

THE AMERICAN WANDERER

TAW

The Walking Magazine



**AMERICA'S
WALKING CLUB**
— ESTABLISHED 1976 —

The American Wanderer is a national publication of the AVA: Americas Walking Club.



Fun, Fitness, Friendship INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Name: Jerry Wilson

Club: Madison Area Volkssport Association (Dairyland Walkers), and Lake Country Wanderers

Year joined AVA: Locally: We were charter members of the Dairyland Walkers, 30 years ago.

Nationally: We became Lifetime members when first offered.

KMs walked: 17,300 (estimated)

Number of events completed: 1,791

Officer positions held (if any): Local club co-presidents for 3 years. Newsletter editor for over ten years. Compiler of quarterly YRE and seasonal events for over 15 years. North-central Regional Director for 4 years. Convention Committee Chair for 6 years plus.

Why did you join AVA? When we first learned about AVA we used walk locations around the country when traveling with young children. Walking got us out of the car periodically on long trips, it also gave us a chance to learn about different areas of the country from walking direction writers who wanted to share the best of their area with walkers.

What's your favorite walk? Oak Park, IL (Although we heard this walk is no longer offered.) Eastside Walk in Madison WI.

What's your most memorable walk? The International Walk just completed during the 2025 AVA Biennial Convention. The first 5 km of the Presidents Walk in Rapid City, SD.

What's your favorite club activity? In the summer our club hosts an ice cream social after holding a 5 km event.

What's your favorite special program and why? I like the Centurion program, it gets us out 100 times plus each year. Before that, the virtual walk events, like the Walk Across Canada, these events would get us out walking almost daily. I guess I need motivation!

What would you tell someone who was thinking about joining AVA? Please join us! Start small, join a local club for a walk or two. If you like it, join a local club. Join the national club to support the AVA mission.

How has AVA helped you with your wellness goals? I believe it helps to keep my organs working as they should. Keeping added weight off is also a big plus. Unfortunately, with aging, walking distances for me is becoming more difficult.

Anything else you want to add about volkswalking or why you walk? I encourage everyone to get out to walk, and keep walking as long as your body will take you.

Two IML Events in October 2025 in North America

La marche Maple Leaf March
October 10-12, 2025
Ottawa, Ontario
marchemapleleafmarch.ca

US FreedomWalk
October 17-19, 2025
Washington, DC/Alexandria, VA
usfreedomwalk.org



SAVE THE DATE

The *Big Give*

Join us for the 12th Big Give
September 17-18, 6PM-6PM



AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

First, thank you to Nancy Wittenberg, Chair, and the entire Board of Directors whose terms ended at the Las Cruces Convention. Their dedication and strategic planning for the future of America's Walking Club is very much appreciated! The new Board will continue to grapple with the reality of what once worked isn't working anymore and the need to redouble our efforts to change and grow.

Clubs have to be held accountable one, to actively achieve the mission of AVA by promoting and organizing noncompetitive physical activities that encourage lifelong fun, fitness and friendship for all ages and abilities. And two, provide the operations income through sanction fees, participation fees and donations to maintain the organization's financial ability to support the mission.

Members whether affiliated with a club or not also must support the mission through all means necessary promoting, participating and financially supporting America's Walking Clubs. Most of all members need to recruit new members, not just to walk but to be part of the ongoing pursuit of new volunteers and leaders. Together we can make a difference and start to grow again. Let your communities know you exist. And when new walkers or interested people show up, make them welcome and looking forward to your next event.

Brenda and I attended the Northeast region's Tri-state Lighthouse Walking Events on Armed Forces Weekend in May. It was great walking with new and old friends and we look forward to attending other multi-event weekends in other regions. Be sure to add your events to the Multi-Day Events (Fests) page on My.AVA.org as soon as possible so people can plan to visit you! I will also be representing AVA at several international events this year; walking and meeting with members of other IVV/IML countries. Especially excited to just be a walker at the Olympiad in Finland!



CARL CORDES, AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN

AVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Find a Director in your area.

