

Don't forget its that time of year to register and sanction all events in order to get them in next year's Starting Point.



NEC News

NEC Meeting Updates

The minutes of the June 2016 NEC meeting will be posted on the AVA website once approved by the NEC.

Northwest Regional Director - Nancy Wittenberg

Fund Development Committee Seeks Committee Members

The Fund Development Committee leads the NEC's participation in resource development and fund-raising. The committee works with the Executive Director to develop the AVA's fund development plan. The committee is the NEC's central source of information about the status of the organization's fund-raising activities. The committee develops policies, plans, procedures, and schedules for NEC involvement in fund-raising. The committee solicits contributions from NEC members. It familiarizes NEC members with fund-raising skills and techniques so that they are comfortable about their role in raising money. It plays a strong role in identifying, cultivating and approaching major donors, corporate sponsors and potential grant sources. Prior fund-raising skills and experience or a desire to develop such are important qualifications. Up to six meetings a year by conference call are anticipated with a possible face to face meeting at the next NEC meeting in January 2017 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana or the AVA convention June 2017 in Billings, Montana.

If you are interested in serving on this committee or for more information please contact Nancy Wittenberg at nw_rd@ava.org or Henry Rosales at henry@ava.org

National Special Programs—Susan Medlin, Chair

Celebrating 40 Years of Volkssporting

We had a wonderful weekend in Fredericksburg. Our events on Saturday (2 walks, a swim and a bike) were a success. We had 361 walkers, 18 swimmers and 9 bikers. Folks came from far and wide, including a convoy from Iowa and a Girl Scout Troop from Kerrville. 16 New Walker Coupons were used and Joanne Forinash sold 12 New Walker Packets. The weather cooperated, a few clouds and a light breeze helped keep the temperature down. Our Pilgrimage YRE walk on Friday afternoon and evening had 85 walkers, and our Cross Mountain YRE walk on Sunday morning had 58 walkers. We had 115 AVA friends join us for a delicious dinner Saturday evening. The Mayor of Fredericksburg spoke, and several members of the original 1970's walkers shared their memories. Our keynote speaker, Christine Handy, gave an inspirational talk on how walking with family and friends helped her recover from a devastating battle with cancer. Christine signed her new book before the dinner, and bought a New Walker Packet so she can start volksmarching near her homes in Dallas and Miami. Perhaps you will meet her on the trail one day!

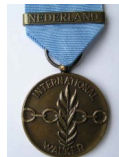
Thanks to all the clubs across America that hosted a "Celebrating 40 Years" event in their hometowns. We appreciate everything you are doing to promote and grow our beloved sport. You can send photos of those walks to Hector@ava.org. Please continue to use the special 40th Anniversary slug and sell the 40th Anniversary patch (so far we've sold over 500 patches) until 31 Dec 2016. Both the slug and the patches can be ordered from AVA HQ.

A special thanks to our sponsors. SAS provided certificates for free SAS shoes, HEB provided gift cards, and Sore No More provided their gel packs for the walkers. We appreciate your support.



Lets add an International Marching League Event to San Antonio!

[Click here for more info.](#)



Celebrating Our Distance Events

Responding to suggestions from the Strategic Planning Committee survey, we decided to emphasize and enhance our Distance events. In this context, Distance events consist of Seasonal or Year-round walks which have a 20 or more kilometers distance option. A review of our YRE's turned up 84 YRE events in 2016 which met the criteria as Distance events. We are adding a new search item on the AVA website Events tab. In the dropdown where you select between Traditional, YRE, or Bike and other, there will be a new choice, "20+ km Events Only". Selecting that choice will take you to just those walks with a specified 20K or more option. This feature should be up and running by the time you read this.

