



# CHECKPOINT



The official voice of the American Volkssport Association  
*America's premier noncompetitive sports organization*

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[www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org)

January 2016

## **NEC Meeting Updates**

### **January 2016 NEC Meeting-Agenda Change Notification**

The next National Executive Council (NEC) meeting is slated for January 22 – 24, 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Meeting time is 8am-5pm, Friday and Saturday and Sunday 8am-12noon (start and end times subject to change), at the Hampton Inn Tropicana, 4975 Dean Martin Drive, (702) 948-8100. Everyone is invited to attend.

**Proposed agenda item number 13 (a.) under New Business titled (IVV Credit) “Per Participant Fee Increase” has been withdrawn from the agenda.**

*Special thanks to Al Korejwo, President of the Las Vegas High Rollers & Strollers and Mary T. Ptacek for their support hosting the NEC meeting!*

## **NEC Committee News**

### **Special Programs 2017 – *Bonnie Johnson*, Chair, Special Programs Committee**

At each January NEC Meeting, new Special Programs are introduced for review and approval by the NEC to begin in the following year. In January 2016, the Special Programs will be introduced which, if approved, would begin on January 1, 2017.

### **Strategic Planning Update – *David Bonewitz*, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee**

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING – YOU SPOKE, WE LISTENED**

At the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting in Las Vegas (January 22-24, 2016), the Strategic Planning Committee presented three Courses of Action for the NEC's consideration. Unfortunately, the deadline for this article is December 25 which means this article can't report what happened at that meeting. However, by the time you read this, you should be able to read the NEC minutes on the AVA website.

While we can't report on the NEC meeting, we can explain a major element in the process of getting to the three Courses of Action, the surveys that the Strategic Planning Committee sent out for walkers and clubs to express their opinions on the state of AVA and where we need to be going. As stated before, we can't release the raw results of those surveys as we promised participants confidentiality

in their responses. However, we will be releasing (via the AVA website) the summary data. This article will touch on some of the themes, issues, and comments that guided the Strategic Planning Committee in their pursuit of change to strengthen AVA for the future.

The intent of a “random” survey is to gather information from a subset of a population with the expectation that the results statistically represent the entire population. The problem with surveys like those we conducted is that they are not truly “random” because the participants chose to participate (i.e., they were not randomly pulled from our population). So, this group of respondents (a motivated subset of our AVA participants) may not be totally typical of our AVA participants as a whole. In addition, the distribution of the survey could have been better as several clubs and Regions indicated that they pushed heavily for responses to the survey while others did not. In spite of these shortcomings, the number of responses (1727) to the individual survey means that the margin of error is around 2% for a 95% confidence level. So, if the survey were to be repeated 100 times, we’d get the same answers 95 times. For example, 70% of all the respondents reported their gender as female. With a margin of error of 2%, the true number of females in AVA is statistically estimated to be between 68 and 72% (70% plus or minus 2%).

While much information can be garnered from the numerical data from the surveys, much more insight can be obtained from the comments that participants made while doing the survey. The challenge is grouping and categorizing those comments in order to make use of the results. At this point, we need to recognize the Membership Subcommittee, and especially Jeanne Miller, for all the hard work developing and analyzing both the individual and club surveys.

From the Individual Survey, we find that our respondents were overwhelmingly retired (69%), female (70%), white (92%), and older than 55 (88%) with no children under 18 in the household (89%). While we credit the military connection for the beginnings and early growth of Volkssport in the United States, today only 37% of the respondents indicate that they have or have had any military connections. Numerically, the top four states for respondents were Florida, Washington, Maryland, and Texas. Whether this represents the percentage of population of walkers is unknown. A number of respondents expressed concern over the questions that dealt with demographics. These questions were seeking essential information about the target audience that is necessary when seeking grants, national publicity, or national partners or sponsors.

With regard to AVA membership, only 51% of the respondents are members of AVA. Given that percentage, it is probably no surprise, but still disappointing, that 65% have not attended an AVA Biennial Convention in the last 10 years.

From the demographic information, we analyzed the responses to the more substantive questions that deal in communications, technology, governance, and other issues that must be addressed when we look at the future of AVA.

When it comes to communications, 90% indicate that they prefer to receive information about events by e-mail. However, it became clear with the submission of the club survey that there are a number of clubs who do not either have access to, or choose to not access, the internet.