PRESIDENT'S UPDATES



HENRY ROSALES, PRESIDENT AND CEO

AVA 2025 BIENNIAL CONVENTION

To all our members, friends, family, and volunteers in Las Cruces, El Paso, and Juarez, who attended our 2025 Biennial Convention in Las Cruces, NM, thank you very much for your unwavering support of the AVA. We had approximately 254 attendees. One of my memorable moments was the walk in Juarez, MX. We had 180 participants venture into Mexico where we were greeted by Juan Acereto Cervera, a representative from the government of Juarez International Affairs, Edgar Cazares, Director of Tourism Development for the State of Chihuahua, Veronica Castro, Director of Tourism Development for the city of El Paso, and Nora Ochoa, Ecotourism & Cultural Heritage Manager, Visit El Paso.

Special thanks to Jerry Wilson, Chair of the Convention Committee, all committee members and the National Office team who all worked on convention planning year-round! This would not be possible without their leadership, commitment, and time.

The 2025 convention survey results are in, and we will be sharing them with you during the August webinar. What is most promising is that twenty-one percent (21%) of the respondents stated this was their very first AVA convention! Ninety-three percent of the respondents said they had a good or very good overall convention experience.

One of our first time convention attendees sent me the following letter that I share with you. Thank you all for attending. Keep the feedback coming!

Dear Friends,

I heard a rumor about an AVA convention questionnaire. I haven't received a questionnaire, but I have some thoughts to share. *And I'm not shy about sharing them.*

The Las Cruces AVA convention was my first. I hope to attend many more. To say it was fun is an understatement. *My husband and I had a blast!*

I loved the volksmarches. Don't ask me to name my favorite, because I can't. I made a new friend while walking around the university in Las Cruces. She said, "It's not a volksmarch unless you get lost at least once." I remember that every time I do a new volksmarch!

I'm so glad you had us walk around the university. I was impressed. I had no idea the university was so large. The university is a beautiful place. Thanks for suggesting volksmarches make a stop in the library. It was well-worth the time to stop there and admire the petrified wood.

The skin of this *gringa* burns easily, and I am grateful that instructions for the various volksmarches were available days ahead of time so that I could start walking before 6 am and finish before the sun and UV rays fried me. I hope you will always do this. My dad died from skin cancer and I lost a friend who was only in her 30's from skin cancer as well. (My friend left behind two children.)

Instead of doing White Sands (my skin would have not appreciated that walk), my husband and I did the Deming 10K. WOW! Deming has remarkable public art! We stopped for a bathroom break in the Courthouse, and an employee there took us to the Mayor's office to show us old pictures of the town. How's that for welcoming?

We stopped for *huevos rancheros* after our walk, and the restaurant owner came over to visit with us. We were given fried pastries to take with us. How's that for welcoming the stranger?

My husband and I stayed at the Ramada. The Ramada is a beautiful hotel and you got us a great price. The staff were very kind and welcoming. We liked our room and enjoyed daily banter with the cleaning staff and the front desk staff.

Food: I thought both dinners were delicious. Mashed potatoes with Hatch chilis? *Oh, my!* I noticed that the people sharing our table were also quite impressed. Everybody gobbled up those potatoes! (I can't get my mind off of them. I'm obsessed.) I liked the cheese enchiladas and beans on the night of the gala. Since I am allergic to poultry, I am pleased that you offered an alternative to the chicken dish. *Well done!*

My husband told me to mention the box lunches to you. They were very good.

Over the past year, phone conversations with the AVA staff have been great. You're all very nice and helpful. However, meeting some of you in person was a real treat. (You're every bit as lovely in person as you are on the phone.)

I was impressed with the age of the participants (average age about 75 or older?). These people stay active and are an inspiration to the rest of us.

Points to consider: There are a lot of seasoned volksmarchers who should see it as a responsibility to be welcoming. For instance, at the gala, **my husband and I were turned away from empty seats at many tables.** This was not "welcoming" and was, frankly, a little embarrassing. "You can't sit here. These seats are reserved for members of our club." *Really? We did bathe...* It felt oddly territorial. Instead, someone should have said, "Come and join us! We're from ... Where are you from? ..."

