

**TYLA in Action**



At the November meeting, TYLA board members collected toys and funds for a Houston emergency shelter for women and children—the Mission of Yahweh's Christmas on a Mission.



TYLA directors partnered with attorneys from the Haynes and Boone Dallas office to present the *What Do Lawyers Do?* project to students from Pinkston High School. The directors also presented mock voir dire and a mini trial using the 2017 TYLA National Trial Competition problem.



TYLA President Baili Rhodes addressed the crowd at the New Lawyer Induction Ceremony on November 20 in Austin.

# Empowering Survivors



It's a new year and our country is facing tough issues. It seems that every time I turn on the news, I hear another tragic story of domestic violence. Allegations of sexual harassment permeate the media. I am not sure if the increased reports are indicative of increased acts of abuse and harassment, or if the survivors simply feel more empowered to speak. I hope it is the second. There is only one word with which we can characterize those individuals who have spoken out about these difficult experiences: brave. But for every person who has come forward to talk, there are many who cannot or will not share their experiences. Although abuse and harassment are not the same, they both leave their victims deeply hurt. If reported, these crimes often result in a long legal (and sometimes administrative) process. The Texas Young Lawyers Association has made it a goal to provide useful legal resources to those brave individuals who have come forward to share their stories, and for those who—for whatever reason—are unable to do so. To bridge that gap, TYLA has developed two new projects for crime victims and is adding video content to a program that was completed last year. The goal is simple: we want to empower survivors.

Under 2016-2017 President Sam Houston's leadership, TYLA developed *Not a Victim* ([notavictim.tyla.org](http://notavictim.tyla.org)), a website dedicated to providing sexual assault survivors with tools to understand the legal processes that surround allegations of assault. The web-based initiative is specifically geared toward college students and the Title IX process. However, the site also contains useful information for all victims of sexual assault, their families and friends, and those facing allegations of assault. This year, TYLA is building on *Not a Victim* by adding interviews with survivors of sexual assault, police officers, and individuals who can speak about the legal and administrative processes.

Prosecutors reviewing *Not a Victim* indicated that all crime victims would benefit from a resource that provides an overview of the legal process. As a result, TYLA is developing the *Victims Guide*, which will provide an easy-to-understand resource that describes the legal process and is readily available to victims, family members, and attorneys.

In researching TYLA's resources available to survivors of domestic abuse, we discovered that there were many resources available to deal with healing from the abuse but few specifically directed to the legal process. There were even fewer resources that dealt with elder abuse. This year TYLA will introduce a new project, *Free from Violence*, to help individuals navigate the legal system as it applies to domestic abuse and elder abuse. The website will feature written resources, as well as videos of survivors and professionals who can discuss the legal processes surrounding allegations of domestic and elder abuse.

TYLA hopes to empower survivors—even those who have been too scared to enlist the support of others—to seek help. As always, I would appreciate your feedback on this or other TYLA projects. Please feel free to contact me at [baili.rhodes@westwebblaw.com](mailto:baili.rhodes@westwebblaw.com).

**BAILI B. RHODES**

President,  
Texas Young Lawyers Association