When it comes to embracing modern technology, every age group indicated that they are in favor to using a computer or a mobile app to register for events. Comments ranged from “I’d love a ‘Where’s the Start Box?’ app” to “Make sure every aspect of being a volkssporter is supported by digital means.” All but the oldest age group is in favor of being able to log and track achievements on-line with comments such as “If you can do your taxes online, AVA should be able to let its members do their transactions online.” Similarly, every age group is in favor of being able to download event maps. “I hate bothering shopkeepers for boxes and worrying about specific hours. I would much

rather do everything online.” However, there were comments from individuals that encouraged AVA to not go so fast or so far that we abandon those who are not technologically savvy or forget the personal interaction that draws us together. “New people need fun face-to-face interaction at fun events to keep coming back.”

In response to the question of what changes would most improve AVA walks and/or events there were 28 pages of over 700 comments dealing with Events and Maps, Clubs, and Advertising and Publicity. There was much agreement that AVA and its clubs can do a better job of advertising, marketing, and publicity of events and Volkssporting itself. The next area of general agreement was that clubs need to be more welcoming, more entertaining, and provide a better product. The question then becomes what can AVA, as an association of very disparate clubs, do to help clubs make these improvements at the local level.

In response to the question of what should AVA stop doing, there were 17 pages with over 400 comments. One big topic is a perceived “us vs. them” mentality, referencing rules, bureaucracy, poor communications, and out-of-touch leadership. (“Change the relationship between clubs and the HQs from a mostly administrative, punitive fees-collecting perception to one of value-added partner.”) It was rather disturbing that there were some who declined to answer certain questions due to a fear of some form of retribution. (“No comment because of retaliation.”) All of this indicates a less than healthy environment. “I can’t think of a single way AVA supports our local club. WE support AVA with our fees.”

The second survey we conducted was one of clubs and State Associations. We sent out the survey to the registered point of contact for each club and State Association. We had 179 responses to the Club/State Association Survey which is only a 74% return rate. This was a bit of a surprise and disappointment as we intended this survey to give us a better insight into the clubs that makeup AVA.

In answer to the question about how satisfied the club is with the governance performance of the AVA National Executive Council, 52% were very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, or neutral. In the comments, the respondents viewed the NEC as a “micro-managing” “good old boy institution” which does not represent the clubs, but employs “regional favoritism” and refuses to “embrace the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

In response to the question as to how AVA can help your club with the challenge(s) it faces, the number one response was “publicity,” especially on a national level, either as advertising or as a partnership or sponsorship. Other comments focused on greater use of online technology to register for events and to record individual achievements. A few comments focused on the need for updated AVA literature, website, and how-to guides, such as how to train and retain club officers, create interesting events, use social media, or create a website. One requested that AVA develop or make available mapping software for events. Several comments dealt with some aspect of rules, bureaucracy, and fees or penalties that they felt held their club back.

Our intent when the Strategic Planning Committee was formed was to ensure that we developed the strategic plan from the bottom up, not from the top down. Tremendous effort was put into the interpretation and use of the survey data to guide the committee’s recommendations to the NEC. Special thanks go out to all those who took their time to put their thoughts into these surveys. You spoke, we listened, and now with the decisions of the NEC, we will take action to build a strong American Volkssport Association for the future.

You are encouraged to review the minutes of the January NEC meeting on the AVA website to see what Course of Action the NEC approved. As you read this article, the SPC is developing the implementation details for the approved Course of Action. This Course of Action and its implementation details will be shared with the membership for your comment. Once complete, the

detailed Strategic Plan will go back to the NEC for final revision and approval. On an on-going basis, your input continues to be valuable. Send your thoughts and ideas to your RD and/or to the Strategic Planning Committee at [SPC4AVA@gmail.com](mailto:SPC4AVA@gmail.com).

### **40 Years of Volksmarching - Susan Medlin, Chair, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee**

Mark your calendar. Come to Fredericksburg, Texas on June 10 -12, 2016 and join us in celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Volkssporting in America. The very first walking event was held in Fredericksburg June 12-13, 1976.

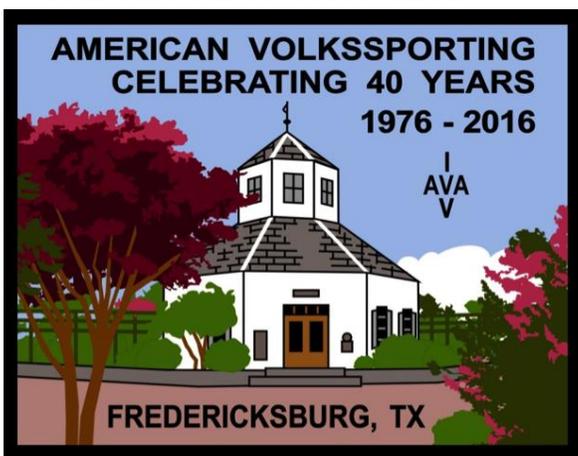
This summer we will celebrate this historic event with multiple walks, a bike event, and a swim. You'll enjoy the scenic countryside, the Wine Road 290 (featuring 15 wineries just minutes apart), a world-class WWII Museum and many fine restaurants and shops. Join us on the Saturday morning Founders Day Walk. We also offer six Year Round Walks, with new routes updated in 2014, and two County walks for your enjoyment. Additional event details will be presented in future editions.

