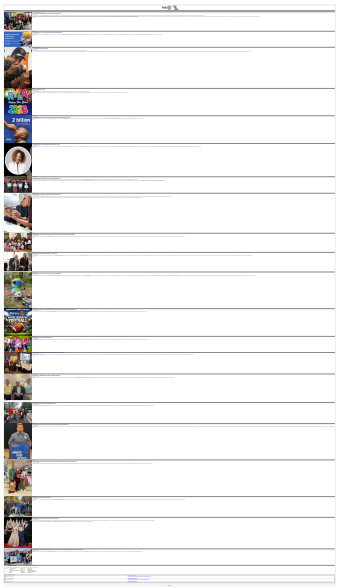
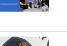
Rotary
District 6900



January 2, 2026

Rotary | UNITE FOR GOOD

DISTRICT 6900 NEWS FOR JANUARY, 2026



South Cobb Rotary Christmas

From Our District Governor

Celebrating Accomplishments and Service, Looking Ahead

By Steve Ivory

Happy New Year! We are now at the halfway point in the Rotary Year. I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season and had a chance to spend quality time with friends and family. I know some of you saw the holiday video message on our district web site. I think the holiday season is a great time to recharge and reflect on what you plan to accomplish in the upcoming year. Along those lines, I hope you all are as excited about the second half of the year as you are the first and that we all plan to complete 25-26 strong.

As a district, we are well along the path to achieving some of our 25-26 goals. We are currently at 3818 members in our 67 Rotary clubs, have achieved $287,325 of annual fund giving, $175,047 towards Polio eradication and with endowment and other giving, we have achieved over $706K in charitable giving! I could not be more proud of you all! We still have 6 months left to give, do many more service projects and take action on the club's strategic plan. Please use your time wisely. At the same time, we are only a few months away from district conference so please be aware of this and register for the April 16-19, 2026 District Conference at Lake Lanier! We have an amazing event planned.

I enjoyed doing several impactful service projects for children in December. I want to tell you two very quick stories. I had 2 incredible "Rotary moments" a few weeks ago as I was doing holiday season service projects with two Rotary clubs - the **South Cobb Rotary Club** and the **Atlanta Southern Crescent Rotary Clu**b.

[more]

Membership

"Discovery Rotary" - An Event for Prospective Rotarians Only

By Audley Knight

District 6900 is planning a special evening of networking, food and drinks (cash bar) to give **prospective Rotarians in the Greater Atlanta** area an opportunity to learn more about Rotary, and how to join, serve and make an impact in our Georgia communities. The event will take place on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at Copelands of New Orleans - Vinings-Cumberland, GA from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

[more]

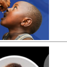
Our Rotary Foundation

Foundations Working Together

By Bob Hagan

Hard to believe we have reached a new year, but here we are! Welcome 2026 and let's look forward to another great year in Rotary and our work with the Foundation.

There was some great news that came out of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation earlier in December that you may have missed in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of the Thanksgiving to the Christmas and Hanukkah holidays. The Gates Foundation has pledged $1.2 billion dollars for 2026-2029 to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) dedicated to vaccinating 370 million children annually as well as focusing on disease tracking and surveillance and working to beef up the healthcare systems in the endemic countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The announcement of this initiative came on December 8 during a summit being held in Abu Dhabi. [more]



RYLA

Happy New RYLA in 2026!

By Jaclyn Donovan

It's a new year and that means it's time to start thinking about RYLA!! Not that we ever really *stop* thinking about RYLA... but now we can say that RYLA is happening This Year!!

RYLA 2026 will be held June 6-10 on the campus of Georgia Southwestern State University. Cost per student is $500, and this covers all necessary expenses related to attending RYLA. For any students riding our charter buses from the Atlanta area, there is an additional $50/per student cost.

[more]

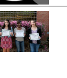
End Polio Now

District 6900 Celebrates World Polio Day with Remarkable Fundraising Efforts

By Wynita Cannon

On **October 24, 2025** , Rotary clubs across **District 6900** came together to commemorate **World Polio Day** , marking another milestone in the global fight to eradicate polio. On this special day, the district raised an impressive **$22,000** for the **PolioPlus Foundation** , reinforcing Rotary's commitment to ending this devastating disease.

[more]



From Our DG Elect

Training for District Leadership Staff January 24, 2026

By Cynthia Edwards

On January 24, 2026, the District Leadership Learning Seminar (DLLS) for Assistant Governors and staff leading the district as officers and/or committee chairs. will be held at Cooper Lighting Solutions, located at 1121 Highway 74 S, Peachtree City, GA 30269. Breakfast snacks and registration will be available at 8:00 a.m. Training will begin at 9:00 a.m. District leaders included in training should confirm their attendance via email to Mandy Timmons at d6900secretary2526@gmail.com by Friday, January 9, 2026.

[more]

Laws of Life

A New Year, A New Opportunity to Change Students' Lives

By Carol Gray Walker

As we begin a new year, Rotary clubs across Georgia have a powerful opportunity to make an immediate and lasting impact on young people through the **Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest.** January marks a pivotal moment—for recruiting essay judges, strengthening school partnerships, and planning for the year ahead.

Georgia Laws of Life is here to help you and your club get involved. Together, we can give more students the opportunity to reflect, write, and grow—while strengthening Rotary's connection to the communities we serve. Read more about the opportunities here. To learn more or schedule a presentation for your club, contact **Carol Gray Walker, Executive Director**, at **carol@georgialawsoflife.org**. [more]

Club News

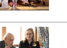
Stone Mountain People of Action at Work in South Africa!

By Cynthia Edwards

A new member of the **Rotary Club of Stone Mountai** n, Jeremy Anderson and his wife, Traci, have been living Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self" and making an impact for many years. In 2018, Jeremy and Traci launched their nonprofit, Next Level Living, Inc. Since then, they've fed an average of 1,000 starving children every week in Cape Town, South Africa —nourishing not only their bellies but their hearts and minds.