If club members want to dine together, they can make plenty of opportunities to do so when they return to their home states. There's no reason to be cliquish at a convention. Conventions should be viewed as an opportunity to meet people from all over the country. We even chatted with a young man from Denmark on our bus!

All of us have a responsibility to welcome others. I noticed a woman standing alone prior to the gala doors opening, so my husband and I went over to meet her. That's what everybody should have been doing.

The music was a little loud prior to the gala doors opening. This made conversation difficult. We liked the music a lot at both events, though. I don't know where you found the musicians, but they were great.

I can't wait to learn where the next convention will be! I hope I'll be able to attend. Since this convention was in the southwest, I'm hoping for a place in a very different part of the country.

Thank you for a great convention. Thank you for all you do to have made me fall in love with volksmarching and the AVA.

Sincerely,

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW LETTER](#)



AVA 2025 BIENNIAL CONVENTION FINANCIAL REPORT

ERIN GROSSO, AVA FINANCE DIRECTOR

A great big THANK YOU to all of you who supported the AVA's 2025 Biennial Convention with your participation. It was a really great time with so many beautiful walks and fun events. We received so many compliments on the Convention Center and the organization and efficiency of registration, credentialing and stamping. Above all, everyone really enjoyed the walks in El Paso, Juarez, White Sands, Mesilla Bosque and Las Cruces. The variety of landscapes and locations were beautiful and the food for the Welcome Reception and the Gala was INCREDIBLE!

On the financial side of the Convention, we were also very successful! The Convention was well attended by 254 registrants and finished with a \$37,641 net profit. We received nearly \$20,000 in grants and sponsorships and negotiated some really great deals on some of the major expenses. While we are very happy with our success, we fell short of our original expectation of 350 registrants which would have earned the AVA nearly \$40,000 in additional revenue. This would result in a net profit of \$77,641.



AMERICAN VOLKSSPORT ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP TEAM ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION

ROBERT BUZOLICH, AVA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

During the 2025 Biennial Convention in Las Cruces, New Mexico, the assembled delegates and proxies voted on Friday, May 2, by acclamation for three nominees to national office. On June 18, 2025, during a Special Call Meeting the AVA Board of Directors elected Sether Werner by acclamation.

The nominees elected to national office are as follows:

			
Chairman Carl Cordes Pacific Region	Secretary Leslie Stone Southeast Region	Vice Chair Ed McCabe Southwest Region	Finance Chair Seth Werner Atlantic Region

Let us congratulate and welcome the four nominees elected to the American Volkssport Association, also known as America's Walking Club, leadership team. All nominees assumed their national position as members of the Board of Directors at the close of the General Membership Meeting on May 2, 2025 or immediately after being elected on June 18, 2025.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BLACK HILLS VOLKSSPORT ASSOCIATION!

The Crazy Horse Memorial Volksmarch was a huge success with participation numbers exceeding 6,000! What a fantastic job the club does working in partnership with the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation. This is a huge event, and it takes a lot of planning and coordination with all the different partners who are involved. Special thanks to Mary Jayne Jordan and Anne Horst for making this happen!

I had the opportunity to attend this event and meet with representatives from Rapid City as well as the CEO of the Foundation, Whitney Rencountre II. He expressed his gratitude and support of the Black Hills Volkssport Association and the AVA and is interested in partnering on a special event next year for their 40th Anniversary and our 50th Anniversary. I hope everyone will join us! Follow us in the Checkpoint as details become available.

2025-2027 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Congratulations to the new Board of Directors for AVA: America's Walking Club.

