



PRESS RELEASE

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USA Awarded Premier International Walking Festival *AVA: America's Walking Club to Host IVV Olympiad in February 2023*

(San Antonio, TX, March 30, 2021) For the first time, AVA: America's Walking Club will host the preeminent bi-annual international walking festival known as the IVV Olympiad, planned for February 2023 in San Antonio, Texas. As a member nation of the IVV – the International Federation of Popular Sports – the USA has never hosted the event. Participants from as many as 42 nations will attend the three-day festival that normally attracts more than 5,000 walking enthusiasts.

The Olympiad will be held in conjunction with the Texas Trail Roundup - another international event co-sponsored by America's Walking Club's Texas state association and the International Marching League (IML)*. This arrangement will afford international travelers the opportunity to spend a full week or more experiencing the best San Antonio and the USA have to offer. The back-to-back festivals are timed to showcase one of the most uniquely American of sporting events – San Antonio's award-winning annual Stock Show & Rodeo.

"It is a great honor for the international community to award America's Walking Club the opportunity to host the 2023 IVV Olympiad here in San Antonio, the home of our national organization. For the first time the Olympiad will be held in the Americas, which not only allows us to share our hospitality with walkers from around the world, but also to bring awareness to our sport and organization here at home. We welcome everyone to the volkssporting movement," said David Bonewitz, Chairman, America's Walking Club.

America's Walking Club - formally known as the American Volkssport Association (AVA) - administers one of the nation's largest healthy living sports programs through its 200 local walking clubs nationwide. Its all-volunteer clubs hold a variety of events - more than 2,500 annually - in all 50 states. Most of its walking events offer a pre-marked 10-kilometer trail with an option to walk 3 or fewer kilometers, but these festivals will also include extended distances of up to 42km.

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One of the longer distances during the Olympiad/IML will be along San Antonio’s renowned “mission trails,” featuring multiple UNESCO World Heritage sites. In addition, the five San Antonio-area America’s Walking Club groups sponsor other 42km walk and bike routes available during the Olympiad and year-round. All events are non-competitive and completed at the participant’s individual pace. Participants may start an event individually or in a group at any time during a specified time window and are allowed more than enough time to finish the various distance options. Special provisions also allow for the physically challenged to participate in most events. Participation is open to the general public.

This movement, called *volksporting*, began in Europe in 1968, and arrived in America in 1976 when Texan Ken Knopp brought the idea to the United States to celebrate the Bicentennial. Walking is the most popular of all U.S. fitness activities and has been identified by the Surgeon General as the most beneficial form of exercise for Americans of all ages and athletic ability levels. As a non-profit organization, America’s Walking Club is dedicated to promoting personal physical fitness and good health by providing fun-filled, safe exercise in a stress-free environment through non-competitive walks and hikes, bike rides, swims, and in some regions cross-country skiing and snow shoeing.

Planning for the 2023 IVV Olympiad has begun and further updates will be available as it progresses.

* A second IML walking festival in America known as the US Freedom Walk Festival, is held annually in Arlington, VA with the next scheduled event 15-17 October 2021.

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ABOUT AMERICA’S WALKING CLUB:

America’s Walking Club is the largest walking club in the United States. A nonprofit organization founded in 1976, America’s Walking Club is dedicated to promoting personal physical fitness and good health by providing fun-filled, safe exercise in a stress-free environment through non-competitive walks and hikes, bike rides, swims, and in some regions cross-country skiing and snow shoeing. Its nationwide, grassroots network of more than 200 active clubs host more than 2,500 events annually across the country. The club, based in San Antonio, Texas, is a member of the [International Federation of Popular Sports](#) (IVV) and the [International Marching League](#) (IML). For more information visit www.ava.org or call 210-659-2112.