

This Week's Program: Brandon Teal, Associate Executive Director of the YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta



Friday, June 5th, the **Rotary Club of Atlanta West End** is pleased to welcome **Brandon Teal, Associate Executive Director of the YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta**, as our program speaker. Brandon brings a strong background in community leadership, health outreach, youth development, and nonprofit service. Since joining the YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta in 2023, he has helped advance programs that strengthen families, support healthy living, and build meaningful community connections across the Atlanta area.

Before coming to Atlanta, Brandon served as a **Community Health Worker of Population Health** with **UNC Health Care** and as **Outreach Director** for the **YMCA of the Triangle**. His earlier work in special education also reflects a long-standing commitment to helping individuals and communities thrive. Brandon holds a master's degree in executive leadership from **Liberty University** and a bachelor's degree in behavioral and social sciences from **North Carolina Central University**. We look forward to hearing his insights on service, leadership, and community impact.

JOIN ONLINE: Zoom Link - Click here Meeting ID: 874 0116
4307 Passcode: Service | One tap mobile: +13052241968

MEETINGS

June is Rotary Fellowships Month

BIRTHDAYS

6/8 Eric John

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

SOCIAL MEDIA



LEADERSHIP

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

KeyWay Report: StepStone Director LaShay Wilson Urges Trauma-Informed Response to Foster Care

President-Elect Chris Hempfling introduced **LaShay Wilson**, Executive Director of StepStone Family Youth Services, for a thoughtful presentation on the realities children face when they enter foster care.

To help members understand a child's experience, LaShay opened with a dramatic demonstration of what it can feel like when an unfamiliar adult suddenly appears and says a child must leave home. An unknown man stepped into the meeting room, said he was from Child Protective Services, and asked incoming Public Image Director **CJ Stewart** to step out. It was all a ruse staged by LaShay and CJ returned to the room in moments. After all present regained their composure, she explained that this is very similar to the plight of children entering foster care: confronted by a stranger in authority and handed a trash bag in which to place your belongings. The exercise emphasized the fear, confusion, and loss of control that often mark a child's first encounter with the system.

LaShay stressed that children are not placed in foster care because they are "bad," but because adults have failed them. She described the emotional and behavioral responses children may show on arrival — anger, withdrawal, fear, sleep problems, and difficulty trusting — and urged foster parents and agencies to respond with patience and trauma-informed care. StepStone provides trauma assessments and therapy when needed, with the goal of seeing children not as problems to be managed but as young people in need of understanding and healing.

LaShay outlined StepStone's scope of work in Georgia: the organization serves approximately 117 children across five offices, ranging from infants to teenagers. In Georgia the current caseload includes roughly 33 children ages birth to five, 47 children ages six to twelve, and 37 teenagers. Nationally, StepStone serves approximately 1,200 to 1,300 children each day. She said StepStone works to keep sibling groups together whenever possible while acknowledging temporary separation may be necessary in cases involving severe trauma, domestic violence, or behavioral needs.

Members asked about agency roles and adoption pathways. LaShay explained that StepStone is a licensed child placing agency that does not remove children from their homes; removals are the

responsibility of DFACS. StepStone becomes involved when DFACS needs a placement outside its own homes. She also shared that StepStone Georgia completed approximately 14 adoptions over the past year, and emphasized that timely action by courts, agencies, and legislators is essential so children do not languish in care.

A major theme of the discussion was the strain on foster families. In response to a question from **Mr. Eric John**, LaShay said foster parents are leaving the system because they often lack the support needed to care for children with serious trauma-related needs. Delays in authorizations for medication, therapy, behavioral aides, and medical appointments place both children and foster parents in difficult positions. In some cases, StepStone has absorbed costs directly to avoid harmful delays. LaShay called for stronger partnership from DFACS, better funding for services, and earlier intervention with families before removal becomes necessary.

The meeting included an update from visitor **Mr. Michael Davis** on the Atlanta BeltLine, covering trail completion plans, West Side park development, and growth in anti-displacement efforts.

Members were reminded of upcoming club activities: Atlanta Streets Alive; the June 5 program with **Mr. Brandon Teal** of the YMCA; the June 12 visit to Our Lady of Perpetual Help; no meeting on June 19 for the Juneteenth holiday; and the June 26 installation ceremony at Atlanta Technical College.

LaShay's presentation concluded with a direct call to service. **Members interested in helping can donate luggage so that no child in StepStone's care has to leave with belongings in a trash bag.** She also urged attention to SR 622 and upcoming legislative hearings on foster care reform. In the spirit of Rotary, the program reminded members that service begins with seeing the dignity of those who are too often unseen — especially children whose lives depend on adults choosing compassion, persistence, and action.

Atlanta West End Rotary at Atlanta Streets Alive — June 14, 2026

We're heading back to the streets! After a fantastic day connecting with neighbors during the last Atlanta Streets Alive, the Atlanta West End Rotary Club is excited to be back in the community for the next installment on Sunday, June 14, 2026.