On Thanksgiving night 2025, the Andersons were joined in Cape Town by ten individuals, including DGE Cynthia Dorsey Edwards and her husband, Lonnie; PE Maxine Cain and her daughter, Lauren; Eric Baker (an executive with Audacy, a multi-platform audio & entertainment company) to participate in their service to the community.

[more]



Club News

North Cobb Uses District Grant for Christmas Gifts for Georgia National Guard Families

By Jose Gonzalez

In the spirit of the holiday season, the **North Cobb Rotary Club** used a $2,000 district grant from D6900 and a $500 contribution from the club's own community grants to share the joy of the holidays with children of service men and women going into active duty with the Georgia National Guard. Club President Jose Gonzalez with the help of his wife Jordon and kids, shopped for the gifts one early Sunday morning to ensure each kid received a gift of their choice.

[more]

Bedros Sharian Jr. and Decatur Club President Alison Weissinger

Club News

Decatur Celebrates Bedros Sharian Jr. at 100 Years

By Dudley Larus

On Friday, November 21, at the Historic Decatur Courthouse, the **Rotary Club of Decatur** and the City of Decatur, Georgia honored long-time member **Bedros Sharian Jr.** as he approached his 100 th birthday on Thanksgiving Day. City Manager and Rotary member, Andrea Arnold, read the proclamation signed by Mayor Patricia M. Garrett that proclaimed November 25, 2025, as Bedros Sharian Jr. Day. Former Decatur Mayor Walt Drake also provided a historical perspective on Bedros' rich life and his impact on the Decatur Community. Bedros is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Decatur and has been a Rotarian for almost half his life. Happy birthday Bedros!

[more]

Club News

North Fulton Launches Phase 3 of Greenway Mural Project

By Lisa Gelber

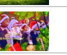
Fall was the time for another exciting phase of the **Rotary Club of North Fulton's** Greenway Mural Project! Our latest efforts began in late September with a **Design Workshop**, where student artists learned how to translate their creative concepts onto a challenging cylindrical, concrete canvas. Reflecting one of Rotary's seven areas of focus, this year's theme was **"Clean Water for All."** We were thrilled to receive **36 concept submissions** from local high school students—proof that word is spreading about how meaningful this project has become for young artists. With Phase 3 now complete, the Greenway proudly showcases 32 vibrant murals spanning two miles. [more]

Club News

Meriwether County Scores Big for the Rotary Foundation Through "Foundation Football"

By Kay Williamson

As the college football season kicked off, the **Rotary Club of Meriwether County -** joined by enthusiastic "friends of Rotary" - selected their favorite teams to follow and cheer for throughout the season. Each week, members gathered at Rotary meetings to track and discuss their teams' scores, fostering camaraderie, spirited conversation ... [more]



Club News

Paulding Hosts Dallas Christmas Parade

By Alex Crenshaw

The **Paulding Rotary Club** was privileged to host the annual Dallas Christmas parade. The club once again brought the community together with a successful and well-attended parade. Families lined the streets to enjoy festive floats, local organizations, marching bands, and community leaders who helped make the event a memorable celebration. ... [more]

Paws, Claus, and Applause: Buckhead Rotary Serves Pets in Need

By Shelley Hammell

The **Rotary Club of Buckhead** closed out the year with a festive, service-filled holiday meeting that captured the spirit of Service Above Self. Members came together to pack 100 treat and toy bags for cats and dogs at the Fulton County Animal Shelter, sharing laughter and fellowship while supporting some very deserving four-legged friends. The meeting also featured the holiday spirit with live music from member Drew Amerson, joined by Ty Tippet for a spirited singalong of "Jingle Bells."

[more]

State Rep. Gerald Greene of Cuthbert presents a resolution at the Blakely Rotary Club to Robert Collier Jr., left, and Jack Watson that praised the life of Robert W. Collier Sr., who died Oct. 18

In Memoriam

Remembering Blakely Rotarian Robert William Collier Sr.

By Charles Gordon

At a late November meeting of the Blakely Rotary Club, State Rep. Gerald Greene saluted the late Blakely Mayor, businessman and **Blakely Rotarian Robert William Collier Sr.** Affectionately known as 'Mr. Blakely,' he served his community as mayor of Blakely for two terms, president and director of the Chamber of Commerce, and as longtime member and president of the Blakely-Early County Rotary Club for more than 60 years.

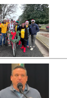
[more]

Club News

North Cobb Walks in Kennesaw Holiday Parade

By Jose Gonzalez

Members of the **North Cobb Rotary Club** walked the City of Kennesaw Parade in style, including North Cobb magnetic stickers on a yellow Nissan, driven by Audley Knight, Club Executive Secretary and a giant North Cobb banner held by members Charity Drabik, Club Fundraiser Chair and Deborah Morton, Club Membership Chair. Additional member walked ... [more]



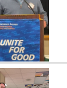
Club News

Hometown Hero Recognition Sparks Grassroots Roswell Rotary Challenge...

By Becky Nelson

The **Roswell Rotar** y Hometown Hero for November story has a sequel! Brother's Keeper Foundation founder, Chris Cathers, with his body fighting Stage 4 Cancer and PTSI, but his spirit needed to create a foundation where Veterans could find help without barriers and only resolutions. During the inspirational November presentation to Chris, Roswell Rotarian John Michael Brunetti was so moved to throw out a match of $10,000 so Chris could see veterans getting what they needed fast. "Match it," he said. "Let's do something worthy of these veterans." The spark was ignited. If that wasn't enough, after the meeting, Chris shared with Roswell Rotary Club President Trummie Lee Patrick III that another donor in his organization had also stepped forward and would match what Roswell Rotary could raise. Anonymous. No fanfare. No spotlight. And that's not the end of the story ... or the matching ... or the challenge!

