

KEYWAY WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

February 24, 2026



Meetings

February is Peace and Conflict Prevention Month

Our Rotary Family BIRTHDAYS

2/16 Carolina Ramos

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Rotary Online

<https://atlantawestendrotary.org>
<https://rotary6900.org/>
<https://rotary.org/>

ROTARY CLUB OF ATLANTA WEST END

Fridays, 12:15 pm
Georgia Tech Hotel &
Conference Center*
800 Spring St NW
Atlanta, GA 30308



LEADERSHIP

President	Victoria Seals, PhD
President-Elect	Christopher Hempfling
Immediate PP	Jared Evans
Vice President	Debra Stokes
Treasurer	Rose Caplan
Secretary	Neil Shorthouse
Public Image	Jared Evans

This Week's Program: Annual Business Meeting

This Friday, we will hold our Annual Business Meeting, as required by our club bylaws, on or before the last Friday in February. This meeting ensures accountability, transparency, and leadership continuity as we prepare for the 2026–2027 Rotary year. This is one of the most important governance meetings of the year. Your presence helps demonstrate our shared commitment to responsible self-governance and ensures a strong quorum. A quorum, defined as one-third of the club's members excluding honorary members, must be present to conduct official business. Virtual attendance counts.

This Annual Business Meeting serves as an opportunity to reflect on where we stand in membership, service impact, Foundation support, status of our utilization of District Grant funds, and overall momentum as we close out this Rotary year and prepare for the next.

The Treasurer will present a Financial Report, offering transparency on the club's fiscal health and stewardship of member dues and project funds. Accountability and ethical leadership are central to who we are. Please note that annual per capita dues to District 6900 are increasing from \$55 to \$60 in the 2026–2027 Rotary year, which will reduce AWER operational funds if club dues are not adjusted accordingly when our own 2026-2027 Club Budget is prepared.

Voting Matters: Election of Officers and Directors for Rotary Year 2026-2027

Members will choose leadership for Rotary Year 2026–2027. The business of this club is conducted by voice vote or a show of hands except in the election of officers and directors, which is conducted by ballot. Voting on club business may be conducted, when required, via email, text, and online tools. Votes cast electronically have the same effect as votes cast in person.

The candidate who receives a majority of the votes for each office is declared elected to that office. If only one person is nominated for a position, that candidate is elected by acclamation.

Per Article 8, Section 2 of [the club's bylaws](#), the standing committees of the Rotary Club of Atlanta West End are Club Administration, Membership, Public Image, Service Projects, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and The Rotary Foundation. The chairs of these committees serve as the non-officer directors of the club, and descriptions of each committee's responsibilities can be found in [the bylaws](#).

This annual meeting is our moment to reflect on what we have built together, to steward what has been entrusted to us in the legacy of this special Rotary club, and to choose the leaders who will guide our next chapter of service. When we show up, participate, and vote, we strengthen not only our club, but also the example of principled self-governance that Rotary represents, which is exactly what is needed in our current day and age.

Blake Elsberry, former Sole Commissioner of Chattooga County and Georgia State Senate candidate

✖ **Chair elect Christopher Hempfling** led our meeting and asked **CJ Stewart**, who chairs AWER's speaker selection for February, to lead our program. CJ introduced **Mr. Blake Elsberry**. Blake is a former Sole Commissioner of Chattooga County and longtime public servant with more than 20 years of leadership in healthcare and local government. Blake is also a current candidate for Georgia State Senate. CJ asked Blake about how he grew up. Blake said he is the oldest of five kids and was raised by a single mother. He said being the oldest required him to step up and take on responsibilities to help his mom. He said he had a good relationship with his stepfather. Blake said he enjoys volunteering in a prison ministry through the Gideons, who he explained are the people who put Bibles in hotel rooms.

CJ asked Blake, what does it mean to be a Republican, and how do you personally distinguish conservative from liberal? Blake said it's based on policy. Republicans typically value conservative fiscal policies and open markets, though there are factions within each party, and most people probably have one or two policy issues where they align with the other side. As a politician, Blake stressed that rather than wearing a label or being forced to be defined only by a political party, he works hard to discuss policy issues. While running as a Republican, he cares mainly about defining and supporting proposals that help people live better lives. He values good proposals "before party." He said faith is first for him in his life. He also pointed out that state and local politics can be more volatile than national politics because local decisions have an immediate impact on how people live their lives. Blake Elsberry also discussed his view on building relationships across political divides, emphasizing the importance of looking for commonalities rather than differences.

