

# Rotary



# Club of The Classic City of Athens

## May 20, 2024: Lauren Towe, Program Manager -- Concrete Jungle (Athens Branch)



The idea for Concrete Jungle was born in 2006 when Craig Durkin, Aubrey Daniels, and their friends searched for apple trees growing in Atlanta in order to harvest and press the apples for a Ciderfest and decided to share with families in need. Through fruit picks, farm days, adventure picks, and produce education classes, Concrete Jungle continues to grow and strive to make sure all families can access and enjoy fresh produce. In 2016, Concrete Jungle became a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and began their Adventure Picks Program - rescuing fruits and veggies from farms and orchards. In 2019, Concrete Jungle began harvesting produce in its first branch city of Athens, GA.

Lauren Towe is the Program Manager for our Athens branch. With UGA at its center, Athens can be a bit of a transitory town. But Lauren is one of those rare lifelong Athens natives and her roots go deep in this community. As Program Manager, Lauren really does it all. She manages volunteers on the ground, scouts local fruit trees, maintains relationships with our partners at UGArden and Campus Kitchen, and coordinates farmers' market and grocery collections, among a thousand other things. She first got involved with CJ in the early stages of the pandemic in 2020. She told us about her journey saying, "I was looking for something where I could meet people, get outside, and give back to the community. Concrete Jungle fit all of those things for me. I became a pick leader. And then I became the program associate. Then I became the program manager. So it was a perfect timeline over the course of just a few years, and I've loved every part of it." Lauren has thought about her relationship to food for a long time, becoming a vegetarian at a young age. In her childhood, she would often visit her grandmother's garden in South Carolina, where she grew up among the tomatoes, squash, okra, green beans, apple trees, and blueberry bushes. She's fortunate to have always known the joy of homegrown food. But her connection to the local food community bloomed out of her experiences at the University of Georgia, studying ecology and sustainability. We asked for her favorite thing about CJ, and she said, "My favorite thing has to be connecting people with plants and their surroundings. Introducing people to new fruits is so cool. Like when the volunteers try a fig for the very first time while they're on a pick with us - I think that is just such a great bonding experience."

## Meeting Responsibilities

Date	Greeter	Pledge	Four Way Test
May 20	Selena Blankenship	Milton Masciadri	Terry Dalton

## Next Meeting Programs

May 27 -- Memorial Day (No Meeting)

## Service Committee

**Tuesday, May 21** - We are scheduled for our quarterly Adopt-a-Highway Litter Pickup, located on Sunset Avenue from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM.

If you are interested in volunteering, please e-mail Candace Crew at shirleycandace.ces@gmail.com.

## Birthdays

Tina Kukanza  
May 31st

Mary Lillie Watson  
June 5th

## Club Leaders



Jeffrey Auerbach  
President  
Club  
Director



Jordan Bowen  
President-Elect  
Club  
Director



Tammy Tate Gilland  
Club  
Director  
Secretary



Laura Iyer  
President-Nominee



Heather J. McElroy  
Club  
Director  
President-Nominee



Christine S. Waite  
Morgan  
Club  
Director  
Treasurer



Selena Blankenship  
Membership  
Chair



Jennifer Scott  
Membership  
Retention  
Chair



Thomas J. Kramer  
Public  
Image Chair



Mary Lillie Watson  
Club  
Director  
Rotary  
Foundation  
Chair



Marilyn Appleby  
Club  
Director  
Service  
Projects  
Chair



Ellen Bryson  
Club  
Director  
Club  
Fundraising  
Chair



Becky Engel  
CCO-Club  
Comm.  
Offcr



Robert A. Hawley  
Sergeant-  
at-Arms



Richard J. Leffel  
Club Admin  
Chair  
Club  
Director



Michelle Elizabeth Roberts  
Kelterborn  
Club  
Director  
iPast  
President



Candace Crew  
Club  
Service  
Chair



Paul Skinner  
Club  
Programs  
Chair



Beverly Harper  
Youth  
Services  
Chair