[more]



Club News

Twas the Night of Giving: Buckhead Rotarians Spread Holiday Cheer at the Shepherd Cente

By Shelley Hammell

Twas the night before Christmas and all through the hospital, Buckhead Rotarians were on the move, bringing holiday cheer to Shepherd Center patients and children during the Christmas Eve dinner service. Instead of sugarplums, members Miriam Falaki, Sam Alston (not pictured), President Shelley Hammell and her husband Joe delivered Elf on the Shelf ... [more]

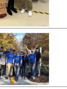
Club News

North Fulton Enhances Peace Garden

By Lisa Gelber

Using funds from a District 6900 competitive grant, members of the **Rotary Club of North Fulton** spent two Saturdays in November enhancing the club's Peace Garden at North Park. Originally created in 2013, the garden is centered around a wooden peace pole that was in need of significant repair. Thanks to the dedication and craftsmanship of Rotarian Andy West, who spent several weeks restoring it, the peace pole has been brought back to its original beauty.

[more]



Club News

Stone Mountain Rotarians Honored by STEM Atlanta!

By Cynthia Edwards

STEM Atlanta, Inc. recently hosted the 2025 STEMii Awards – Futurist 2030: The Royal Christmas Gala. The STEMii Awards fuels the Futurist 2030 Leadership Readiness Initiative, preparing young professionals ages **19–44** to thrive in an AI-driven global economy. Proceeds from the Gala support scholarships, leadership labs and transformative STEM education experiences.

This year's gala honored two **Stone Mountain Rotarians - Jeremy Anderson and Cynthia Dorsey Edwards** - individuals whose lives exemplify doing good locally and globally. [more]

Pawsitivity in Action: Buckhead Rotary Helps our Two-and Four-Legged Neighbors this Holiday Season

By Shelley Hammell

As part of our ongoing Pawsitivity Partnership, **Buckhead Rotarians** continued to make a meaningful impact in December with the third pet food delivery. Twenty-five Rotarians and guests came together to serve 45 LifeLine pet owners, ensuring that both pets and their families received much-needed support during the holiday season.

[more]

LEADERBOARD Check out the full district scoreboard

Here are the clubs that are leading the way in our district for membership, annual fund and polio plus.

Category	NET MEMBERSHIP	ANNUAL FUND	POLIO PLUS
I	**Fayetteville**	**Smyrna**	**North Atlanta**
II	**Johns Creek North Fulton**	**Marietta Metro**	**Vinings Cumberland**
III	**Marietta**	**Dunwoody**	**Carrollton Dawnbreakers**
IV	**Roswell**	**Peachtree City**	**Peachtree City**

Upcoming Key Dates

Tuesday, January 13th, 2026	**Pelham DG Official Visit**
Wednesday, January 14th, 2026	**On The Flint - Albany, GA Rotary On The Flint - Albany, GA Official Visit**
Thursday, January 15th, 2026	**Camilla Camilla Official Visit**
Tuesday, January 20th, 2026	**Dougherty County (Albany) Dougherty County (Albany) Official Visit**
Thursday, January 22nd, 2026	**South DeKalb DG Official Visit**

From Our District Governor

Celebrating Accomplishments and Service, Looking Ahead

South Cobb Rotary Christmas

Happy New Year! We are now at the halfway point in the Rotary Year. I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season and had a chance to spend quality time with friends and family. I know some of you saw the holiday video message on our district web site. I think the holiday season is a great time to recharge and reflect on what you plan to accomplish in the upcoming year. Along those lines, I hope you all are as excited about the second half of the year as you are the first and that we all plan to complete 25-26 strong.

As a district, we are well along the path to achieving some of our 25-26 goals. We are currently at 3818 members in our 67 Rotary clubs, have achieved $287,325 of annual fund giving, $175,047 towards Polio eradication and with endowment and other giving, we have achieved over $706K in charitable giving! I could not be more proud of you all! We still have 6 months left to give, do many more service projects and take action on the club's strategic plan. Please use your time wisely. At the same time, we are only a few months away from district conference so please be aware of this and register for the April 16-19, 2026 District Conference at Lake Lanier! We have an amazing event planned.

I enjoyed doing several impactful service projects for children in December. I want to tell you two very quick stories. I had 2 incredible "Rotary moments" a few weeks ago as I was doing holiday season service projects with two Rotary clubs.

The first moment came when I was able to go to the **South Cobb Rotary Club'**s annual holiday luncheon. The club, led by President Pam Kramer, invites in 20 local school children from low income families from a local school. Santa Claus was present so the event was full of holiday cheer, and it was lots of fun to see

the children are so excited and happy. The club fed the students, then gave very generous presents and watched the children open up the presents. I sat with an eight-year old and his six-year old sister. The siblings provided me a “Rotary moment” when they said they didn’t think they would get presents this year because their mom just spent their remaining $200 on a table the family needed. I saw how excited the children were when they realized they got all kinds of great gifts due to the club’s generosity!! What an impact the South Cobb club makes every year in the lives of these children. (Well done and thank you for having me be part of it).

I was also a Santa’s helper with the **Rotary Club of Atlanta Southern Crescent** that does an annual event allowing children to shop with simulated money for the members in their family. It was so heartwarming to see the smiling faces and excitement of 65 low income children who are able to shop, learn some economic basics, have their gifts wrapped by smiling Rotarians and nursing home staff and then enjoy some pizza. The Atlanta Southern Crescent club provided me with a second Rotary moment as I saw the absolute joy on “Junior’s” face as the club president, Mahli Lowder, his big sister, he and I “shopped” for gifts for his family. Thank you so much as well for doing such a great event that truly changes lives.

I spent some time in the last few days doing a personal service project and delivered food to our local fire and police departments and then Anna and I took treats to Piedmont Atlanta Hospital to our (nurse) daughter Claire who was working on Christmas Day.

