

TYLA in Action at Recent Events

TYLA hosted a table at the Texas District & County Attorneys Association conference September 21-23 in Galveston.



Immediate Past President C. Barrett Thomas at the conference.

Board members traveled to Austin for the TYLA board meeting on November 18-19.



The board gathers in front of the State Capitol during the board meeting weekend.

TYLA members continue to visit classrooms across the state to educate students about what it takes to become a lawyer.



John W. Ellis (left) and David Shank of Scott, Douglass & McConnico in Austin spoke to about 150 fourth-grade students at Gilbert Elementary School in December.

So Much to Learn

WITH the flurry of the holidays behind us, many consider early January a time for reflection. Growing up, I did not go through the usual exercise of adopting New Year's resolutions. Rather, I was usually content to enjoy a bowl of black-eyed peas and catch a movie or two. I now realize, however, that it is important to reflect on where you have been, where you are currently, and where you hope to be in the future.

My firm has a sign in our kitchen that reads "Work Hard and Be Nice." This is a great message, and it's one that was instilled in me at a young age by my parents and grandparents. Following it should be part of a path to both personal and professional success. Unfortunately, conflict inherent to law—especially in litigation—leads us to sometimes forget the second part.

During the New Lawyers Induction Ceremony in Austin this past November, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht highlighted the 2015 changes to the lawyer's oath and the bar's efforts to highlight the importance of civility. As part of my remarks during the ceremony, I offered some unsolicited advice: Please take the long view of your career. In this, there are two important points. First, it takes time to develop a positive professional reputation, but it can be lost quickly and may never be regained. Second, although there are now over 100,000 licensed Texas lawyers, we are so interconnected that it sometimes feels like there are only eight lawyers in this state. In other words, the large number of lawyers should not encourage a scorched-earth policy with opposing counsel.

Irrespective of my profession, I sincerely believe that hard work and civility are core tenants that I will always follow. But I do not believe that I started out with a true appreciation for the "business" of the practice of law. Both the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Young Lawyers Association provide a number of resources to assist lawyers in dealing with clients, including tips and



information to employ when a relationship sours.

A senior partner once told me "the practice of law would be easy but for clients." He was kidding—perhaps only a bit—because clients are essential. But how do you get clients in the door in the digital age? We all know that lawyer advertising is regulated, and there are rules that must be followed. To that end, TYLA developed a *Social Media 101* pocket guide a few years ago that specifically addresses lawyer advertising on social media platforms. But what do you do once the client has signed an engagement letter? What if this is your first paying client? What if things go bad?

Be on the lookout for TYLA's *Client Development and Resource Guide*, which is intended to address the life cycle of the attorney-client relationship. It will begin with tips and other advice about business development, but the best part is that the guide will address specific practice areas, acknowledging the different expectations clients may have depending upon their legal needs. It will also offer practical information about how to manage disputes with clients, focusing upon fee disputes, and will point the reader to the various resources provided by the State Bar and local bar associations. I want to thank TYLA Directors Scott Bodkin of Flower Mound, Andrew Dornburg of Richmond, and Curtis Lucas of Waco for their work and leadership on this project.

No matter how much we have to learn, at least we can all be nice.

SAM HOUSTON

President,
Texas Young Lawyers Association