

TYLA in Action at Recent Events



Texas Tech University School of Law placed first in the 2016 State Moot Court Competition, reclaiming the honor it achieved in 2013. Team members included C.J. Baker, Shelby Hall, and Kristen Vander-Plas, and their coach was Robert T. Sherwin. This is Texas Tech's fifth championship since 1975. This year's event took place during the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting on June 14-16 in Fort Worth and was put on by TYLA.

Participating law schools also included Baylor Law School, Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, St. Mary's University School of Law, Houston College of Law (formerly South Texas College of Law), Texas A&M University School of Law, and the University of Houston Law Center. All teams went through seven rounds. The competition was judged by eight justices of the Texas Supreme Court and Justice Bill Whitehill of the 5th Court of Appeals.

From left: C.J. Baker, Kristen Vander-Plas, Robert T. Sherwin, and Shelby Hall.



TYLA hosted an evening reception June 17 at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting in Fort Worth that acknowledged the group's projects, previous officers, new leaders, and outstanding attorneys. Houston attorney Kathryn Elizabeth Boatman received the Outstanding Young Lawyer of Texas Award. Other honorees included Lisa Rush of Austin (Liberty Bell Award), Judge William Harris of Fort Worth (Outstanding Mentor Award), Aaron J. Burke of Dallas (President's Award), Courtney Barksdale Perez of Dallas (Joseph M. Pritchard Inn Outstanding Director Award), Jenny Smith of Austin (Keith L. Krueger Award), and Sara Giddings of San Angelo (Outstanding First Year Director Award), among others.

From left: Former TYLA President Kristy Blanchard and Kathryn Elizabeth Boatman.

We Are Firsts

ONE of the Texas Young Lawyers Association's signature projects for the 2016-2017 bar year is *I Was the First. You Can Be a Lawyer Too!*, a "pipeline" program that will feature a diverse group of first-generation lawyers who have made significant contributions to Texas and the nation.

By highlighting these firsts, we hope to show young people that a legal career is possible irrespective of a person's sex, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status. We are working with Law-Related Education Department Director Jan Miller and her staff at the State Bar to identify the individuals who will be featured in the project.

But, for purposes of this column, I thought it would be great to recognize the three TYLA directors who chair our Law-Related Education Committee, which is spearheading the project.

As it turns out, the three chairs, Raymond Baeza of El Paso, Sara Giddings of San Angelo, and Jenny Smith of Austin, are all firsts. They are amazing people with distinct stories. And because they are overseeing this initiative, I wanted to learn more about their paths to the legal profession.

Some people always knew they wanted to be a lawyer. That is true for Jenny, even though she had no lawyers in her family. Sara, too, had somewhat of an innate desire to pursue law: She drew up her first contract in third grade, and in the eighth grade, she informed her parents that she was going to go to law school.

Raymond's story demonstrates why projects that educate young people about the law and legal careers are such important recruitment tools. He decided to pursue law school after participating in the Teen Court of Lea County, New Mexico, a volunteer program that allowed high school students to represent other students who had committed misdemeanor offenses. That opportunity to be a legal advocate inspired him to become a lawyer.



A desire to serve others also pulled Jenny in the direction of the law. After she graduated from college, Jenny worked for a council of local governments, reviewing and distributing grant applications for communities. She identified one submission that met the requirements and would have served additional unmet needs of the particular community. Unfortunately, the grant had to be denied based upon what she viewed as a misinterpretation of the law. At that moment, Jenny realized that she wanted to go to law school "to make a difference" and "to be able to argue the interpretation of laws" so that she would not have to accept "a simple bureaucratic simplification" in the future.

All three attorneys received unconditional support from their families, which Sara says was important because she and her relatives didn't realize how much law school entailed.

All three acknowledged that a legal career comes with challenges. Raymond noted the "very real issues that lawyers face because of stress and workload, like alcoholism, addiction, and mental health issues." Jenny also stressed that "the profession can consume you if you let it" and that she has had to "learn to set aside personal time and cherish it." Sara discussed having to overcome "the perceptions associated with being a younger female practicing law."

Notwithstanding these challenges, all three said they would still choose the practice of law if they had to do it all over again. In line with TYLA's public service goals, Raymond said that he wouldn't change his path because he has been able to help so many people.

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Live El Paso Sep 14 Doubletree by Hilton Hotel El Paso Downtown

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Live Austin Sep 15-16 Texas Law Center

Also Webcast Sep 15-16 8:55 am to 4:30 pm CT on TexasBarCLE.com

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Video Dallas Sep 29-30 Cityplace Events

*34th Annual Advanced Oil, Gas & Energy Resources Law Course

Live Houston Sep 29-30 Westin Galleria Hotel

27th Annual Estate Planning & Probate Drafting Course

Live Dallas Oct 6-7 Westin Hotel Galleria Dallas

30th Annual Advanced Civil Appellate Practice Course

Video Dallas Oct 13-14 Cityplace Events

21st Annual New Frontiers in Marital Property Course

Live Louisville Oct 13-14 The Seelbach Hilton Louisville

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Video Santa Fe Oct 13-14 La Fonda Hotel

42nd Annual Advanced Family Law Course

Video South Padre Island Oct 19-21 Isla Grand Beach Resort

32nd Annual Advanced Personal Injury Law Course

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Listings may change without notice.
To verify information or to register,
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*Arrive a day early to attend a "Law 101," "Boot Camp,"
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