PHOTOS:

Atlanta Southern Crescent Rotary Christmas

Posted by Steve Ivory
December 30, 2025

Membership

"Discovery Rotary" - An Event for Prospective Rotarians Only

by Audley Knight, District Membership Chair

District 6900 is planning a special evening of networking, food and drinks (cash bar) to give **prospective Rotarians in the Greater Atlanta** area an opportunity to learn more about Rotary, and how to join, serve and make an impact in our Georgia communities. The event will take place on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at Copelands of New Orleans - Vinings-Cumberland, GA from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

Clubs in the Greater Atlanta area are invited to encourage their prospective members to join in this night of Rotary fellowship and connections - to help solidify their interest in joining our great organization! Prospective members can use this link to register to attend: **Register for Prospective Member Event.**

Invitations will be sent to potential Atlanta area members who are identified in Rotary International's leads platform - and to individuals your club asks to have added to the list._

Posted by Audley Knight
November 30, 2025

Our Rotary Foundation

Foundations Working Together

Hard to believe we have reached a new year, but here we are! Welcome 2026 and let's look forward to another great year in Rotary and our work with the Foundation.

There was some great news that came out of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation earlier in December that you may have missed in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of the Thanksgiving to the Christmas and Hanukkah holidays. The Gates Foundation has pledged $1.2 billion dollars for 2026-2029 to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) dedicated to vaccinating 370 million children annually as well as focusing on disease tracking and surveillance and working to beef up the healthcare systems in the endemic countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The announcement of this initiative came on December 8 during a summit being held in Abu Dhabi.

The $1.2 billion was part of a $1.9 billion collective pledge that included $450 million from Rotary International and an additional $100 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies. It is amazing what can be raised when great organizations collaborate. Though Polio cases have dropped by 99% since 1988, still there have been outbreaks over that time in 20 different countries around the globe which requires making mandatory a sustained on-going investment if we are to achieve full eradication of the disease. Once we do achieve full eradication, and we will, it will be the second human disease to achieve that status, second only to smallpox. We'll get there with your dedicated support within Rotary. We are very blessed and thankful to the Gates Foundation for their continued support to stop the spread of Polio and support of the Rotary Foundation.

Let me shift gears to another topic for the rest of my article this month. There is an outstanding article written by Carl W. Davis, who is a Senior Major Gifts Officer with The Rotary Foundation. We've made that easy for you to view the entire article, thanks to the efforts of PDG Alex Smythe who placed the article on our district website. Carl discusses the "Big Beautiful Bill Act" that has been all the rage in Washington since its passage this past summer. Much of the article focuses on planning which he was encouraging us to consider as 2025 was coming to a close. He points out the large impact the Bill will have on Charitable Giving. His concern is with the fact that the amount of the new standard deduction will now be permanent and will make it more difficult to file an itemized return for most people. In response he recommended using Rotary's Donor Advised Fund (DAF) that allows the Donor to receive a tax receipt for a charitable gift in one year where the charity will receive the give in a different tax year.

Carl points out that starting in 2026 everyone is eligible to give dollars to charity to minimize their tax bill even if they don't itemize. He states that single-filers can do so for up to $1,000 and joint-filers up to $2,000 per year. This is a good way to keep marching up the Paul Harris giving ladder and can easily place the donor in the Paul Harris Society. No better time to look at doing so than now.

There are many other points Carl makes and I highly encourage you to read the entire article and study it for yourself and, as he suggests, doing so by consulting your own personal tax advisor is always the best approach. Don't take my word for it as I'm certainly not a Tax adviser and don't pretend to be. Still, there are good potential approaches for us all to consider as we support our Foundation. Let's end the year with a big Rotary big! Look at the good we do in the world. By clicking this link, you will find Carl's article and read it in its entirety. **https://rotary6900.org/story/10555**

If I can personally assist you in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out to me via cell or email. I'm here to help and together we will….Unite for good!

Posted by Bob Hagan

December 30, 2025

RYLA

Happy New RYLA in 2026!

It’s a new year and that means it’s time to start thinking about RYLA!! Not that we ever really *stop* thinking about RYLA… but now we can say that RYLA is happening This Year!!

RYLA 2026 will be held June 6-10 on the campus of Georgia Southwestern State University.

Cost per student is $500, and this covers all necessary expenses related to attending RYLA. For any students riding our charter buses from the Atlanta area, there is an additional $50/per student cost.

We hope that you and your club will consider sponsoring a student (or more than one) to attend RYLA this year! We have seen first-hand how it can change the lives of our students and want to share that experience with as many students as possible.

If you and your club want to get in on all the great things that come along with sponsoring a student to RYLA, use one of the following routes to send in your RSVP:

1. Use this link to complete our RSVP online: https://forms.gle/SsLFt1wFuW38UgPk8

2. Visit our page to download the forms: www.rotary6900.org/page/656

3. Email us at RYLA6900@gmail.com

Posted by Jaclyn Donovan
December 21, 2025

End Polio Now

District 6900 Celebrates World Polio Day with Remarkable Fundraising Efforts

On **October 24, 2025**, Rotary clubs across **District 6900** came together to commemorate **World Polio Day**, marking another milestone in the global fight to eradicate polio. On this special day, the district raised an impressive **$22,000** for the **PolioPlus Foundation**, reinforcing Rotary's commitment to ending this devastating disease.

Clubs across the district hosted creative and engaging events to support the cause, including:

- Score for Polio Plus Competition in Atlanta Metro
- East Cobb Rotarian Brad Groff's 500-mile Camino de Santiago walk in Spain
- Newnan's Pints for Polio
- Our own District Governor, Steve Ivory, raising over $1800 in Push-Ups for Polio

Additional celebrations were held by clubs in **Johns Creek North Fulton** and **Americus**, showcasing the district's widespread dedication.

District 6900 extends heartfelt thanks to every Rotarian and supporter who contributed to this important mission. Together, we are one step closer to a polio-free world.

Posted by Wynita Cannon
December 19, 2025

From Our DG Elect

Training for District Leadership Staff January 24, 2026

On January 24, 2026, the District Leadership Learning Seminar (DLLS) will be held at Cooper Lighting Solutions, located at 1121 Highway 74 S, Peachtree City, GA 30269. Breakfast snacks and registration will be available at 8:00 a.m. Training will begin at 9:00 a.m. District leaders included in training should confirm their attendance via email to Mandy Timmons at d6900secretary2526@gmail.com by Friday, January 9, 2026.

