

This Week's Program: Mandy Eidson and Taylor Drakeford |Self-Help Credit Union

On **Friday, September 18**, the Rotary Club of Atlanta West End is pleased to welcome **Mandy Eidson and Taylor Drakeford of Self-Help Credit Union** as our program speakers. Together, they bring extensive experience in community development, financial inclusion, affordable housing, and building partnerships that strengthen neighborhoods and create greater economic opportunity.

Mandy Eidson



Mandy Eidson is the Director of Business Development and Community Engagement at Self-Help Credit Union, one of the

MEETINGS

September is Basic Education and Literacy Month

BIRTHDAYS

9/21 Terri Copeland
10/5 Frances Ellison-Dansby
10/14 Annabelle La Force

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

10/11 Christopher Hempfling (13)

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	Christopher Hempfling
President-Elect	Rodney Fields
Immediate PP	Victoria Seals, PhD
Vice President	Rodney Fields
Treasurer	Melanie Sewell
Secretary	Neil Shorthouse
Public Image	CJ Stewart

nation's leading Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). A community development professional with extensive experience in affordable housing and capital management, she focuses on cultivating mission-aligned partnerships and advancing economic inclusion. Mandy is a proud Atlanta native and serves locally on the boards of HouseATL and the Georgia Social Impact Collaborative, as well as the Advisory Boards for Westside Works, the West End Main Street Council, and the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership Advisory Council.

Taylor Drakeford



Taylor Drakeford is a Regional Manager with Self-Help Credit Union in Atlanta, where she works to expand access to equitable financing that supports affordable housing, small businesses, and community wealth-building. With a career rooted in community development, she is dedicated to expanding access to responsible financial products and services that help individuals, families, and communities build long-term economic stability. Taylor collaborates with partners across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to help drive sustainable investment in underserved communities.

KeyWay Report: Ms. Tiauna Crooms, BTW High School

President Chris Hempfling presided over our program. The meeting began with a moment of reflection for the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attack on America. President Chris then introduced **Ms. Tiauna Crooms, Principal of Booker T. Washington High School** who provided presented BTW's academic programs, student achievements, and community partnership opportunities, all of which aligned with the Rotary Club's monthly theme of education and literacy.

Principal Crooms stated that BTW HS currently enrolls 793 students. Significant facts and accomplishments at BTW include:

- Approximately 630 students are identified as economically disadvantaged, yet the school emphasizes that circumstances do not determine future outcomes
- The Class of 2026 accumulated over \$33 million in scholarships among approximately 168 graduates
- 51 seniors earned over 1,000 college credits through dual enrollment; 13 students earned technical certificates
- BTW achieved the highest growth in the district at 74% across three-year trend data in science, math, and social studies
- Graduation rates have improved from 79% in 2024 to 85% in 2025, with further improvement expected for 2026
- Approximately 48% of students currently pursue post-secondary education, with ongoing efforts to increase persistence rates
- BTW is recognized as both an AP Challenge School and an AP STEM School, and is one of only two early college programs in the district.
- BTW's higher education partners are Atlanta Metro State College, Atlanta Technical College, Clark Atlanta University, Georgia State University

Ms. Crooms pointed out that its population will grow to about 1200 students owing to Atlanta Public Schools downsizing its number of schools so that it can make more efficient use of its properties and concentrate its resources of staff and programs to improve the quality education for all students.

Booker T. Washington High School is preparing to celebrate its 100th graduating class, a milestone that underscores its deep historical importance.

BTW operates as a certified STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) school, one of the first in Atlanta Public Schools to receive this designation. The STEM program focuses not merely on certification but on cultivating students' ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, and communicate effectively. Students engage in Project-Based Learning (PBL) that addresses real-world community issues such as food deserts, infrastructure challenges, and sustainable transportation. The school's STEM advisory board supports students through internships, externships, and participation in national events such as the National Society of Black Engineers conference.

BTW's CTAE (career, technical and agricultural, education) program offers pathways in culinary arts, agricultural science, healthcare, and computer science, among others. Students progress through three levels of coursework, culminating in an End of Pathway Assessment (EOPA), a nationally recognized industry-certified exam. Successful completion earns students professional credentials they can carry into college or the workforce. The school also partners with the Atlanta Career Academy to offer additional pathways not

available on campus.

The Early College Program partners with four post-secondary institutions, allowing students to earn up to 24 transferable college credits by graduation. Students formally enter the early college track in 11th grade, though preparation begins in 9th grade. The program aims to produce well-rounded graduates who qualify for the Hope Scholarship, participate in extracurricular activities, and hold leadership positions.

Principal Tiana Crooms emphasized that while BTW provides robust internal resources — including social work services, the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and future funds for families — communicating these resources to parents and encouraging their engagement remains a significant need for growth. The school's leadership views parental involvement as a critical component of the village model that supports student success. BTW's PTA needs to be larger and more active.

The principal drew on her own experience as a product of Atlanta's magnet school system, highlighting how mentorship, access, and exposure transformed her trajectory. She stressed that what BTW students need most from the community is not just financial support, but tangible access to opportunities — internships, professional networks, and doors that open for them when they are ready. The school is actively seeking partnerships that can provide these experiences, particularly for students who are academically prepared but lack the external connections to fully realize their potential. How AWER takes on roles in these areas adds significantly to BTW to building a better future as an institution and adding benefit to students.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hempfling, C.J. Stewart, Jared Evans, Neil Shorthouse

Keyway AWER Speaker reporters

Atlanta West End BeltLine Cleanup — September 19

Join Rotary Atlanta West End to clean the Washington Park section of the BeltLine

We have a great opportunity to put *Service Above Self* into action at our upcoming Atlanta BeltLine cleanup project. Please join Rotary Atlanta West End as we help clean up the Washington Park section of the BeltLine.

When: Saturday, September 19 at 9:00 AM

Where to meet: Washington Park Natatorium, 102 Ollie St NW, Atlanta, GA 30314

I hope each of you will consider joining us and, even better, bring a friend, family member, or prospective Rotarian along with you. This is a fun way to serve our community, enjoy some fellowship, and introduce others to what Rotary Atlanta West End is all about.

Please remember to complete the liability waiver before participating: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5195801>

Special thanks to Bridgette Long, our community service chair, for organizing this opportunity. I look forward to seeing everyone as we work together to make the West End shine!



L.E.A.D. Center For Youth's Community Champions Celebration

L.E.A.D. Center For Youth is hosting its annual Community Champions Awards Celebration in partnership with the Atlanta Braves Foundation on Sunday, September 27, 2026. Join L.E.A.D. from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM as we honor our exceptional student-athletes and supporters who make our work possible. You can purchase tickets at this link or by scanning the QR code below.

All event proceeds will directly support sport-based youth development and programming at L.E.A.D. Center for Youth, empowering our young athletes to thrive both on and off the field.



Agenda, Connections, & Four-Way Test

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

Sign up to be a program chair in the new Rotary Year [here](#) today!

A Little Dues, A Lot of Good

Supporting District 6900 starts with staying current on your district dues. Keeping your dues up to date ensures we can continue providing leadership development, youth programs, district events, club support, and the many resources that help our clubs thrive.

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?