



MY OPINION

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Rural Resources

As the Texas Young Lawyers Association president-elect, I am honored to represent the 26,000 young lawyers in the State of Texas. Yet, as a lawyer in a county with less than 10,000 residents, I am even prouder to bring a rural perspective to the State Bar.

While I was campaigning for TYLA president, I received many emails from rural attorneys telling me it was refreshing to see a small-town lawyer being elected to a major post in the State Bar. I told them that TYLA and the State Bar need and want our perspectives. I also was able to share with these young lawyers the many great projects TYLA has produced, which can be used in their practices and in their local communities.

Most rural attorneys have a wide spectrum of practice and never know what will walk through the door. At some point over the last nine years, I have taken on nearly every type of case you can imagine! I found that TYLA had a publication or production that addressed nearly every scenario presented and provided not only resources I could use in my practice, but materials I could keep in my lobby for public information to distribute in my community.

For example, TYLA's brochure, *Ending the Violence: How to Obtain a Texas Protective Order*, provides information on the legal steps necessary to obtain a protective order. My local sheriff's office has been thrilled to have this publication in the office. They do not have the resources for an officer to be assigned strictly to assault and family violence cases. This handout enables the officers to provide victims immediate informa-

tion that could help them escape a negative situation. The brochure offers help at a time when a victim often struggles with trust issues and is scared and vulnerable. The brochure is a tool that allows attorneys to help a victim without overwhelming them with legal jargon.

Another publication I have found particularly useful in my rural practice is *Committed to Healing: Involuntary Com-*

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mitment Procedures. This brochure discusses in detail the process involved in mental health commitments. Many families are dealing with family members who have a mental health issue, but do not know where to turn.

This publication walks an applicant through the process of what a mental health commitment involves and when

it can be used. I also found that this brochure helps our local Justice of the Peace offices answer questions when citizens come directly to them seeking help.

TYLA also has many video productions that can be used in your communities. Rural attorneys are often volunteers in several organizations at one time. As the Bosque County attorney, I am often asked to speak to civic groups and TYLA is my "go to" place for topics on which to speak.

Many of TYLA's videos are perfect presentations for rotary groups, chambers of commerce, or other civic organizations. A particularly good video to show in my county has been TYLA's *Safeguarding Our Seniors*. This video provides information on recognizing and reporting elder abuse, a topic of great need in rural communities as the senior population grows and younger citizens move into large cities.

Finally, many rural practitioners are sole practitioners. TYLA provides projects, such as *Ten Minute Mentor* and *Office in a Flash*, a flash drive that not only provides sole practitioners with a free hour of CLE, but also provides resources on setting up your own firm. These are invaluable tools for a sole practitioner who either does not have a mentor in his or her community or who has to travel great distances to attend CLE on the topics covered in these projects.

If you are interested in obtaining some of these outstanding programs or publications, visit www.tyla.org for more information. (Or call the TYLA office at (800) 204-2222, ext. 1529 or email tyla@texasbar.com.)

I guarantee there is something that will benefit your rural practice and your community. ★