mission is to provide service to the public and resources to its members. I would be honored to serve as president-elect of an organization that does both.

In maintaining the focus on public service, TYLA’s projects often provide vital information to those who cannot afford legal services. The projects also bring attention to significant social problems like domestic abuse, cyber bullying, and mental health issues. Since 2003, I have been blessed to use some of these resources in my own community and have seen first-hand how these projects can change lives. TYLA’s resources also serve our membership. Through projects like *Ten Minute Mentor*, *Hangin’ Out Your Shingle: Things to Consider Before Starting Your Own Practice*, and the newly created forms bank, young lawyers can seek online guidance if they do not have a mentor that they can ask for help.

I am so proud of this organization and I want to travel the state to share with the public, and TYLA’s membership, the great things TYLA is doing and will continue to do. It has been a privilege to be TYLA vice president this year, and it would be my honor to serve as your president.

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

### CHANDLER

1. We are all concerned about the unstable economy and resulting uncertain legal market, which directly affects Nos. 2 and 3 below.
2. The decrease in professional development time and opportunities for mentoring of young lawyers.
3. The ability of young lawyers to balance their professional and personal lives.

Difficult and unstable economic times inherently lead to an uncertain legal market. Fortunately, some industries are seeing some glimmers of hope; however, no one knows how long, or even if, the better times will last. As all lawyers work harder during these challenging days, the time available for mentoring



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(either providing it or receiving it) and professional development opportunities naturally decreases.

I would like to see the implementation of a statewide mentorship program wherein established attorneys in various fields of law would serve as mentors to a yearly class of young attorneys. The yearly mentorship class would be selected through application and would be assigned to mentor attorneys in their respective fields of practice. The mentor attorneys would then give periodic CLE presentations (either live or online) regarding their respective areas of law and agree to make themselves reasonably available to answer emails or telephone calls from the young attorneys in their class.

If you are a sole practitioner or in a small firm, you may not have anyone to approach to ask certain questions, or if you are an associate in a large firm, you may not feel comfortable asking a senior associate or partner certain questions. That is precisely where your mentor would come into play. I've found as a young lawyer that most times I only need a slight nudge in the right direction and then I can figure out the rest. I can only imagine most other young lawyers are the same way. The idea is to give young lawyers additional tools to allow them to work more efficiently in order to perform at a high level for the benefit of their clients, but to also allow them more time to enhance their personal lives. This, in turn, would help young lawyers address the constant challenge of balancing their professional and personal lives.

#### KOEHLER

1. *Integrity in mentorship.* I strongly believe that young lawyers emerge from law school in desperate need of a mentor they can turn to when they have questions. They need someone to teach them to practice with integrity. Most young lawyers do not anticipate the day-to-day challenges in the legal profession that test not only our substantive knowledge, but also our ethical and moral boundaries. Law school can only go so far in preparing you for decisions that will undoubtedly shape the kind of lawyer you will become. We owe it to our young lawyers, our communities, and our profession to not only lead by example, but also to be there to show them how to respond to these challenges with honor and integrity.
2. *Balancing professional life with personal life.* This is always a challenge for young lawyers. We want to succeed, please the boss, and work as hard as we can to eventually make our way to the top. Oftentimes we burn out and wonder why we ever wanted to be a lawyer in the first place. Young attorneys should volunteer in their communities, make time for their families, and offer pro bono legal services. I want to encourage young lawyers

to take advantage of the incredible opportunities TYLA provides. I also want to encourage law firms to understand how having a well-balanced young lawyer not only serves the firm's interest, but also the firm's clients, the profession, and the community.

3. *Effective office management.* As a sole practitioner, I have to balance my books, hire and fire employees, and worry about the day-to-day operations of my office. Most days, I just want to practice law, not worry about running a business. I do not think this is just a problem for sole practitioners either. Lawyers, in general, want to focus on their work, not worry about personnel issues or computer software problems. TYLA's projects, such as *Ten Minute Mentor Goes to Law School*, help address some of these problems and give practical advice on software, forms banks, office sharing, and many other resources that can help practitioners practice law while managing a business.