Office	Name
Chair	Carl Cordes
Vice-Chair	Ed McCabe
Secretary	Leslie Stone
Finance Chair	Seth Werner
Atlantic RD	Karen Kaufman
Atlantic DRD	Ron Jones
Mid America RD	Craig Gauger
Mid America DRD	Roxie Geiser-Weaver
North Central RD	Ken Johnson
North Central DRD	Kristi Kenyon
Northeast RD	Carol Giesecke
Northeast DRD	Eileen Skinner
Northwest RD	Sandi Severtsen
Northwest DRD	Pat Jewett
Pacific RD	Holly Pelking
Pacific DRD	Suzie Glass
Rocky Mountain RD	Christopher Begnoche
Rocky Mountain DRD	Vacant
South Central RD	Terri Tyler
South Central DRD	Vacant
Southeast RD	Jeanne Stokes
Southeast DRD	Vacant
Southwest RD	Andy Thomas
Southwest DRD	Susan Noonan

CONGRATULATIONS SETH WERNER, AVA FINANCE CHAIR

On June 18 the Board of Directors of America's Walking Club, meeting in a special session elected by acclamation Seth Werner from the York White Rose Wanderers of Pennsylvania as Finance Chair of the American Volkssport Association to a term of office which began immediately.

Join with the Board of Directors, the clubs, state organizations and the staff of the National Office, as we congratulate Seth on his election and welcome him onto the Board of Directors as we continue to grow and improve America's Walking Club. Seth's background, skills and experiences will contribute greatly to the accomplishment of our mission.



CANDIDATE STATEMENT

As a lifelong walker and current President of the York White Rose Wanderers, I am proud to submit my name for consideration as Finance Chair of the American Volkssport Association Board of Directors. I bring a strong blend of financial acumen, strategic leadership, and deep commitment to volkssporting to this role—qualities that are vital to stewarding AVA's financial integrity and supporting its mission of promoting fun, fitness, and friendship.

Professionally, I hold an MBA in Project Management, PMP certification, and have over a decade of leadership experience in financial oversight, operations, and strategic planning across nonprofit, education, and government sectors. I've managed multimillion-dollar budgets, led nonprofit board development, overseen large-scale audits and financial transitions, and implemented tools that increased transparency and operational efficiency. I currently support vulnerable communities through my work with United Disabilities Foundation and have served in leadership roles with the American Red Cross, educational institutions, and national cultural organizations.

What makes me uniquely qualified is the intersection of these experiences with my deep-rooted passion for volkssporting. I grew up walking with my grandparents, and today I walk alongside my wife Suzanne—an enduring family tradition that gives me personal insight into the value AVA brings to communities nationwide. But I also understand the challenges AVA faces. As club president, I've worked firsthand to revitalize local engagement, address declining participation, and advocate for meaningful change in the face of resistance.

In addition to financial leadership, I have managed national conferences, redesigned open house and marketing strategies, and led web and forum development initiatives to increase organizational visibility. I'm proficient with a variety of cloud-based tools, and emerging AI technologies—that streamline planning, data visualization, and communication.

As Finance Chair, I will focus on:

1. Transparency and Accountability I will ensure that all financial reports are timely, accurate, and accessible to the board and membership. Clear, consistent communication builds trust.
2. Strategic Financial Planning I will collaborate with the CEO and Finance Committee to create forward-looking budgets that align with AVA's strategic plan, enabling responsible investment in programs, digital infrastructure, and outreach.
3. Capacity Building for Clubs I will work to develop and share user-friendly financial tools, templates, and training to help local clubs build stronger financial practices and reduce administrative burden.
4. Streamlining Financial Processes I will review and improve internal finance workflows—making budgeting, reporting, and approvals more efficient and easier to understand for both board members and club leaders.
5. Support for Innovation I will advocate for data-informed decisions and financial models that make room for experimentation and growth, particularly in digital, marketing, and intergenerational engagement strategies.

I believe the Finance Chair plays a pivotal role not only in maintaining AVA's financial health but in enabling its future. With thoughtful stewardship and open collaboration, we can honor our legacy while adapting for the next generation of walkers. Thank you for your consideration.