Our folks have done the work to identify the 84 Distance events in 2016. In 2017, we ask the clubs to do that when the event is entered into the Electronic Sanction Request. To make this work properly, the criteria for the search is the event must be a Seasonal or Year-Round event, and the distance entry must start with the word 'Distance ', with an uppercase 'D', and followed by a space. The actual distance of the event is free form after that for another 16 characters. Anything else in the first 9 characters other

than 'Distance ' will fail to match the search criteria. A correctly formatted entry looks like this: Distance 5/10/20km

In addition to highlighting them on the AVA Website, we are going to put an article in each TAW and each Checkpoint describing one of these distance walks. I will start the ball rolling with the 20km Leon Creek Greenbelt - Bill Radigan Memorial Walk here in San Antonio.

Leon Creek Greenbelt - Bill Radigan Memorial Walk

The 20km walk is on a wide concrete or asphalt path. It is part of the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System, which will eventually encircle San Antonio. Volkssporters have an opportunity to view limestone bluffs, wildflower fields, and stands of Cottonwood and other heritage trees. Over half of it is in a wooded area, so in the hot months it is best walked in the early morning or early evening to take advantage of the shade. One section takes you by new office buildings and student dorms which are being built for the University of Texas at San Antonio. There are several low bridges, so in our brief periods of heavy rainfall, some sections may close. Leashed pets are welcome on the trail. This walk qualifies for Cities in Song, Honoring our Flag, Trekking with Trees, Water Towers, Bridges, and Louisiana Purchase.

IT Changes to Search for Long Distance Events or Walks

The criteria for the search is the event must be a Seasonal or Year-Round event, and the distance entry starts with the word 'Distance ', with an uppercase 'D', and followed by a space. The actual distance of the event is free form after that for another 16 characters. Anything else in the first 9 characters other than 'Distance ' will fail to match the search criteria. Clubs will need specific instructions to input it correctly. A correctly formatted entry looks like

Distance 5/10/20k
or
Distance 5K, 10K & 20K

The SNOB Program is Ending in 2018

The SNOB Program is ending on December 31, 2018. Walkers will have the 2017 convention to help them finish their books. It was an interesting concept, but sales were weak and it was hard to get all the stamps without going to the conventions.

SNOB books will be provided free in all the pre-registration packets for the 2017 Convention. Attendees can get some of the stamps during the convention, and those who are finishing their books can receive their pins on the last day of the Convention. If you have questions, please contact SWRD Susan Medlin, 210-325-3523, sw_rd@ava.org.

Introducing Our New Extended Distance Walks:

The Pacific Crest Trail & Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail

Responding to a suggestion in the survey, we are starting an AVA National Distance Program. For 2017, we are featuring the Pacific Crest Trail and Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail. While walkers will not be required to walk the entire trail in either program, they will walk a number of sections of the trail. We are looking at 15-18 walks for the Pacific Crest Trail and 12- 18 for Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail. Both programs will include many seasonal walks, due to weather conditions in the states. If sections of this trail are already YRE or seasonal events with walk boxes, then clubs may chose to continue to use the walk box. Otherwise, these walks will use the Online Start Box. The RD's for these walks; Nancy Wittenberg, Suzi Glass,

and Jerry Wilson, are actively working on setting up these programs. If you can help them, please contact them and assist. We all have a lot of work to do in the next 6 months.

Assuming this new program is successful, and folks are eager to walk these new venues, then we are looking at adding the Appalachian Trail (sadly, without Robert Redford), the Continental Divide Trail, the Katy Trail in Missouri (already sanctioned as a Bike event) and the Buckeye Trail in Ohio in further years. If you have comments or suggestions, you can reach me (SWRD Susan Medlin) at sueammed@aol.com.

Susan A. Medlin

Southwest Regional Director

American Volkssport Association

210-325-3523

sueammed@aol.com

We Want You!



Click on image for flyer and rules!