He maintains that all politicians should not be afraid to talk and listen to all issues people carry and work hard to understand all sides of all issues. Certainly, poverty does not discriminate in rural Georgia; it affects lots of people regardless of race or party affiliation.

CJ also asked Blake about the core values guiding decisions, even when party expectations might push you in another direction. Blake said his faith is key when politics get tough. These situations strengthen his faith rather than weaken it. "I have to lean into faith," which he learned more about after losing three important male influences in his life within a year.

On rural healthcare in Georgia, and specifically about the expansion of Medicaid, Blake said the Republican party hasn't taken enough leadership in addressing healthcare challenges. He referred to a freestanding ER built in Chattooga County without using county funds or tax incentives as a model that could be replicated in other rural areas. It provides critical services like CT scans for stroke patients without requiring the \$120 million investment of a full hospital. Further, his urgent care and emergency health services receive more than fifty walk-ins per day, doubling predictions. In describing his work in rural healthcare, including the rural freestanding emergency room, he emphasized this facility has exceeded patient expectations and is saving lives by providing critical care services in an underserved area.

Join a Montgomery Day Trip to Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Sites - Sunday, March 15, 2026

Seats remain for this meaningful and reflective day trip to **Montgomery, Alabama** on Sunday, March 15, 2026. Rotarians are invited to participate in this shared experience hosted by **Indivisible Cobb** in partnership with the **Rotary Club of Atlanta West End**. The excursion will include guided visits to the **National Memorial for Peace and Justice**, the **Legacy Museum**, and the **Freedom Monument Sculpture Park**. These powerful sites were created by **Bryan Stevenson** and the **Equal Justice Initiative** to honor the history of racial injustice while fostering reflection, truth telling, and reconciliation in America.

The bus will depart at 8:00 AM and return by approximately 8:00 PM. The destination is located at 417 Caroline Street, Montgomery, AL 36104. Six (6) seats remain available. Rotarians from other clubs are also welcome to join this experience of learning and fellowship.

The registration deadline is Sunday, March 1, 2026. Those interested are encouraged to register promptly using the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe11O6eMjfDbibaxITjpmXQvX_Q7jB8-nM9rbOr0vINETOKwQ/viewform?usp=header

This visit offers a shared opportunity for education, reflection, and fellowship grounded in Rotary's commitment to service, understanding, and community engagement.



February Focus: Peace and Conflict Prevention

February is **Peace and Conflict Prevention Month** in Rotary, reflecting the organization's long-standing commitment to building a more peaceful world through service, dialogue, and understanding. Rotary International chose this focus to highlight the belief that **peace is not only the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, opportunity, and strong relationships within and among communities**. Rotary's work in peacebuilding ranges from supporting local conflict resolution efforts to sponsoring peace fellowships that train leaders in mediation, diplomacy, and humanitarian service. By dedicating a month to this theme, Rotary reminds members that promoting peace begins with ethical leadership, respect for diversity, and service that addresses the root causes of conflict. Through these efforts, Rotarians help create conditions where lasting peace can take hold.

Calander, Agenda, Connections, & Four-Way Test

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR** Works

- 3/6: Maritza McClendon - Olympian and Community Advocate
- 3/13: Don Schewe - The Evolution of Information
- 3/20: Hon. Brad Raffensperger - Georgia Secretary of State
- 3/27: Brandon Butler - Founder of Trust Fitness
- April Program Dir. Bridgette
- 4/11: District Learning Assembly, Columbus, GA
- May Program Dir. Carolina

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation & Pledge
3. Introduction of Guests
4. Tasse Trivia
5. DEI Moment
6. Announcements
7. Program/Speaker
8. The Four-Way Test
9. Adjournment

• **June Program Director Needed!**
Sign up to be a program chair [here](#) today! June needs YOU!

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atlantawestendrotary.org LinkedIn.com/company/rotary-club-of-atlanta-west-end

Never a Bad Time to Catch Up (ON DUES)!

District 6900 has updated to a new Stripe ACH payment process. The new method is more convenient and more secure. If you pay your dues via ACH (**and you should!**), go to YOUR PAGE on our club website (Click [here](#)) and use the Setup ACH button to relink your account. Should you encounter any problems, click the Contact Webmaster link in the page footer.

THE FOUR-WAY TEST of the things we think, say or do



- first* **Is it the TRUTH?**
- second* **Is it FAIR to all concerned?**
- third* **Will it build GOOD WILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**
- fourth* **Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?**