

14 Low Cost Ways For Clubs To Make News

It seems safe to say that AVA club leaders and volunteers around the country have, at one time or another, accepted the fact that getting people excited about walking isn't always an "easy sell." They know it is imperative to increase interest in, and exposure for volkssporting. And they also know if they really want to be effective in reaching the public, they need the cooperation of the media to be successful.

This listing provides 14 proven strategies and a few comments that can be used to supplement existing club promotion programs and make volkssporting more interesting in the eyes of reporters and journalists. It is understood that how well these suggestions are executed depends on resource availability and the real desire of fellow AVA club members to participate.

- **Tie in with news event of the day.** (Obesity and senior health care have been in the news lately. Show how AVA walking programs can assist in promoting and producing healthy lifestyles and publicize the healthy aspects of walking. Provides a great opportunity to promote AVA organizational purposes - fun, fitness and friendship).
- **Conduct a community poll or survey and announce the findings.** (There are exercise and fitness-related surveys being taken and findings released every day. Search your favorite exercise websites. You can suggest to local media that they might want to see results. Provide the results in an e-mail news release always giving credit to the author. Add a paragraph about your club at the end of the release. With the 24/7 news cycles, media members are always appreciative of news leads).
- **Arrange a sports celebrity interview at a walking venue.** (Could be a local college player, retired athlete, successful coach, sports newscaster. Then, after the media interview, ask the celebrity to be your AVA club spokesperson).
- **Tie in with a newspaper or other organization on a project.** (Organize a community walk with media as co-sponsor but don't ask them for cash, ask them for exposure and air time. The radio medium works well here. Media love to promote themselves and their tie-ins with community activities. Media companies rarely give cash. The promotional power they have to offer is better than cash).

Also, grocery stores make great sponsors and provide great snacks at events. It has been suggested that there should be a fourth "F" to go along with Fun, Fitness and Friendship – Food! Serving refreshments after a long walk enhances the total volkssport experience. Invite the local grocery store to be present. They can sample new products and they know proper food handling techniques and how to deal with health department officials).

Form a committee and announce names of members. (Form a physical fitness committee working in conjunction with local officials. Invite representatives from local health organizations, senior service centers, media, schools, to serve as committee members. Once the committee is formed, announce its purpose and members).

- **Announce an appointment.** (Introduce the appointed AVA Regional Director if he or she happens to visit or be from your community. Announce your new club leadership board. Announce an appointed speaker's bureau representative and the fact he or she is available for group presentations).
- **Celebrate an anniversary.** (The birthday of your club, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month in May, first AVA U.S. Volksmarch June 9, the founding date of a nearby city. Invite city officials to the party. Invite a local bakery to donate a "special" cake).
- **Speak to public bodies to endorse and educate the public on AVA and your events.** (Contact the local civic organizations in your area, Rotary, Lions Club, Church groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, schools, etc. Talk to that committee chair whose job is to find guest speakers for each of their monthly meetings).
- **Write a letter to the editor.** (Provide information about your organization, about lack of community sports and recreation centers. Invite the editor to one of your events. Assign someone to accompany them providing information and encouragement during the walk).
- **Stage a special event to endorse reports and surveys on walking.** (Look for government, health agency, Surgeon General reports that endorse exercise and walking. All kinds of information can be found on the web, and then you endorse them. Forward them to the media via e-mail. Or conduct a health fair at your event site working with local hospitals, media. Pass out information on your club and an executive summary of the report or survey).
- **Organize a tour, an event or venue inspection.** (Inspect a walking trail or conduct a tour of available AVA walking trails with city officials, VIPs, sports officials, and general public. Conduct a clean-up day with local scout troop to help clean up the trail and allow sponsors to provide logo bags, trucks to haul trash).
- **Tie in with well-known weeks or days.** (Enter your club to march in the community July 4th parade, Veteran's Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc. Get a banner to carry in front of the group and reap tons of exposure. Maybe create a walk to coincide with anniversary of founding of your city. Ask AVA club members to donate or collect Christmas toys to local charity. Use creativity).
- **Make an award.** (Announce your outstanding volunteer of the year. Invite the mayor to present an IVV performance award to a volkssporter. Present the mayor or city councilman with an award for their continued support in allowing you to use public property for trails).
- **Hold a contest.** (Try to break a Guinness record for number of marchers or promote "dogs are welcome" theme and then encourage walkers to sign up for your walk with a pre-event "Pooch Parade," where dog owners dress up dogs for prizes. Then everyone owner and dog take off on your walk. Approach pet stores, grocery stores that sell pet foods, groomers, veterinarians, etc. as co-sponsors and/or dog judges. Let them set up a tent or table for a fee and step back and watch the success. Also, police and military like to show off police dog/drug bomb sniffing activities at public events. Usually very popular with the public).