In the spin up to the anniversary celebration, we are looking for human interest stories, humorous antidotes, lessons learned, and other interesting events that would encourage folks to become volksmarchers. Please forward your memories to John McClellan, President of the Happy Wanderers, [johnmc82@cfl.rr.com](mailto:johnmc82@cfl.rr.com) by **January 31, 2016**. We hope to include your memories in articles for Reader's Digest, AARP magazine, TAW and other publications.



### **40th Anniversary of U.S. Volksmarching - Patch Contest**

**WE HAVE A WINNER!**



We are delighted to present the winning patch for the 40th Anniversary of our first American Volksmarch in Fredericksburg, TX. Susan Noonan designed the winning entry, and she did a great job. Susan is a member of the West Texas Trail Walkers, and she also designed the beautiful patch they offered in Palo Duro this year. Susan Noonan received the \$100 prize. We would also like to thank Phil Allamong of Quarryville, PA, Dorman Batson of Federal Way, WA, and Brian Fisher of Kerrville, TX. They each submitted impressive patches and it was a tough decision for the judges. The winning patch will be ordered and stocked by the AVA HQ, and should be available for purchase by the end of January 2016. The club price is \$3 per patch which includes shipping. (Patches are not available for individual sale.) The patch is 4.25" by 3.25" and is 100% embroidered.

**Girl Scout 2015-2016 Patches and Order Form: ([click here for fillable order form](#))**

AVA clubs can order the 2015-2016 Girl Scout patch by completing the AVA Club Consignment Form and returning it to Karen Winkle at the AVA headquarters. You may fill out and submit the form by email to [Karen@ava.org](mailto:Karen@ava.org) or print the form and submit by mailing it to The American Volkssport Association, 1001 Pat Booker Road, Suite 101, Universal City, TX 78148.

## **AVA HEADQUARTERS TEAM NEWS**

### **HQ Finance & Operations Director – [Candace Purcell](#)**

#### **Special Program Fees**

Regarding programs which began in 2015 & 2016, please ensure you have paid the \$300 fee for each of your programs. If not, please do so. Send payment to Candace Purcell at National Headquarters.

#### **Requirements for Starting a New AVA Club**

There is now a requirement sheet and checklist for starting a new club. You can find this information by going under the Clubs tab > Clubs Only > AVA Club Forms.

#### **Invoice and Statement Addresses**

To ensure that invoices and account statements will be sent to the proper club addressee, the address must be updated no later than the **25<sup>th</sup> day** of the month in club maintenance pages.

If you are an AVA Associate member and you need to update your address, please contact [karen@ava.org](mailto:karen@ava.org)

#### **2016 Certificate of Liability Insurance**

The Certificate of Liability Insurance for 2016 is now available on the AVA website. You can find the certificate by going to the Clubs tab > mouse over Clubs Only > and click on AVA Club Forms

### **HQ Events Coordinator – [Marie Bebley](#)**

#### **2016 Slugs**

The 2016 slugs for YREs and Seasonal events were mailed out December 2, 2015. When entering your new event, please remember to date your upcoming events for 2016.

#### **YRE and Seasonal Reports Due January 31**

Please enter your 4th Quarter Report for your YRE and Seasonal events. Deadline is January 31, 2016. Event stamps for closed YRE and Seasonals that were not renewed for 2016 must be returned to the AVA HQ no later than January 31, 2016. Clubs should submit your report and return event stamps by the stated deadlines to avoid late fees.

### **HQ Awards and Membership Coordinator – [Karen Winkle](#)**

Please ensure that the correct address is indicated on your Event and Distance books, as well as on AVA membership renewals, so that HQ can verify current database listings.