To Design an AVA Mascot

Northeast Regional Director—Betty Green

AVA: Positive Personal Narratives

In effort to support with our grant writing initiatives on a National scale I am collecting brief narratives from AVA participants who would like to share how being an AVA participant has benefited them. For example, a recently widowed woman who felt her local walking club gave her a reason to get out of her home, to be with other people, feeling the natural endorphin effect from walking and being outdoors, a sense of purpose.... You get the picture. This is true of new members who find us as well as long-time members that have felt the support of other Volkssporters. Narratives from those who no longer walk are just as valuable. They may support their clubs and receive support in other ways.

Advice from Henry Rosales for the type of stories needed:

"I need pictures and stories of children and seniors walking together along with impactful stories on how walking saved or changed their life! One can also share advocacy stories for example, if a club used their money to help build a ramp so folks in wheelchairs could also enjoy the walk or perhaps a story on how clubs are working with under privileged children to better their health through walking. If clubs are advocating for safer places to walk let us know what and how you are advocating and what has been the results of your efforts."

"For grants I need to be able to demonstrate how walking is impacting the lives of people either individually or collectively in their communities. Funders always want to know what is the impact we are creating by the services we are providing and how can we prove it has been successful."

My preference is for email correspondence as I will compile and forward these on to Henry Rosales. Narratives may be in the body of the email or as an attachment. I would appreciate receiving these narratives by the end of September.

Please use the subject line "AVA: Positive Personal Narratives" as I need to readily identify emails regarding this specific topic. *By submitting your articles and pictures you are granting permission to the AVA to reprint and reproduce your stories and pictures for the sole purpose of fundraising and/or marketing efforts of the AVA. AVA will reserve the right to edit or reproduce your stories and pictures in part as well as in full as deemed appropriate.* Send narratives to: bettyg52@gmail.com

AVA STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2020 IMPLEMENTED

At the National Executive Council meeting in Fredericksburg, Texas, on June 11, 2016, the Strategic Plan as developed by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was presented for approval. Like all of the work done by the SPC, this was a team effort with the presentation shared by the SPC Chair, Bobbi Bilnoski (consultant), Henry Rosales (AVA Executive Director), Susan Ives (representing the Chair of the Membership Subcommittee), and Ken Miles (Chair of the Governance Subcommittee). After the presentation and a limited number of questions, the NEC soundly approved the Strategic Plan.

While we have attempted to keep the AVA membership aware of the development of the Strategic Plan through the Checkpoint and articles in TAW, it has been difficult to ensure that the full picture was clear to everyone. This article should provide considerable more clarity and is also a Call to Action.

The following are the key focus areas, the strategic goals in those areas, and the objectives designated to meet those goals. While these focus areas are numbered, the order does not imply a particular value to any of these areas. They are all critical to the long-term success of AVA. However, it should be noted that for AVA to survive, we must grow, to grow we must have quality programs and clubs, to have quality programs and clubs, we must have the necessary finances, and to tie it all together we must improve both our internal operations and our governance and leadership. These are the areas that we must focus upon.

The first key focus area is to improve the quality and value of member benefits and programs. This is the Mission Impact portion of the plan. Strategic Goal 1 is to promote and organize noncompetitive fitness activities that encourage lifelong fun, fitness, and friendship for all ages and abilities. The Objectives established to meet this goal and the “action committees” assigned to achieve these goals are:

- A. Retain and grow all levels of membership (Membership Committee, Chair Jeanne Miller, e-mail: jeanneno@gmail.com)
- B. Improve membership benefits, programs, and services (Program Committee, Chair Debbie Kruep, e-mail: debmarkkruep1@yahoo.com)
- C. Establish a Club Development Program to help volunteer leaders grow active clubs (Training Committee, Chair Sam Korff, e-mail: secretary@ava.org)
- D. Develop and implement new global events and activities (Executive Committee and National Programs Committee, Chair Susan Medlin, e-mail: sw_rd@ava.org)

The second key focus area is to diversify and develop sustainable funding sources. This is the Financial Sustainability portion of the plan. Strategic Goal 2 is to ensure long-term sustainability through financial integrity and revenue diversification. The Objectives established to meet this goal are:

- A. Develop and implement a fund development plan to diversify revenues that will include a donor/sponsor relationship management plan, grants/corporate sponsorship revenues, and maximize convention and special event capacity/exposure/revenue
 - B. Streamline financial systems, policies, and practices
 - C. Establish national partnerships that benefit the members and generate unrestricted revenue
- The Executive Director (ED) is the primary lead in these areas. Nancy Wittenberg (Northwest Regional Director and former Vice Chair of the SPC) volunteered to assist the ED with work in this area. Nancy can be reached via e-mail at nw_rd@ava.org.

The third key focus area is to increase national public awareness of the new AVA brand which is the Internal Operations portion of the plan. Strategic Goal 3 is to increase public awareness, operational capacity, and efficiency to facilitate engagement and growth. The Objectives established to meet this goal and the “action committees” assigned to achieve these goals are:

- A. Develop and implement a long-range national publicity campaign (ED)
- B. Build a member-centered data management system (IT Committee, Chair Frank Sayers, e-mail: rm_rd@ava.org)
- C. Create and implement annual risk management plan and review process (ED/Executive Committee)
- D. Resource implementation of the strategic plan prioritizing operational capacity and staffing plan alignment, performance, policies, and procedures (ED/Executive Committee)

The fourth key focus area is to develop the capacity of the Board, Staff, and Volunteer Leaders. This is the area of Governance and Leadership with a Strategic Goal to build board governance and management capacity to facilitate engagement and growth. The Objectives established to meet this goal and the “action committees” assigned to achieve these goals are:

- A. Develop NEC strategic governance capacity
 - A. Board Committee and Task Group charters (Bylaws Committee, Chair Jerry Wilson, e-mail: nc_rd@ava.org /Standards & Evaluation Committee, Chair Suzi Glass, e-mail: pa_rd@ava.org)
 - B. Governance policies, principles, and practices (Bylaws Committee/Standards & Evaluation Committee)
 - C. Board composition of skills and experience (Executive Committee)
 - D. Board/ED education and training (Executive Committee)
- B. Update and align governing documents with strategic direction and Texas/ Federal Law (Bylaws Committee/Executive Committee)
- C. Study and align AVA regions to support club growth (Standards & Evaluation Committee)

Each of these” action committees” were tasked to report at the January 2017 NEC meeting what they propose to do to meet their objectives and provide a timeline that fits within the 5-year Strategic Plan.

The approval of this plan by the NEC completed the work of the SPC, and it was disbanded by the AVA President. This is as it should be with these “action committees” bringing in fresh ideas and new energy to implement the tasks that will achieve these Objectives and meet these Goals. The members of the SPC did a wonderful job under less than perfect conditions. As Chair, I owe them tremendous thanks for staying the course in spite of difficulties and producing a Strategic Plan that can provide the foundation for a bright future for AVA.

Note that I said the Strategic Plan “can provide the foundation for a bright future for AVA.” This is where the Call to Action comes in. YOU are AVA. As we hand off this Strategic Plan to the “action committees,” I challenge you to get involved. Pick an area where you have experience or interest and contact the appropriate committee chair. Offer your ideas, your help, your support, your energy. Only if we work together will we be able to complete these objectives to reach our goals. Let’s get out there and make things happen.

AVA National Office Team

Awards and Membership Coordinator—Karen Winkle

To view the Monthly Comparison Chart for the Total Number of Awards processed [click here](#).

Events Coordinator—Marie Bebley

It’s Renewal time again. The 2017 YRE and Seasonal Renewal is happening now, deadline is midnight 30th August, 2016. Please renew your walks at your earliest convenience.

Link to the Renewal Instruction below for your convenience.

[Click here](#).

Here are some tips to renew your YREs and Seasonals.

- Please do not mark your events “No Renewal” if undecided. There is no “undo” button, you will have to re-enter a new ESR.