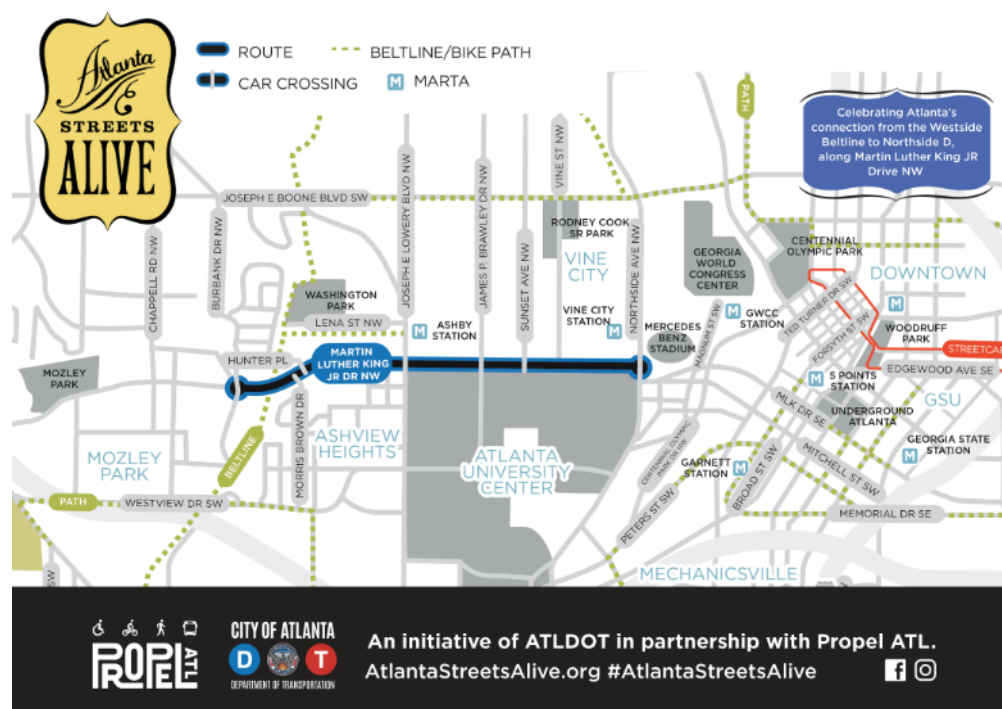
Atlanta Streets Alive will activate a new route from MLK to Vine, creating another opportunity for residents, families, cyclists, walkers, and visitors to experience our city and to connect with the organizations working to make it stronger.

You'll find the Atlanta West End Rotary Club at our community booth near the intersection of **Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SW and Vine Street NW**. Whether you've heard of Rotary for years or are just curious about who we are, we invite you to stop by and say hello. We'd love to share what we're doing in the West End, learn what matters most to you, and explore ways we can work together to build an even stronger community.

Events like Atlanta Streets Alive remind us that communities thrive when people gather, connect, and engage with one another. That's exactly what Rotary is about.

- **Date:** Sunday, June 14, 2026
- **Event time:** 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- **Street closure:** 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Near Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SW & Vine Street NW

If you're attending on June 14, make sure to look for us. Bring a friend, stop for a conversation, and discover how local service can create lasting impact. We can't wait to see you there!



June Is Rotary Fellowships Month

One of Rotary's greatest strengths is the friendships we build through service. During Rotary Fellowships Month, we celebrate the many ways Rotarians connect beyond club meetings and service projects.

Rotary Fellowships are international groups that bring together people who share common interests, hobbies, professions, and recreational activities. Whether your passion is business networking, cycling, photography, boating, travel, wine appreciation, music, or other interests, there is likely a Fellowship that

can help you build friendships across the globe.

These connections strengthen Rotary by creating opportunities for collaboration, cultural exchange, and lasting friendships. This month, take time to explore a Rotary Fellowship, reconnect with fellow Rotarians, and discover new ways to engage with our global network.

Calander, Agenda, Connections, & Four-Way Test

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- 6/5: Brandon Teal, YMCA
- 6/12: Onsite at Our Lady of Perpetual Help (meeting with Tasse Trivia check presentation)
- 6/14: Atlanta Streets Alive MLK Jr. Drive AUC route
- 6/19: No Meeting; Juneteenth Holiday
- 6/26: Installation Ceremony
- 7/3: 1st meeting of the new Rotary Year
- 7/12: 12th Annual Safe At Home Game

Sign up to be a program chair in the new Rotary Year here today!

westend@rotary6900.org

inforotaryawe@gmail.com

atlantawestendrotary.org

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

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[LinkedIn.com/company/rotary-club-of-atlanta-wes?...](https://LinkedIn.com/company/rotary-club-of-atlanta-wes?)

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?