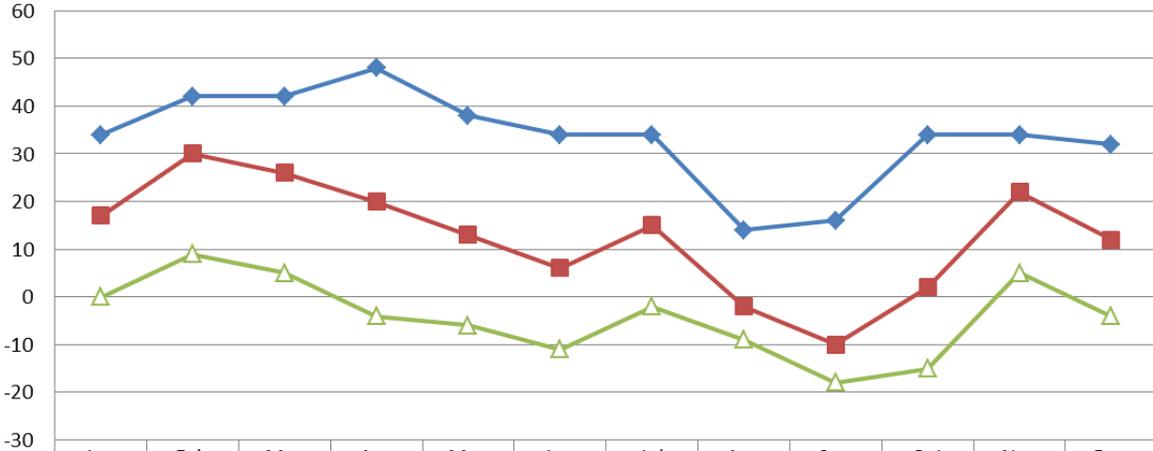
#### **Awards Processing Monthly Comparisons**

The monthly comparison chart for new walkers completing their first 10 events **(A)** and the monthly total awards processed chart **(B)** are shown on the next page.

(A)

### Ten Event Books Processed 2014-2015 Calendar Year Monthly Comparison

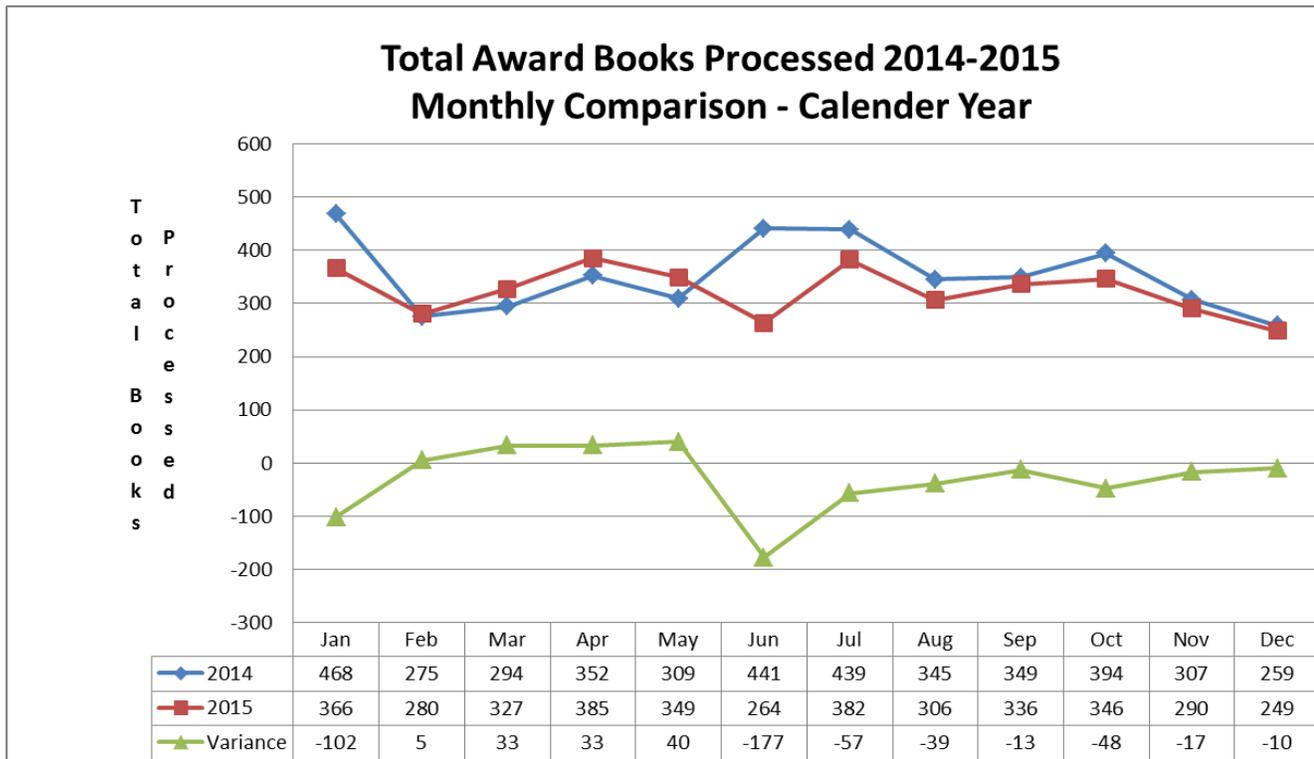
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	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2014	17	12	16	28	25	28	19	16	26	32	12	20
2015	17	21	21	24	19	17	17	7	8	17	17	16
Variance	0	9	5	-4	-6	-11	-2	-9	-18	-15	5	-4