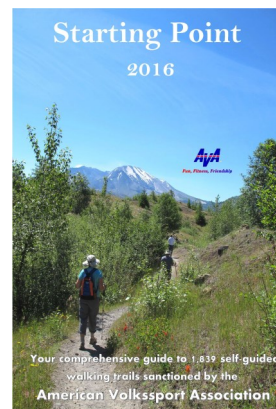
- For faster and to avoid error during renewal, do a fast and quick renewal without changes. Simply click re-new and submit. You may enter your changes or updates by going to ESR Listing page to edit your event information.
- Your event will disappear from your renewal list if you entered wrong information. Call Marie to have your event reactivated if your event disappeared during renewal.
- Most of the error you will encounter is in the POC section. Please follow the instructions accordingly.

Contact Marie at events@ava.org or 210-659-2112 for any ESR renewal problems and concerns or [click here for starting point tips](#).

Sanctioning of 2017 YRE's and seasonals begins June 1, 2016 and ends August 31, 2016. RDs have until September 15 to review their region's events; after September 15 if your club sanctions a YRE or seasonal it will not appear in the 2017 Starting Point Book. Starting Point changes are listed only for events published in the Starting Point.

** Once sanction window closes after 8/31/2016 you must go to Traditional Events pull down menu of Type and select YRE or Seasonal. **

2016 Starting Points are still available at a reduced rate of \$15.00, plus shipping costs, while supplies last! Get yours today!



Information and Technology Specialist—Hector Hernandez

Big Thanks to All the Clubs and members who participated in the Big Give and attended our 40th Anniversary. Each event was a great success and couldn't of been done without you. Just so you know we are putting up the commemorative 40th Anniversary t-shirts online on our [CafePress Store](#).

If you have any pictures you may want posted to the website please email me at Hector@ava.org or if you want to add any of your pictures to our online Facebook albums please email Samanta at Samanta@ava.org.



Starting Point Photo Contest

AVA is looking for those two photos that capture the essence of Volkssporting in the USA! The first and second place winners will get their photo printed on the front side (1st place) and backside (2nd place) cover of the 2017 Starting Point book. Winners will also get a complimentary copy of the Starting Point!

Entries are due to AVA National office no later than August 31, 2016. Rules, guidelines and the official entry form are [attached here](#). Participation in the nationwide contest is open to AVA members, clubs and state organizations. All entries must have been created or occurred during the time period from June 30, 2015 – August 31, 2016. For more information contact Hector at hector@ava.org

Communications—Samanta Sanchez, Intern

Due to the transitions that our national office will be experiencing, the AVAHQ@ava.org email address will no longer be monitored by Candace Purcell. I have been assigned the task of monitoring AVA's primary email address. Please use this email for all general inquiries and I will direct them to the appropriate staff member or you can send a message directly to their email address. Thank you!



Big Give Update

Our annual fundraising campaign, The Big Give SA, has ended but donations have kept coming in through the month of June. Despite the unexpected technical issues, our fundraiser was an unprecedented success. As of today, we have raised a bit over \$53,000!!! This amount reflects the support, dedication, and love that our members have towards AVA. We are excited for next year and the big things to come for our organization.

BIG THANK YOU!!!

AVA's Executive Director's Update—Henry Rosales

Executive Director's Update



****Click icon for a message on the Big Give.****

THANK YOU and CONGRATULATIONS TO EVERYONE! The Big Give Raised Over \$53,000!

The Big Give SA fundraising campaign ended on May 31, 2016, Although some checks were still in the mail during the time this article was published, it is safe to assume we will have raised over \$53,000. This year's campaign proved to be just as successful as last year's because we doubled the number of donors, thanks to the support of everyone involved in getting the word out via social media, email, mail, word of mouth, etc. Our strategy to outreach to more individuals proved to be very effective. We also leveraged **\$3,500** in prize money through the support of our online donors!