Attendees will include Assistant Governors and staff leading the district as officers and/or committee chairs. Training topics have been selected by DGE Cynthia Dorsey Edwards and District Learning Facilitator (PDG) Andre' Marria with input by the DG-line, facilitators, and planned attendees. Information sessions and discussions will be facilitated by many of our own current District/Zone leaders to ensure that continuing and new staff members will be well-equipped to build on the great foundation laid for us by previous District Governors and their teams.

Dr. Taunya A. Lowe will be our guest presenter / facilitator. She is a globally recognized leadership strategist, professional development expert, and creator of human-centered AI solutions that drive measurable results. With over 20 years of experience spanning corporate, government, nonprofit, and higher education sectors, she helps organizations future-proof their leaders, teams, and workforce strategies.

As CEO and Principal Consultant of The Resurgent Group of Metro Atlanta, Dr. Lowe designs AI-enabled tools, leadership academies, and strategic frameworks that elevate critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and workforce readiness across multigenerational teams. Her work bridges innovation and impact—where technology enhances people, not replaces them.

A multi-award-winning author, speaker, and host of the Results Driven Organizations Podcast, Dr. Lowe is known for her dynamic, practical, and thought-provoking approach to leadership development. Whether on stage, in the boardroom, or inside AI-powered platforms, she equips leaders to think smarter, lead boldly, and deliver results in the future of work.

We look forward to Dr. Lowe giving us useful leadership tips and inspiring us to continue taking PRIDE in all that we do! ***(PRIDE - Personal Responsibility in Developing Excellence)***

Posted by Cynthia Edwards
December 30, 2025

Laws of Life

A New Year, A New Opportunity to Change Students' Lives

As we begin a new year, Rotary clubs across Georgia have a powerful opportunity to make an immediate and lasting impact on young people through the **Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest**. January marks a pivotal moment—for recruiting essay judges, strengthening school partnerships, and planning for the year ahead.

See the Contest Through the Eyes of a Volunteer Judge

Each spring, Rotarians from sponsoring clubs across the state serve as essay judges, reading students' personal reflections on values like perseverance, honesty, and compassion. For many volunteers, it's one of the most meaningful experiences Rotary offers.

"Such a special experience to read these stories from so many wonderful young people!" — **Bernard**

Santa Maria, Rotary Club of Buckhead

Judging requires no prior experience, just a willingness to read and reflect. It's a flexible, rewarding way for Rotarians to connect directly with students' voices.

A Turnkey Service Project with Deep Community Impact

For Rotary clubs, Laws of Life is a **turnkey service project**. Georgia Laws of Life provides the curriculum, training, materials, judging platform, and program support—allowing clubs to focus on what Rotary does best: **building relationships and celebrating young people**.

Clubs that partner with a school often share that the greatest joy comes from reading students' stories and recognizing them at a Rotary meeting or school celebration.

Why Schools Say Yes

School leaders consistently emphasize how the contest supports both academics and character development.

"The Laws of Life Essay Contest gives our students a rare chance to reflect on who they are and what matters most. It builds empathy, strengthens writing skills, and helps us understand our students on a deeper level. We look forward to it every year." — **Dr. Terri Bell, MTSS, Stone Mountain High School**

January is the Time to Start Conversations

January and February are critical planning months for schools. **To engage a new school for the upcoming academic year, initial outreach should take place before March**—before testing season and the end-of-year rush begin. That said, Rotary clubs are encouraged to share the Laws of Life program with local schools year-round. Helpful tools and talking points for school outreach are available at https://georgialawsoflife.org/why-rotary/

When a school expresses interest in participating, the partnering Rotary club should plan to commit to its Georgia Laws of Life sponsorship at that time. Our team is happy to support clubs every step of the way—offering guidance on timing, outreach, and next steps to make the process simple, effective, and rewarding for both the club and the school.

We Look Forward to Partnering with You

Whether your club is ready to:

- Recruit essay judges
- Sponsor the contest
- Partner with your local school
- Re-engage a past school partner
- Or explore Laws of Life for the first time

Georgia Laws of Life is here to help. Together, we can give more students the opportunity to reflect, write, and grow—while strengthening Rotary's connection to the communities we serve.

To learn more or schedule a presentation for your club, contact **Carol Gray Walker, Executive Director**, at **carol@georgialawsoflife.org**.

Posted by Carol Gray Walker
December 19, 2025

Club News

Stone Mountain People of Action at Work in South Africa!

A new member of the **Rotary Club of Stone Mountai**n, Jeremy Anderson and his wife, Traci, have been living Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self" and making an impact for many years. In 2018, Jeremy and Traci launched their nonprofit, Next Level Living, Inc. Since then, they've fed an average of 1,000 starving children every week in Cape Town, South Africa —nourishing not only their bellies but their hearts and minds.

Believing deeply in the power of education, the Andersons have also sponsored 60 students to attend the College of Cape Town since 2020. They live by the conviction that they are "blessed to be a blessing," and their generosity continues to open doors and change lives around the world.

On Thanksgiving night 2025, ten individuals, including DGE Cynthia Dorsey Edwards and her husband, Lonnie; PE Maxine Cain and her daughter, Lauren; Eric Baker (an executive with Audacy, a multi-platform audio & entertainment company), left Atlanta to join Jeremy, Traci, and their family in Cape Town. They went to provide support to and participate with the Andersons in their service to the community. They were also filled with anticipation of experiencing the continent of Africa for the first time.

During the nine days that the Atlanta group was in Cape Town, Next Level Living delivered two back-to-back fundays that reached more than 3800 children across Sonderend Primary and Kampies informal settlement – flooding both communities with joy, dignity, and connection through massive water slides, arts and crafts, sports zones, face painting, music, hot meals, fresh fruit, desserts, party packs, and full volunteer support. For many learners and families, these moments were once-in-a-lifetime experiences that restored hope in places where it’s often fragile.

