



# TULSA LAWYERS — FOR — CHILDREN

Protecting Rights of Abused Children

## VOLUNTEER FOCUS

### All in the Family

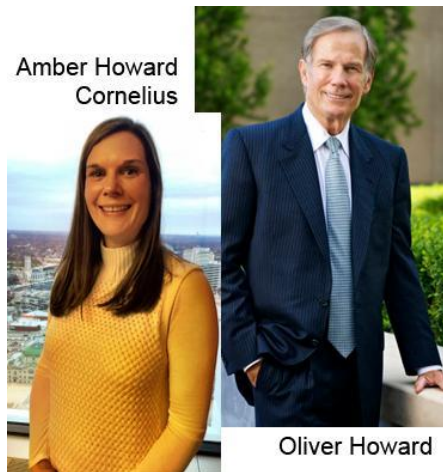
Tulsa Lawyers for Children devotes itself to representing abused and neglected children...children in families. How fitting, then, that volunteering can be a family effort? Oliver Howard and Amber Howard Cornelius bring their legal talents to TLC as a father-daughter duo.

"Amber kicked this whole thing off a couple years ago. She talked me into going to University of Tulsa for the seminar sessions where the speaker walked us through the goals and processes and some of the special laws dealing with children," explained Mr. Howard, of Gable Gotwals.

From his 35-year law practice in complex litigation, Howard brings a wealth of legal skill to the organization. Also, as a former minister, he enjoyed working with families in teaching and advocacy roles. That experience, according to Howard, fits perfectly with the client relationship lawyers create. But until working with TLC, he only served adults as an attorney.

"Now all of the sudden you're dealing with a young child who doesn't have the ability to meet you halfway. I've felt more of a sense of protectiveness-what can I do to get the best result for the child to get him or her a better life?"

Ms. Howard Cornelius-an associate with Sprouse, Shrader, Smith-brings years of public service work to TLC, including eight years in South Africa. Having worked regularly in that country's often-chaotic family courtrooms, she knew what to expect walking into juvenile court here. Nevertheless, she acknowledges the American courtroom is more formal-the courtroom where her father has practiced for years. She enjoys seeing the crossover between their backgrounds, and has helped Howard navigate this new side of the legal world:



"I think he was a little nervous. My dad has been involved in [The Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice] for a long time and in the community with church work and various things, but his legal work wasn't focused on that. He was calling me and reading over his file, and being very thorough, which is great-that's the kind of representation you want on a pro bono basis. I went to the juvenile court with him for the first hearing, and here's this tiny little courtroom-it's just so different!"

Volunteering with TLC provides the duo with a chance to work together, an opportunity they couldn't enjoy before since they're at different law firms. Cornelius hopes the next time a case is available, they can partner again.

"This has been a nice way for us to have a shared experience of working together. It gives us an excuse to get together, have lunch, and build up more of a common understanding as we think about how we can find different ways to be involved in the community and serve this very special population," she said.

For Howard, his daughter's idea helped him revive the family advocacy role that's always been his gift. He knows the time they spend together helps fill an important need, and it also provides them with time to collaborate on their career and service paths.

"It's opened my horizons. In our society today, for many reasons, children can just get lost in the shuffle. That's what pointed me this direction, and the opportunity came when Amber suggested we work together. There's a big community I haven't touched in my life but would like to continue to fill some gaps and make some difference working with TLC. It's given me time to work with Amber on things we believe in and meet some fine people in the organization," said Howard.

Ms. Cornelius shared that working with TLC has kept the public service piece of her career thriving since she's moved to private practice. It's important to her-both from a desire to serve and as part of a legacy:

"For me, this kind of work has always been a way to honor my dad because I felt like he was really purposeful about finding ways to give back. It's something he instilled in me, so for us to be able to do this together is nice. It shows I'm honoring that this is important, and it's something I've done because of his example."