THE 2025 AVA BIENNIAL CONVENTION IS IN THE BOOKS

JERRY WILSON, CHAIR, CONVENTION COMMITTEE

Another Historic Convention is in the books. We truly lived the words: Fun, Fitness and Friendship! I want to again thank all those that volunteered before, during and now during wrap-up of our time in New Mexico!

Here are the people that served on the Convention Committee for many months giving their time and ideas to this major 2025 event:

Marian DeVaul
Susan Fine
Jeff Giddings
Mike Green
Erin Grosso
Hector Hernandez
Helen Hull
Susan Pinneke

Eileen Roberts
Henry Rosales
Steve Sandridge
Leslie Stone
Andy Thomas
Henrietta Vargas
Jerry Wilson

We hope you all had a great and memorable time in the Southwest in 2025. See you in ????,?? in 2027 (That development clock starts in July of this year.)

SILENT AUCTION THANK YOU!

ANDY THOMAS, SILENT AUCTION COORDINATOR

I want to thank everyone who donated gifts and gift cards to the silent auction in the AVA Convention in Las Cruces. Also a big thanks for everyone who put in bids and participated in the cash raffle. We had many great gifts including regional-themed baskets, jewelry, popcorn, books signed by one of the "Dessert in the Desert" speakers, and timeshare stays for the IML events. Also thanks to the volunteers who sat in the room and the AVA office staff and Kathy Schwencke and others who did everything so that the auction run smoothly.

THE FULL LIST OF DONORS ON PAGE 23



AVA SPECIAL PROGRAM – ANNIVERSARIES HURRAH

Runs January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026. Redeem completed books by December 31, 2027. This shortened period reflects the singularity of the anniversary year. The Program booklet has space for 25 events. Any AVA sanctioned YRE, Seasonal, or Traditional event may be completed for this program celebrating the semi-quincentennial (250th) anniversary of the United States and the Golden (50th) Anniversary of the AVA. (It is also the sesquicentennial of the Centennial State.) Any event which a walker believes is representative of our national or volksmarching history may be completed. One stamp can be used twenty-five times or twenty-five stamps can be used one time. Create your own sub-program within this one to make it truly memorable for you. If there is no event at the historical site you select, find the sanctioned event closest to it and complete that trail. Upon completion, participants will receive a 4"x6" oval patch. Cost of the booklet is \$14. Booklets can be ordered after November 1, 2025. Send request for the booklet to: Falcon Wanderers, c/o: Anniversaries SP, P.O. Box 17162, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7162. POC is Terry Lunghofer at: tlunghofer0031@gmail.com or 719-597-4307 (H).

Stay tuned for a future article recommending possible sub-programs for qualifiers and an image of the patch celebrating these two historic anniversaries!

THE SEARCH IS ON! SPECIAL PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2027

DIANE EVANS, CHAIR, AVA PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Does your club have an idea for a new AVA Special Program they would like to sponsor beginning in 2027? Three current Special Programs (Lighthouses II, Par for the Course, and Rails-to-Trails) will end on 12/31/26 so the Programs Committee will be looking for three new Special Programs to begin on January 1, 2027.

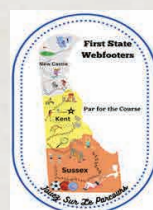
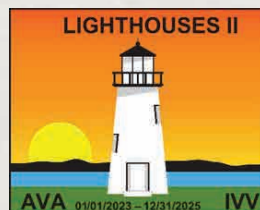
Do you know of a theme that would generate interest from a historical, cultural, educational, or scenic beauty perspective that has not previously been a Special Program. Are there major or intriguing American anniversaries occurring in 2027? Now would be the time to put your creative ideas and imagination to work. Talk with club members on walks as some have additional interests outside walking (yes, it does happen) and those other activities may generate ideas. Check your community calendars for local celebrations that are applicable across all states. Add "Brainstorming Special Programs" to the club's meeting agenda and solicit ideas at the meetings.