Across both sites, more than 40 volunteers helped serve 500 liters of akhni, distribute tons of fruit, hand out thousands of cold treats, and create a safe, electrifying atmosphere that uplifted over 300 families in just 48 hours. These two events proved what becomes possible when NGOs, brands, sponsors, and community leaders (including Rotarians) unite under one mission: to bring unforgettable life-shaping moments to children who need them most.

PHOTOS:

Posted by Cynthia Edwards
December 30, 2025

Club News

North Cobb Uses District Grant for Christmas Gifts for Georgia National Guard Families

In the spirit of the holiday season, the **North Cobb Rotary Club** used a $2,000 district grant from D6900 and a $500 contribution from the club's own community grants to share the joy of the holidays with children of service men and women going into active duty with the Georgia National Guard. Club President Jose Gonzalez with the help of his wife Jordon and kids, shopped for the gifts one early Sunday morning to ensure each kid received a gift of their choice. During the club's annual holiday party, members wrapped up the individual gifts, one by one, and wrote handwritten holiday cards for each child. Then past president Nancy Prochaska and her husband Kevin delivered the gifts to the children during the 93rd Finance Company pre-deployment Yellow Ribbon event, culminating in a multi-step process to bring the spirit of the holidays to these children.

Posted by Jose Gonzalez
December 30, 2025

Club News

Decatur Celebrates Bedros Sharian Jr. at 100 Years

Bedros Sharian Jr. and Decatur Club President Alison Weissinger

On Friday, November 21, at the Historic Decatur Courthouse, the **Rotary Club of Decatur** and the City of Decatur, Georgia honored long-time member **Bedros Sharian Jr.** as he approached his 100th birthday on Thanksgiving Day. City Manager and Rotary member, Andrea Arnold, read the proclamation signed by Mayor Patricia M. Garrett that proclaimed November 25, 2025, as Bedros Sharian Jr. Day. Former Decatur Mayor Walt Drake also provided a historical perspective on Bedros' rich life and his impact on the Decatur Community.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS , Bedros Sharian, Jr. was born on November 25, 1925 to Armenian immigrants who arrived in the United States in the early 1900s, whose journey to this country has been an integral part of his rich family legacy; and

WHEREAS , in 1931, Bedros' parents established the Sharian business, initially starting with a rug cleaning operation in their backyard on Drexel Avenue, which eventually grew to become a cornerstone of the Decatur business community; and

WHEREAS , Bedros graduated from Decatur Boys High School, attended Emory University at Oxford, and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, epitomizing the courage and sacrifice of the "Greatest Generation"; and

WHEREAS , upon returning to Decatur in 1946, Bedros completed his education at Emory University, joined the family business, and became its President, and later Chair of the Board of Directors, always leading with integrity, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to excellence; and

WHEREAS , Bedros has been instrumental in guiding Sharian, Inc. through four generations of ownership and management, fostering not only its success but also a strong legacy of service to the community, and

WHEREAS , Bedros' contributions to the Decatur community extend beyond business, as he served as President of the Decatur Rotary Club and the Executive Club of Decatur, with nearly 50 years of active service to both organizations; and

WHEREAS , it is fitting that we celebrate Bedros Sharian, Jr. on the occasion of his 100th birthday, recognizing his remarkable legacy as a Decatur business leader, a proud American, a distinguished World War II veteran, and the patriarch of the Sharian family, whose contributions to our city have been immeasurable.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Patricia M. Garrett, Mayor of the City of Decatur, the “City of Homes, Schools, and Places of Worship,” do hereby proclaim November 25, 2025 as **BEDROS SHARIAN, JR. DAY** in honor of his 100th birthday and in recognition of his lifelong dedication to Decatur, his service to our nation, and his exemplary leadership in business and community life.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereto set my hand and cause the Seal of the City of Decatur to be affixed this 21ST day of November, 2025

Patricia M. Garrett

Mayor

Posted by Dudley Larus
December 3, 2025

Club News

North Fulton Launches Phase 3 of Greenway Mural Project

Fall was the time for another exciting phase of the R**otary Club of North Fulton's** Greenway Mural Project!

Our latest efforts began in late September with a **Design Workshop**, where student artists learned how to translate their creative concepts onto a challenging cylindrical, concrete canvas.

In early October, club members turned their attention to preparing the mural sites. After power washing, members primed **14 raised sewer covers—each over six feet tall!** (Extension poles definitely earned their keep this year.) The following day, volunteers organized all art supplies for the student artists, wrapping up the week with a lively Happy Hour at Lazy Dog—because Rotary always knows how to blend service with fellowship.

All that preparation paid off the next weekend, as the Alpharetta Greenway came alive with color, creativity, and collaboration. Rotary members and student artists worked side by side to bring their visions to life. Reflecting one of Rotary's seven areas of focus, this year's theme was **"Clean Water for All."** We were thrilled to receive **36 concept submissions** from local high school students—proof that word is spreading about how meaningful this project has become for young artists.

With Phase 3 now complete, the Greenway proudly showcases 32 vibrant murals spanning two miles. This achievement wouldn't be possible without the invaluable support of Fulton County Public Works, Arts Alpharetta, Alpharetta Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, and the City of Alpharetta.

A special thank-you goes to club members **Amie Blanton, Richard Matherly, and Thomas Nolfa**, whose dedication and leadership drove this project forward—and to our talented professional muralist, **Annalysa Kimball**, whose artistry continues to inspire us all.

PHOTOS:

Posted by Lisa Gelber
December 3, 2025

Club News

Meriwether County Scores Big for the Rotary Foundation Through “Foundation Football”

As the college football season kicked off, the **Rotary Club of Meriwether County -** joined by enthusiastic "friends of Rotary" - selected their favorite teams to follow and cheer for throughout the season. Each week, members gathered at Rotary meetings to track and discuss their teams' scores, fostering camaraderie, spirited conversation, and plenty of friendly competition.

This year, our club fully embraced Foundation Football, a fun and meaningful way to give back! For every point their chosen team scored, participating Rotarians donated that same amount to the Rotary Foundation. Every touchdown, field goal, and extra point wasn't just a victory on the field—it was a win for service. At the end of the season:

- The Rotarian who raised the most earned an additional $100 donation to the Rotary Foundation made in their name by the club.
- Participants also earned one ticket for every point scored in a drawing for a $1,000 cash prize!