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

#### CHANDLER

I have enjoyed every TYLA project that I have been associated with, but my favorite would have to be the *TYLA/ProBAR: Know Your Rights/Conoce Tus Derechos* video. Each year, hundreds of unaccompanied children reach the Texas border after fleeing abuse, neglect, or persecution in their home countries. Without adequate legal representation, these children remain in detention, unable to navigate the complicated immigration system and facing almost certain deportation.

In 2006, TYLA joined efforts with the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR) to create the Unaccompanied Children's Project to help provide a voice for the unaccompanied children detained in South Texas and seeking immigration relief. ProBAR attorneys, along with dedicated staff members, represent unaccompanied immigrant children and also recruit, train, and coordinate the activities of volunteer attorneys, law students, and legal assistants. The *TYLA/ProBAR: Know Your Rights/Conoce Tus Derechos* video is a continuation of this joint project. This is an orientation video that helps to answer many of the Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? questions that these children, who are alone and afraid, may have. The video assists the detained minors by allowing attorneys and assistants to provide an immediate and concise outline of laws and regulations during initial intake sessions in a way that children can understand. The video can be viewed multiple times, even after departure of ProBAR and



volunteer attorneys and serves as an additional training tool for future volunteer attorneys and assistants.

For many people, the topic of immigration conjures up strong feelings on both sides of the issue, and, in reality, the majority of children detained will face deportation. No matter where you fall on the topic of immigration, it is important to know that this video makes the children aware of legal means of immigration (if they qualify) and ultimately helps save the lives of children.

### KOEHLER

I was honored to be part of the team that created *Healing the Wounds: Navigating the Legal System after Surviving Domestic Abuse*. This project has helped thousands of people across the state of Texas. The project focuses on the legal questions raised by a victim of domestic violence trying to escape a bad situation. The *Healing the Wounds* DVD has been distributed by the Texas Council on Family Violence, the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, and has been presented at the National Conference on Crimes against Women and the Conference on Prevention of Child Abuse. As the elected county attorney in Bosque County, I prosecute protective orders on a weekly basis. This project has helped the victims I have worked with move on to a healthier, happier life.

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

### CHANDLER

Balancing your personal life with your professional life is a constant challenge for young lawyers and I'm certainly no exception. I know that my wife would agree that I don't always balance the two as well as I should, but she is understanding about the challenges I face. I am also blessed with the opportunity to have my own small firm. Actually, one of the primary reasons I opened my own law office was to allow myself the freedom to make my own decisions about how and where to focus my time. Essentially, that means I'm the only one to blame for not striking a fair balance between the personal and the professional. I have found that an easy tactic for achieving some balance is to simply take the time to personally RSVP to events such as dinner with friends and church and community activities. If it's on my calendar and I've told someone I'll be there, I'll work more efficiently at the office in order to attend the event. As my wife is pregnant with our first child, I've had to add doctor visits and baby room renovation to my schedule and when our baby girl comes, I know I will have to try even harder to strike the balance of being a dad, husband, and lawyer!

### KOEHLER

I have a very supportive husband who lets me volunteer *a lot!* I find that when I am able to help others in my community, I am a better lawyer, a better mother, and a better wife. For the past two years, I have been blessed to serve as a camp counselor at Camp John Marc, a camp for children with physical disabilities or chronic illness. My experience there has shown me that material things and monetary gain are nothing if your children are not healthy. Once you put that in perspective, everything else seems insignificant.

My work with TYLA has also helped me to balance my professional life with my personal life. Being able to use my law degree to create projects that provide assistance to people who cannot afford legal services is very rewarding. I also love that TYLA is family oriented. Taking my children and husband to a TYLA activity allows all of us to see attorneys interacting with their families, while working on projects that benefit the community. ✪



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## ELECTION RESULTS

The TYLA Board of Directors has elected the following officers for 2010-11:

**Alfonso Cabañas**, chair-elect of the board;  
**David C. Courreges**, vice president;  
**Kristy Sims Piazza**, secretary; and  
**Alyssa J. Long**, treasurer.

**David Anderson** will serve as chair of the board.



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## CONGRATULATIONS!