(B)



## **AVA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATES - HENRY ROSALES**

### **Grant Writing and Fundraising Update**

Following is an update on HQ's efforts in finding, writing and submitting grant proposals:

#### **The Disney Employee Matching Gifts Program: The Walt Disney Foundation**

*STATUS – In Progress.* The gift program application was sent to Disney Foundation officials by Headquarters AVA. If the application is approved by Disney, all eligible Disney employees are able to submit matching gift requests for donations they made to our organization.

#### **Interactive Health Technologies, Inc. Meeting (IHT)**

*STATUS – This is an ongoing project that will need time to build relationships and identify funding sources. Current thought centers on a joint venture partnership between AVA and IHT.* The initiative could include an initial health screening pilot program and eventual submission of a proposal for an investigator-initiated government grant. This is fairly complex and a go slow attitude has been adopted. Mr. Gaat is to deliver information to us on his thoughts and ideas going forward.

#### **Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) – San Antonio Chapter Gift of Guidance**

*STATUS – Service grant was awarded to AVA!* AVA was one of six nonprofit organizations selected from San Antonio to receive benefits from the PRSA Gift of Guidance program. Seasoned public relations professionals spent time consulting with AVA representatives about fine-tuning media messages, planning special events and developing a basic public relations plan. AVA received a free mini-public relations plan that highlights 3 strategies with tactics for implementation, all of which can be accomplished with a limited budget but does require staff time. The three public relations strategies recommended by PRSA are:

1. Make use of stories placed in local, regional and national news media to generate public interest and knowledge about the organization and its events.

2. *Promote the benefits of AVA membership to event participants.*
3. *Reach out to the potential national sponsors and promote the mutual benefits.*

### **Unfunded Grant Proposals**

Other proposals submitted by AVA but not funded were to the San Antonio Nonprofit Foundation, the Baptist Health Foundation of San Antonio and to Every Body Walk!

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** AVA HQ has completed its initial evaluation of proposal submission criteria for a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) grant, the nation's largest philanthropy organization dedicated to health. Their mission is to improve the health and health care of all Americans. It is apparent that HQ needs to identify existing or planned AVA club - community engagement advocacy programs to meet submission requirements and strengthen our proposal. AVA HQ is currently collecting information on these programs. Several clubs have sent us examples of their interaction with local officials to make their communities a better, healthier place to live. We need more! We really need some examples demonstrating initiatives of partnerships with local health agencies. Send your advocacy initiative summaries to [marketing@ava.org](mailto:marketing@ava.org) and use the subject line "Advocacy Initiatives." Remember, if your initiative is what we need to strengthen our proposal, it may end up on the receiving end of a monetary gift as part of the grant.

### **AVA Headquarters Welcomes Melinda Riggsby**

An intern from the Alamo Colleges has been hired! Melinda Riggsby will support the AVA for the next 10 strategic planning.

Melinda grew up as an "Air Force Brat" of weather Chief, and was enculturated into Volkssporting at an early age, spending much time walking with her parents and siblings throughout Europe. She has developed a love for nature, and passion for the AVA, one which she hopes to foster in future generations of Volkssporters!



**Childhood photo of Melinda Riggsby and her two younger brothers on a Volksmarch together in Germany, 1995.**

### **AVA Headquarters is interested in your ideas!**

Over the next couple of months the AVA Headquarters will be exploring ways to reformat our monthly newsletter, the Checkpoint, in effort to send out information to clubs that is timely, relevant and qualitative. Please send us your ideas regarding the type of information you think is pertinent to your clubs so that we can refine the information in the Checkpoint to better meet your needs. Email your ideas to Executive Director at [execdir@ava.org](mailto:execdir@ava.org) (Please note on the subject line "Checkpoint Ideas") If you prefer to reach the Executive Director by phone, the number is (210) 659-2112.



*A Parting Shot- Liberty Bell Wanderers at Collegeville, PA on December 26, 2016*

**CELEBRATING 40 YEARS!**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

*June 10-12, 2016*

*Fredricksburg, Texas*

For more information, contact Ellen Ott at  
[ellenott@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ellenott@sbcglobal.net)

**The American Volkssport Association**

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