Thanks to the excitement of this initiative and the generosity of our members, the Rotary Club of Meriwether County is donating an impressive **$3,496** to the Rotary Foundation!

This friendly competition made game days even more exciting and strengthened our club's ability to support the Rotary Foundation's vital work—both locally and across the globe.

We're proud to turn our love for football into meaningful contributions that change lives!

PHOTOS:

Posted by Kay Williamson
December 18, 2025

Club News

Paulding Hosts Dallas Christmas Parade

The **Paulding Rotary Club** was privileged to host the annual Dallas Christmas parade. The club once again brought the community together with a successful and well-attended parade. Families lined the streets to enjoy festive floats, local organizations, marching bands, and community leaders who helped make the event a memorable celebration. Thanks to dedicated volunteers and strong community support, the tradition continues to grow each year. You can watch the parade on YouTube at **https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=uBpfCjoFoms**

Posted by Alex Crenshaw
December 18, 2025

Paws, Claus, and Applause: Buckhead Rotary Serves Pets in Need

15

The **Rotary Club of Buckhead** closed out the year with a festive, service-filled holiday meeting that captured the spirit of Service Above Self. Members came together to pack 100 treat and toy bags for cats and dogs at the Fulton County Animal Shelter, sharing laughter and fellowship while supporting some very deserving four-legged friends. The meeting also featured the holiday spirit with live music from member Drew Amerson, joined by Ty Tippet for a spirited singalong of “Jingle Bells.” A surprise visit from Santa (Buckhead Rotary member Jim Coleman), traveling all the way from the North Pole Rotary Club added to the excitement and smiles throughout the room. The LifeLine Animal Project sled, with the help of Rudolf to guide their way, transported the donations to the Fulton County Animal Shelter, ensuring the toys and treats reached pets in need. A *paws-itively* big thank you goes to Kari Kirkley for organizing the toys and treats for our furry friends. The energy in the room reflected the generosity, creativity, and passion that define Buckhead Rotary, making this gathering a memorable way to end the year.

PHOTOS:

Posted by Shelley Hammell
December 31, 2025

In Memoriam

Remembering Blakely Rotarian Robert William Collier Sr.

State Rep. Gerald Greene of Cuthbert presents a resolution at the Blakely Rotary Club to Robert Collier Jr., left, and Jack Watson that praised the life of Robert W. Collier Sr., who died Oct. 18

At a late November meeting of the Blakely Rotary Club, State Rep. Gerald Greene saluted the late Blakely

Mayor, businessman and **Blakely Rotarian Robert William Collier Sr.**

Rep. Greene presented members of Mr. Collier's family, his son Robert Collier Jr., and his son-in-law, Jack Watson, with a resolution passed by the Georgia House of Representatives that praised Mr. Collier's life.

"The State of Georgia mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished citizens with the passing of Robert William Collier Sr. on October 18, 2025," the resolution reads.

"Whereas, affectionately known as 'Mr. Blakely,' he served his community as mayor of Blakely for two terms, president and director of the Chamber of Commerce, and as longtime member and president of the Blakely-Early County Rotary Club for more than 60 years…"

The document speaks of Mr. Collier's love and long marriage to his wife, Alicia, and their two children, Robert Jr. and daughter Ginger Watson, his five grandchildren and his 12 great-grandchildren.

It spoke of Mr. Collier's "…magnanimous strengths, with an unimpeachable reputation for integrity, intelligence, fairness and kindness, and by the example he made of his life, he made this world a better place in which to live."

The resolution called Mr. Collier "a compassionate and generous man" …. who "will long be remembered for his love of family, friendship and community and will be missed by all who had the great fortune of knowing him."

Mr. Greene represents House District 154, which includes Early County.

Posted by Charles Gordon
December 18, 2025

Club News

North Cobb Walks in Kennesaw Holiday Parade

Members of the **North Cobb Rotary Club** walked the City of Kennesaw Parade in style, including North Cobb magnetic stickers on a yellow Nissan, driven by Audley Knight, Club Executive Secretary and a giant North Cobb banner held by members Charity Drabik, Club Fundraiser Chair and Deborah Morton, Club Membership Chair. Additional member walked through the parade, celebrating the season while children of members distributed candy to the attendees.

PHOTOS:

Posted by Jose Gonzalez
December 30, 2025

Club News

Hometown Hero Recognition Sparks Grassroots Roswell Rotary Challenge…

The **Roswell Rotar**y Hometown Hero for November story has a sequel! Brother's Keeper Foundation founder, Chris Cathers, with his body fighting Stage 4 Cancer and PTSI, but his spirit needed to create a foundation where Veterans could find help without barriers and only resolutions. During the inspirational November presentation to Chris, Roswell Rotarian John Michael Brunetti was so moved to throw out a match of $10,000 so Chris could see veterans getting what they needed fast. "Match it," he said. "Let's do something worthy of these veterans." The spark was ignited. If that wasn't enough, after the meeting, Chris shared with Roswell Rotary Club President Trummie Lee Patrick III that another donor in his organization had also stepped forward and would match what Roswell Rotary could raise. Anonymous. No fanfare. No spotlight. "I'll match whatever you raise," they said. In an instant, the challenge of one Rotarian could be seen to go from $10,000 to $20,000. Then $20,000 would become $40,000. At a December meeting, the challenge was made public to the 200 folks in the room and, within 8 minutes, almost $40,000 was raised creating a new budget for Brother's Keeper just from Roswell Rotary! NOTE: This is not considering the additional match!

Chris Cathers had the courage to create something new where no path existed. He still calls, still listens, still shows up. Even now—especially now—he serves with a spirit that defines Service Above Self.

From Brothers Keeper: Your generosity allowed us to fully stabilize five veterans in acute need. And, now we invite you to match our commitment and help us complete the remaining three service projects for veterans needing life-changing companions, service dogs, for heroes who need them to navigate PTSD, mobility impairment, and daily living.

