R. Shawn Hoover is the Conflict Defender for the Cordele Judicial Circuit in Georgia. He is also the area Vice President on the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Board of Directors, the YLD Liaison for the Special Committee on Death Penalty Representation, and a YLD Scholar for the 2015-2016 bar year.

- Are you a government, military, or public sector lawyer, and what area of law do you practice?

I am a government lawyer; I’m in criminal defense, and I’m a conflict defender for the Cordele Judicial Circuit in Cordele, Georgia. The Cordele Judicial Circuit consists of four counties in southern Georgia, and I work with all of the law enforcement agencies, including the judges and public defenders to help represent defendants when the public defenders are unable to do so because of conflicts.

- Is that something you always wanted to do, or a type of law you planned to practice while in law school?

I knew from a very young age that I wanted to be a public defender, and law school really confirmed that. I went to a very pro-prosecutorial law school, and listening to my professors and classmates, rather than changing my mind, their conversations solidified how I felt about public defense and the legal system.

- What do you enjoy about being active in the YLD?

When I graduated from law school and came back to Georgia, there was an older attorney – who I still look up to and seek advice from today – who told me that a young attorney can’t do much in the legal system and can’t make a difference; he felt that to make a difference in this profession takes time. Obviously, that wasn’t something I wanted to hear as a young attorney. Being around young attorneys in the YLD, they’ve shown me how much young lawyers can do, and they’ve been out of law school for the same amount of time as me; it’s very inspiring. I think the thing I enjoy most about being active in YLD is being around other people who know they can do more that just what they came out of law school to do and are actually doing it.

- What do you like to do in your free time?

I volunteer a lot; I volunteer with a number of high schools and shelters in Georgia – men’s shelters, women’s shelters, and homeless shelters. I’m currently coaching a high school mock trial team. I also enjoy being active with my undergrad: I volunteer with the debate team whenever they’re in the south. When I have the time, I try to get on my motorcycle.