Atlanta West End Rotary Club

KeyWay

MARCH 5, 2026

This Week's Program: Maritza McClendon, Olympic medalist, leader, and advocate for youth empowerment

Friday, March 6, 2026



This week, we welcome Maritza McClendon, Olympic silver medalist, leadership speaker, and advocate for water safety and youth empowerment. Maritza made history as the first woman of color to qualify for the United States Olympic swimming team and later earned a silver medal at the 2004 Olympic Games.

Her journey began after being diagnosed with severe scoliosis as a child, when swimming was first recommended as therapy. What began as treatment developed into an extraordinary athletic career marked by national titles, world records, and Olympic achievement. Today, Maritza travels the country sharing lessons from her experience as an elite athlete and leader. She is especially passionate about promoting water safety and expanding access to swimming in minority communities, helping young people build confidence, resilience, and opportunity through sport. Through her story of discipline, perseverance, and service, Maritza continues to inspire audiences to overcome barriers and pursue excellence both in and out of the water.

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

MEETINGS

March is Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month

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
4/17	Program Speaker: Bill Marianes
4/24	Club Assembly

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

KeyWay Report

Club Assembly

February 27, 2026

KeyWay Report on Our AWER Club Assembly February 27, 2026

The Atlanta West End Rotary Club held a productive Club Assembly focused on leadership transition, strategic priorities, and club sustainability for the coming Rotary year. As the club prepares for a new Rotary year, leadership continuity, thoughtful decision-making, and visible service in the West End remain central priorities.

President-Elect Christopher Hempfling opened the meeting and introduced AWER member **Mark Newman to** introduce his guest speaker**.** Mark introduced **The Reverend John Vaughn**, Executive Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist. John then, at Mark's request, offered the invocation for the AWER meeting. Following the invocation Chris requested **Marilyn Jackson** to present the DEI report. Following a lengthy conversation about a plethora of important matters arising from the DEI report, Chris then launched into the business of AWER which centered on the election of AWER Officers and Directors, plus otter matters.

Leadership Elections for Rotary Year 2026–2027

The club selected officers to serve beginning July 1, 2026:

- **President:** Christopher Hempfling
- **President-Elect:** Rodney Fields
- **Secretary:** Neil Shorthouse
- **Treasurer:** Melanie Sewell
- **Foundation Chair:** Christopher Hempfling
- **Club Administration Chair:** Rodney Fields
- **Community Service Chair:** Bridgette Long
- **Membership Chair:** Leo Chancey
- **DEI Chair:** Marilyn Jackson
- **Public Image Chair:** Position open (Jared Evans will provide transitional support)

Members expressed appreciation for those stepping into leadership roles and emphasized the importance of consistent attendance and active participation to sustain the club's effectiveness and momentum.

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

Membership Chair Sonia Hantman joined the meeting virtually from snowy Sweden and shared that she will be stepping back from AWER due to anticipated family relocation later this year. Her son has been accepted into a Master's Program at San Diego State University after his graduation this May 2026 from Georgia Tech. So Sonia will be relocating this summer to California.

Financial Report from Rose Caplan, Treasurer . Rose reported "AWER finances are good– as long as members pay dues in a timely fashion. Rose also stated that **Ms. Melonia Sewell**, AWER member and finance director of Atlanta Technical College, has agreed to serve as treasurer and has taken all steps needed to assume Treasurer responsibilities effective July 1, 2026. Members expressed appreciation for Rose's service and for Melanie's willingness to take on this critical role, and encouraged her to attend AWER meetings **in person** when possible.

District 6900 Grant for Peace Pole – **AWER Treasurer Rose Caplan** reported that Our Rotary District Office approved a grant of $2000, several months ago, for our club's Rotary Peace Pole project install two peace poles somewhere in or near the West End. Successful completion of a District Grant **requires** submission of receipts and photographs documenting the completed installation and community dedication ceremony **by March 31st**. Members discussed several potential locations, including Atlanta Technical College, a BeltLine-adjacent site at Trees Atlanta, and the possibility of coordinating with another Peace Pole initiative connected to the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery, who is working on a peace pole installation in Liberty Plaza in advance of the FIFA World Cup here in 2026.

