Atlanta West End Rotary Club

KeyWay

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Feb. 20, 2026

This Week's Program: Mr. Blake Elsberry, Regional Director, former Sole Commissioner of Chattooga County



Please join us next week as we welcome **Mr. Blake Elsberry**, Regional Director, former Sole Commissioner of *Chattooga County*, and longtime public servant with more than two decades of leadership in healthcare and local government. Mr. Elsberry brings a unique blend of frontline medical experience and executive public service. With over ten years in invasive cardiology and extensive hospital experience, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to quality, cost effective care. As Sole Commissioner of Chattooga County from 2021 to 2024, he served as acting executive officer, chief financial decision maker, and administrator over public works, water, EMA, 911, and other critical services. A member of the **Leadership Georgia Class of 2023** and recipient of the 2024 ACCG County of Excellence Award, Mr. Elsberry spearheaded transformative initiatives, including Georgia's first rural free standing emergency department requiring zero county investment, an $10 million fiber broadband expansion project, and significant reductions in county debt and tax millage rates. With a passion for Georgia history, legislative policy, and rural communities, Mr. Elsberry will share insights shaped by service, fiscal stewardship, and leadership grounded in integrity. We look forward to an engaging and informative program.

MEETINGS

February is Peace and Conflict Prevention Month

2/20	Program Speaker
2/27	Program Speaker
3/6	Program Speaker
3/13	Program Speaker
3/20	Program Speaker
3/27	Program Speaker
4/3	Happy Easter
4/10	Program Speaker: Al Pearson

BIRTHDAYS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

3/12	Neil Shorthouse (49)

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

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

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

Mr. Peter Ellis, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Atlanta Office

February 13, 2026



President Seals turned the meeting over to **CJ Stewart**, AWER program Chair for February. CJ began by noting that he graduated from the FBI Citizens Academy in 2024. The FBI Citizens Academy is a 6–8 week program that offers community leaders an inside look at the FBI. Its goal is to educate and foster understanding of the role of federal law enforcement in the community.

CJ provided an interview format with AWER guest **Mr. Peter Ellis, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Atlanta Office**. Special Agent Ellis began with a short early life description of being one of three boys raised alone because their father abandoned the family. Peter described his mom as a remarkable lady, a single mother who worked multiple jobs to support her family, Agent Ellis watched and learned the values of hard work, integrity, and accountability from his mom. These principles have guided his 21-year career at the FBI, from being a field agent to his current leadership position. Ellis emphasized how these traits were instilled in him by his mother, despite difficult circumstances. He now passes these values to his own children and the people he works with at the FBI. Ellis also discussed how these principles apply to his leadership approach, including holding team members accountable and maintaining high standards of integrity throughout the organization. He highlighted the FBI's work in protecting Americans both domestically and internationally, including rescuing victims, preventing terrorist activities, and

bringing perpetrators to justice. Ellis also addressed the perception gap between different communities and law enforcement, acknowledging historical issues while emphasizing the FBI's commitment to equal justice regardless of race, religion, or background.

Ellis Stressed that early engagement with communities is crucial for preventing conflict. He shared examples from his experience in Michigan, where he engaged successfully with the LGBTQIA+ community despite initial distrust. By explaining the FBI's mission and demonstrating that they work for all Americans, he was able to build trust that later proved valuable when incidents occurred. Ellis also stressed that understanding between different groups is essential, as conflicts often arise from fear and misunderstanding. Agent Ellis stated the FBI's mission to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution.

AWER member **Mark Newman** referred to a recent lead article in the New York Times Magazine alleging the Trump administration has undermined the FBI causing many agents leaving and hundreds of the previous top leaders being fired. Special Agent Ellis acknowledged that social media, articles and podcasts have provided platforms for disgruntled former employees to voice complaints but pointed out that this behavior hurts current employees and doesn't reflect the organization's actual work. In his experience working for several administrations the core AND difficult work of FBI continues to be done well. Ellis acknowledged historical issues but emphasized that the FBI investigates crimes based on evidence regardless of who committed them, with prosecution decisions ultimately made by the Department of Justice.

Agent Ellis was asked, “How do you lead with integrity and consistency in a role that exists across changing administrations and political climates?” Special Agent Ellis said he’s served under five administrations and four FBI directors during his 21-year career, he said FBI employees remain apolitical and focused on their core mission to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution. He expressed concern about former FBI employees who speak out against the organization, noting that this behavior damages the reputation of current employees who are doing important work. Significantly but not surprisingly, Special Agent Ellis stated that if ever asked to do something against the Constitution or FBI policies, he would leave the organization rather than

compromise his integrity. He highlighted the FBI's continued work in areas like counterterrorism, victim services, and bringing criminals to justice, regardless of political changes and regardless of the administration in power in Washington D.C.

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AWER Keyway Speaker Reporter: Neil Shorthouse

AWER Annual Business Meeting - February 27, 2026

At the **annual business meeting** of the Rotary Club of Atlanta West End, which must be held **on or before the last Friday of February**, the following key activities should occur:

1. **Election of Officers and Directors**:
    - Members elect the club's President, President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and any open Director positions.
    - Candidates may be nominated by the President-Elect, a nominating committee, or from the floor.
    - If only one person is nominated for a position, they may be elected by acclamation.
    - The elected officers and directors will serve from **July 1 to June 30** of the upcoming Rotary year.
2. **Financial Report**:
    - The club's financial condition must be presented and reviewed, providing transparency on the club's finances over the past year.

These components ensure accountability, transparency, and continuity in leadership as required by the club's bylaws. View at these links the club's bylaws and constitution.

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
• 2/27: Club Assembly/Annual Business Meeting/Club Officer & Director Elections
• 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 & June Program Director Urgently Needed!**
• May Program Dir. Carolina
Sign up to be a program chair here today! Apr. & June need YOU!

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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atlantawestendrotary.org
facebook.com/RotaryAWE
@rotaryatlantawestend
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.