Your $40,000 will:

1. Fully fund the highest-leverage, lowest-cost stabilization cases: These are five veterans where a relatively small amount of money prevents homelessness, relapse, and/or medical decline.
2. Prioritize life-or-death mobility, housing stability, and mental health continuity for three more veterans by partially but yet significantly provide a meaningful portion of funding for not only their survival but stabilization and so they can reclaim their life.
3. Ensure equity across needs while protecting against “catastrophic setbacks.

This $40,000 has become far more powerful—certain to change lives towards stability and, hopefully, flourishing. Nothing is certain and these plans are based on known needs and hopeful outcomes. Don’t miss the point…. there is something happening because a group of people dared to think outside the norm, outside the box and find different ways to help! “I couldn’t be more proud of this kind of potential brewing in our club,” RRC President Trummie Lee Patrick III.

And this is where success is found —in a place far deeper than a ballpark, a backyard, or even a Rotary Club meeting. It is found at the intersection of imagination and compassion, where ordinary people refuse to let the world remain as it is. The courage of Chris Cathers is turning his remaining days into a legacy of hope for those who once fought for us. And the challenge made by one Rotarian will hopefully create a wave of generosity that will change lives we have not yet met.

Posted by Becky Nelson
December 31, 2025

Club News

Twas the Night of Giving: Buckhead Rotarians Spread Holiday Cheer at the Shepherd Cente

Merry
CHRISTMAS
The Season

Twas the night before Christmas and all through the hospital, Buckhead Rotarians were on the move, bringing holiday cheer to Shepherd Center patients and children during the Christmas Eve dinner service. Instead of sugarplums, members Miriam Falaki, Sam Alston (not pictured), President Shelley Hammell and her husband Joe delivered Elf on the Shelf Plushee Pals, sparking smiles, laughter, and a little extra magic for young patients spending the holiday in the hospital. Buckhead Rotarians and The Lumistella Company, the women-led creators of the beloved Elf on the Shelf universe, generously donated these Plushee Pals. Shepherd Center is a nationally recognized hospital specializing in rehabilitation for people with spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, and other complex neurological conditions. We were honored to share a small gesture of kindness and show these young patients, and their families, that they are not alone this holiday season.

Posted by Shelley Hammell
December 31, 2025

Club News

North Fulton Enhances Peace Garden

Using funds from a District 6900 competitive grant, members of the **Rotary Club of North Fulton** spent

two Saturdays in November enhancing the club's Peace Garden at North Park. Originally created in 2013, the garden is centered around a wooden peace pole that was in need of significant repair. Thanks to the dedication and craftsmanship of Rotarian Andy West, who spent several weeks restoring it, the peace pole has been brought back to its original beauty.

Each year, club members come together to maintain and improve the garden, and this year's efforts went even further. The garden was expanded, and a second peace pole was added at the front, inviting visitors to step in and experience a sense of calm and reflection.

There's nothing better than serving alongside fellow Rotarians to create something beautiful while sharing the timeless message: *"May Peace Prevail on Earth."*

PHOTOS:

Posted by Lisa Gelber
December 22, 2025

Club News

Stone Mountain Rotarians Honored by STEM Atlanta!

STEM Atlanta, Inc. was honored to host the 2025 STEMii Awards – Futurist 2030: The Royal Christmas Gala. The STEMii Awards fuels the Futurist 2030 Leadership Readiness Initiative, preparing young professionals ages **19–44** to thrive in an AI-driven global economy. Proceeds from the Gala support scholarships, leadership labs and transformative STEM education experiences.

This year's gala honored two **Stone Mountain Rotarians - Jeremy Anderson and Cynthia Dorsey**

Edwards (our District Governor Elect) - individuals whose lives exemplify doing good locally and globally.

Jeremy Anderson, Rotarian, humanitarian, and global leadership voice, was honored as 2025 Man of the Year. Through his leadership with Next Level Living and his global speaking platform, Jeremy's service reaches across continents:

- Feeding over 1,000 children weekly in underserved communities in Cape Town, South Africa
- Sponsoring college access for 60 students, opening doors to education and opportunity
- Advancing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs that build resilience, purpose, and leadership in youth across the U.S.

Jeremy's work reflects Rotary's global mission—compassion in action, leadership with heart, and service that transforms lives.

STEM bestowed one of its highest honors - the Pillar of the Community Award - upon DGE Cynthia Dorsey Edwards, calling her "a visionary leader whose legacy of service has shaped education, workforce development, and community empowerment across Georgia and beyond." In addition to Rotary Cynthia's remarkable journey includes:

- Decades of service advancing leadership, equity, and opportunity
- Nearly 18 years with the Bell System supporting major business accounts
- Over 20 years at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, where she made history as the first African American woman Vice President
- Founder & President of Storehouse of Solutions, LLC, advancing workforce readiness and leadership development
- Creator of Time Out for Us (T.O.F.U.), empowering women for more than two decades.

Posted by Cynthia Edwards
December 30, 2025

Pawsitivity in Action: Buckhead Rotary Helps our Two- and Four-Legged Neighbors this Holiday Season

As part of our ongoing Pawsitivity Partnership, **Buckhead Rotarians** continued to make a meaningful impact in December with the third pet food delivery. Twenty-five Rotarians and guests came together to serve 45 LifeLine pet owners, ensuring that both pets and their families received much-needed support during the holiday season. In addition to pet food, volunteers delivered 24 Open Hand meal orders, reinforcing our commitment to caring for the whole family, two-legged and four-legged alike. These deliveries do more than meet an immediate need; they help keep pets with the people who love them, reduce stress during a challenging time of year, and strengthen the bonds within our community. Service Above Self really comes to life when we roll up our sleeves and help our neighbors in meaningful ways. Thanks to this partnership with Buckhead Rotary, LifeLine Animal Project and Open Hand, families can enjoy the holiday season knowing that no one, human or pet, will go hungry.

Posted by Shelley Hammell
December 31, 2025