The AVA Special Program Policy limits new Programs Committee recommendations to just one AVA Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting per year which is typically the first meeting of the calendar year (i.e. 2026). The Special Program begins January 1st of the following year (i.e. 2027). Committee recommendations at the first BOD meeting of the calendar year provides sufficient time in the remaining year for the sponsoring club to submit articles to TAW and the Checkpoint describing the new program, obtain booklets/awards and create program information for the AVA webpage and OSB. Plus, it allows the clubs across the country to understand the details of the new Special Program, review/modify their current YRE/Seasonal trails or develop new routes or traditional events to include the qualifiers of the new program.

The deadline for new 2027 Special Program proposals is **November 1, 2025**. For a copy of the information required in the new Special Program proposal package, please contact Diane Howell Evans at Programs@ava.org.

SPECIAL PROGRAM DEADLINES

If you are still considering participating in Special Programs, the following Special Programs have a 12/31/25 deadline for the PURCHASE of the current program book:



The last date to REDEEM the following Special Programs challenge books is 12/31/25:



For information on these Special Programs, as well as all the other current programs, please review the Special Programs website at: cb.ava.org/specprog.php



VISIT NORMAN

Norman, Oklahoma: A Hidden Gem for America's Walking Enthusiasts

For walking clubs and recreational walkers seeking a blend of natural beauty, history, and community, Norman, Oklahoma stands out as an exceptional destination. Located just south of Oklahoma City, this walkable city offers scenic trails, historic neighborhoods, and a culture that embraces exploration on foot — making it a natural fit for America's Walking Club (AVA) members.

Inspired by AVA in Las Cruces

After participating in the 2025 AVA Conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico last month, I returned home energized by the camaraderie, stories, and shared passion for walking. It reminded me how powerful our steps can be — not just for fitness, but for connection and discovery. That spirit of exploration lives strong in Norman, and it's why I believe it deserves a spot on every walking club's travel list.

Trails for Every Type of Walker

One of Norman's most picturesque walking destinations is **Lake Thunderbird State Park**, with more than 80 miles of shoreline and miles of well-kept trails. Whether you're interested in a quiet nature walk, birdwatching, or a brisk group hike, the park delivers. Shaded paths, seasonal eagle sightings, and scenic lake views create a perfect environment for both casual and avid walkers.

In town, the **Legacy Trail** offers a paved, urban walking route that connects neighborhoods, the University of Oklahoma, and Norman's downtown. It's accessible, shaded in many parts, and offers a peaceful blend of city and nature. For those who value functionality and flow in their routes, this trail hits the mark.

History and Heritage Underfoot

Norman also invites walkers to step into its history. **The Chautauqua Historic District**, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, showcases approximately 150 historic homes dating from 1910 to 1938. With vintage street lighting, towering trees, and beautifully preserved architecture, the district is an ideal backdrop for slower, more reflective walks.

Equally rewarding is a stroll through the **University of Oklahoma campus**, often cited as one of the most beautiful college campuses in the U.S. Walkers are treated to stunning views of Bizzell Memorial Library, the Seed Sower Statue, and tree-lined paths around the South Oval. The campus combines educational landmarks with botanical beauty — ideal for club walks and photo-friendly tours.

A Natural Fit for AVA Walkers

What makes Norman especially appealing to AVA members is how seamlessly it supports the AVA mission of non-competitive walking. Whether for health, recreation, or cultural immersion, the city's walking infrastructure supports varied interests and fitness levels. There's ample opportunity to host AVA-sanctioned events or simply enjoy an informal club outing.

Beyond the trails and neighborhoods, Norman offers walkable access to museums, parks, local eateries, and seasonal events. It's the kind of city where a day's walk can lead from a historic district to an art exhibit to a friendly café, without stepping into a car.

Walking Toward Discovery

Reflecting on the AVA conference and the sense of joy and purpose it brought, I see those same qualities reflected in my walks through Norman. This city invites you to slow down, look around, and connect — with nature, with history, and with each other.

If you're part of a walking club looking for your next destination, or an individual walker eager for new paths, Norman is ready to welcome you. Lace up your shoes and discover why this Oklahoma gem belongs on every walking enthusiast's map.