Your support is much appreciated and received by the National office as an indication that we must continuously improve the quality of our work and services to our membership and the general public for a strong future. We remain dedicated and committed in our efforts to ensure that Volkssporting not only continues but thrives in the United States for many years to come.

The Big Give SA Comparison 2015 & 2016

Online Individual Donors	129	\$10,496	223	\$14,572
Online Club Donors	12	\$3,275	13	\$2,100
Mailed Individual Donations by Check/Cash	93	\$8,240	275	\$12,211.25
Mailed Club Donations by Check/Cash	27	\$6,630	68	\$9,927.75
Prize Money		\$0		\$3,500
Total Donors	261		579	
Total Raised (not including match)		\$28,641		\$42,311
Match 2015 (Individual)		\$30,000		
Match 2016 (NEC, Private and Employee Donors)				11,000
Grand Total		\$58,641		\$53,311

New Finance Manger Hired

I am happy to introduce Ms. Erin Grosso who was recently hired as the Finance Manager.



Erin Grosso – Erin was raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is a graduate of the University of New Mexico. She moved to San Antonio, Texas in 1992 and married Michael Grosso. Michael is a native of San Antonio and after 23 years of service in the USAF, they returned to Texas. They and three children have made their home in New Braunfels, Texas. She is excited to learn more about volkssporting and the AVA and will be serving the AVA as the Accounting Manager. She hopes that her background in accounting, recruiting, and fundraising will lend itself to further the growth and success of the American Volkssport Association.

IRS 990 N Form

For those clubs needing additional information completing the one time IRS online registration for the filing of the 990 N form refer to the article written by Frank Sayers by [clicking here](#).

FINANCE (Unaudited Report)

Annual Budget for 2016-2017 – The AVA budget for 2016-2017 was approved during the NEC meeting in June and is available on the AVA website along with our audited financial statements for fiscal 2014-2015.

Year to Date Report Fiscal Year Ending 2016-The May 2016 financials reflect a net income loss of \$(130,153.65) through 05.31.2016. Although we are still anticipating additional revenue from the Big Give (approximately \$16,000) and from participation and 4th quarter fees I am still anticipating we will end the year with a net loss.

AVA's DBA = AVA: America's Walking Club

Our DBA (Doing Business As) was ratified by the National Executive Council on June 11, 2016. After

reviewing all the comments sent in by club members there we no changes or edits made by the NEC to our new DBA.

Thanks to all of you who provided comments and suggestions. AVA: America's Walking Club can replace American Volkssport Association where ever you like. The DBA is good for 10 years and can be renewed. If you chose to use the DBA, no more explaining what Volkssport means!

For filing with the IRS, the name remains American Volkssport Association.



From the bottom of our hearts, special thanks to everyone who joined us for the 40th Anniversary Celebration in Fredericksburg, Texas. The event was a huge success and well organized thanks to the support of our volunteers and state association and club members. We also thank all of our clubs across the country who have hosted or will be hosting a 40th Anniversary Celebration in your area. Please send us your stories and pictures so we can share them with our Volkssporting family!

Support Our National and International Friends!



****Click on image to enlarge****

Photo by Ray Harper 2015 Mobile, Alabama

C.Kahl aboard John and Debbie Bright's Model "T"

Checkpoint Available Via Email to All Club Members Who Request It

To receive an electronic copy of the Checkpoint send us an email to the attention of Samanta requesting that you be put on our distribution list for the Checkpoint. Please note on the subject line: Request for Checkpoint. Send your request to Samanta at intern@ava.org.

The American Volkssport Association

The Mission of AVA is to promote and organize noncompetitive physical fitness activities that encourage lifelong fun, fitness, and friendship for all ages and abilities.

1001 Pat Booker Road · Suite 101 · Universal City, TX 78148

Phone 210.659.2112 · Fax 210.659.1212 ·

Email: avahq@ava.org **Website** ava.org

[Click to Like Us on Facebook](#)

[Click for our Cafepress Store](#)