Members also discussed the broader opportunity to leverage the Peace Pole dedication as a visible expression of Rotary's commitment to peace, inclusion, and community partnership. Bridgette Long agreed to help advance the project to completion within the required timeline.

No site was finalized at this meeting.

Possible relocation of AWER's Weekly meeting from GA Tech Hotel and Conference Center - AWER Member **Carolina Ramos** and AWER Secretary **Neil Shorthouse** have been charged by AWER President Victoria to proposal for AWER Membership's approval of a new location for AWER's weekly

meetings. Neil and Carolina presented a report that included a way to assess, qualify and vote for a new location. This report - one page- has been sent to the entire AWER membership.

Members reaffirmed the desire to meet in the West End while recognizing the advantages currently offered by Georgia Tech. Discussion centered on long-term sustainability, accessibility, parking, and the importance of securing durable commitments before making any transition. Carolina Ramos and Neil Shorthouse are continuing to research potential sites, such as Lee and White establishments, the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, and others. Members acknowledged that future developments, such as the Mall West End and others, development may bring suitable meeting spaces online in a number of years.

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AWER Keyway Speaker Reporters: Christopher Hempfling, Jared Evans and Neil Shorthouse

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March Focus: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

March is Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month in Rotary, highlighting the organization’s commitment to ensuring that communities around the world have access to safe water and healthy living conditions. Rotary International recognizes that clean water and proper sanitation are fundamental to public health, education, and economic stability. When families have reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, children are healthier, girls are more likely to stay in school, and communities are better able to thrive. Rotary clubs work with local partners to create sustainable solutions such as drilling wells, installing water filtration systems, building sanitation facilities, and teaching good hygiene practices. By dedicating March to this focus, Rotary reminds members that access to clean water is not a privilege but a basic human need. Through service, partnerships, and community leadership, Rotarians help bring lasting improvements in health, dignity, and opportunity to people around the world.

Community Engagement Opportunity: Atlanta Streets Alive 2026

Atlanta Streets Alive returns throughout 2026, creating a unique opportunity for our club to connect with the community in a fun and visible way. This free event temporarily closes major streets so people can bike, walk, skate, dance, and enjoy public space together. As part of an international open streets movement, Atlanta Streets Alive brings thousands of residents out to experience the city in a new way while strengthening neighborhood connections.

In past years, our club has hosted a booth along the route to share Rotary’s story, meet community

members, and highlight the impact of our service projects. These events provide a welcoming environment where conversations happen naturally and people are curious about organizations making a difference in their community. By participating again in 2026, we can continue building awareness of Rotary, invite potential members to learn more, and demonstrate how local service creates stronger communities.

With several event dates scheduled across the year and routes spanning different neighborhoods, Atlanta Streets Alive offers multiple chances for our club to show up, engage with the public, and proudly represent Rotary as people of action in our city.

2026 Atlanta Streets Alive Planned Dates:

- Sunday, March 22, 2026 – MLK: BeltLine to Broad (new route)
- Sunday, April 19, 2026 – Peachtree St. (15th St. to Alabama St.)
- Sunday, May 31, 2026 – West End to Grant Park (Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. to Georgia Ave.)
- Sunday, June 14, 2026 – MLK: BeltLine to Broad (new route) (FIFA-related)
- Sunday, September 27, 2026 – Peachtree St. (15th St. to Alabama St.)
- Sunday, October 18, 2026 – West End to Grant Park (Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. to Georgia Ave.)
- Sunday, November 8, 2026 – Howell Mill Rd. (Westside Stride Partnership)

Calander, Agenda, Connections, & Four-Way Test

MARK YOUR CALENDAR Works
• 3/13: Don Schewe - The Evolution of Information
• 3/20: Hon. Brad Raffensperger - Georgia Secretary of State
• 3/22: Streets Alive - MLK: BeltLine to Broad (new route)
• 3/27: Brandon Butler - Founder of Trust Fitness
• April Program Dir. Bridgette
• 4/11: District Learning Assembly, Columbus, GA
• May Program Dir. Carolina
• **June Program Director Needed!**
Sign up to be a program chair here today! June needs 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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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?