DESTINATION ROGERS

Exploring the Trails and Treasures of Northwest Arkansas

Nestled in the heart of the Ozarks, Northwest Arkansas (NWA) is a paradise for walkers seeking scenic trails, vibrant culture, and a welcoming community. With its rolling hills, lush forests, and thoughtfully designed walking paths, this region offers an exceptional destination for those who embrace an active lifestyle and the joys of exploring on foot.

A Trail for Every Step One of NWA's standout features is its extensive trail system, which connects cities, parks, and natural wonders. The Razorback Greenway, a 40-mile paved trail, seamlessly links Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville, and Bella Vista, offering a diverse landscape of urban paths, forested stretches, and picturesque streams. Whether you're looking for a leisurely stroll or a more vigorous trek, this interconnected system ensures a unique walking experience for all levels.

For those who crave a deeper connection with nature, the Buffalo National River trails and Hobbs State Park provide breathtaking views, wooded paths, and opportunities to spot wildlife along the way. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art even integrates walking trails with world-class outdoor sculptures, creating an experience where art and nature blend seamlessly.

A Walkable, Welcoming Community Beyond its natural beauty, NWA is known for its vibrant towns filled with locally owned shops, farmer's markets, and cultural hubs that invite exploration. Bentonville's town square, home to the Walmart Museum and charming cafes, is the perfect place for a post-walk refreshment. In Rogers, visitors can explore the historic downtown district, featuring local boutiques, lively events, and the Railyard Park, a perfect spot for a relaxing stroll. Just outside the city, Hobbs State Park provides an immersive nature experience, with trails like the Shaddox Hollow Trail offering shaded paths and scenic views of Beaver Lake.

The region's commitment to accessibility and outdoor recreation ensures a safe and enjoyable environment for walkers of all abilities. With pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, well-maintained trails, and community-wide support for healthy living, NWA stands as a model destination for those who love to explore at their own pace.

More Than Just a Walk—An Experience From annual festivals like the Soar NWA hot air balloon festival to seasonal farmers' markets and craft fairs, every visit offers a new opportunity to connect with the local community. Whether you're taking a peaceful morning stroll around Lake Atalanta, joining a group walk along the Crystal Bridges trails, or tackling the scenic heights of Mount Kessler, each step through Northwest Arkansas is a step toward adventure and discovery.

For those seeking a destination that blends walkability, natural beauty, and a sense of community, Northwest Arkansas is ready to welcome you. Lace up your walking shoes and experience the heart of the Ozarks—one step at a time.



VISIT SPRINGFIELD



Top Attractions to Explore in the Springfield, Missouri Area

Planning a visit to Springfield, Missouri? Whether you're traveling with family, friends, or solo, this vibrant Ozarks city is packed with unique attractions. Here's a curated list of standout spots worth checking out.

Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World

Missouri's top tourist destination, this 500,000-square-foot space is far more than a store. In addition to outdoor gear, it houses several free museums, including the NRA Sporting Arms Museum, Archery Hall of Fame and the Motorsports Museum.

BigShots Golf

A fun spot for golfers of all skill levels, BigShots offers 56 climate-controlled bays, a six-hole mini-golf course, delicious eats from a scratch kitchen, and high-tech, 3D-enhanced golf games.

Crystal Cave

Reopened in 2022, Crystal Cave features a 55-minute guided walking tour through dazzling rock formations, plus kid-friendly attractions like train rides, gemstone mining, and mini golf.

Dickerson Park Zoo

Home to over 500 animals, this self-guided zoo experience includes giraffe feedings, a reptile house, a mini train ride, playground, and seasonal events.

Discovery Center

This interactive science museum features hands-on exhibits on everything from physics to health, including crowd favorites like the HighWire Bike and Discovery Town.

Fantastic Caverns

America's only ride-thru cave offers a 55-minute guided tour in a Jeep-drawn tram. It's accessible year-round and ideal for families and guests with mobility needs.

Finley Farms

Centered around the historic Ozark Mill, this destination blends history with farm-to-table dining, a riverside wedding chapel, and scenic walking paths.

History Museum on the Square

Located on historic Route 66, this award-winning museum brings Springfield's colorful past to life with interactive exhibits and artifacts. A must-visit for history and Route 66 buffs.

Landers Theatre

Catch a live performance at Springfield Little Theatre, where local talent brings family-friendly shows like Matilda and The Sound of Music to life.

Springfield Botanical Gardens

Explore themed gardens showcasing irises, roses, native plants, and more. Don't miss the tranquil Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden, a 7.5-acre oasis with lakes and a teahouse.

Pythian Castle

Built in 1913, this historic structure offers guided tours, ghost hunts, and private event rentals. It once served as a rehab center for WWII soldiers.

Route 66 Car Museum

Car lovers will appreciate this collection of 70+ classic and movie vehicles, including the Batmobile and a 1907 REO Runabout.

Smallin' Civil War Cave

Take a journey back in time through this historic cave, featuring Civil War lore, ancient cave drawings, and lantern-lit evening tours.

Springfield Cardinals

Catch a minor-league baseball game at Hammons Field—fun even for non-fans thanks to food deals, giveaways, and themed nights.

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

Enjoy peaceful trails, wildlife viewing, and educational exhibits at this 80-acre urban oasis with over three miles of walking paths.

Wild Animal Safari

Drive through or hop on a guided tour to get up close to exotic animals, plus a walk-through area with monkeys, reptiles, and a petting zoo.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield

Explore one of the best-preserved Civil War battlefields in the U.S., complete with a visitor center, artifacts, and interpretive trails.

Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium

This 350,000-square-foot experience features 35,000 animals, immersive exhibits like shipwrecks and rainforests, and was named Best Aquarium by USA Today multiple times.





REGIONAL TALES FROM THE TRAILS



ATLANTIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



HAUNTED GETTYSBURG WEEKEND

BY TOM JACKSON

Join the York White Rose Wanderers in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, for the Haunted Gettysburg Weekend, November 14-16. This will be the first Haunted Gettysburg Weekend that is also scheduled to coincide with the Gettysburg Remembrance Day. Remembrance Day honors the sacrifices made on the Gettysburg battlefield and consists of a parade of several thousand Civil War Reenactors, an illumination at the National Cemetery, a military ball, a reenactment, and other events.

There will be four Volkswalks. The "Ghost Tour Walk" will be on Saturday only; the other three walks are sanctioned for all three days. In addition, there are three year round walks, a bike, and a swim in Gettysburg.

The "Ghost Tour Walk" is a Guided Night Walk and includes a professionally led tour by guides from Gettysburg Ghost Tours. After the ghost tour, the route to our vehicles goes through the National Cemetery. On this evening, there will be illuminations at the gravesites of each Civil War Soldier and there will be a ceremony where the names of the Civil War Soldiers are read. The cost of the Ghost Tour is \$20 which includes the \$4 fee for Paid Participants. You must preregister by sending a check, payable to the YWRW, that is received by Bill Lore, 425 Quaker Dr, York, PA, 17402-4139, by November 1.

The other three walks are the "Remembrance Day Parade Walk", "Hauntings & Rebels Walk", and "Secrets of Gettysburg Walk". These walk will be described in a future TAW articles.

Hotel Reservations may be made at the Days Inn Gettysburg at the rate of \$79.00 plus tax. Reservations must be made by October 13. Call (717) 334-0030 and reach the front desk. If you reach the "Days Inn Central Reservations", that means the front desk in Gettysburg was busy or away from the phone. Ask to be transferred to the front desk in Gettysburg. You can only get the \$79.00 rate by talking with someone at the front desk in Gettysburg. Request the "York White Rose Wanderers" rate. Don't delay making a reservation - we have a block of only 40 rooms and will be unable to add additional rooms. Rooms are also available on Thursday and Sunday nights.

Join us for dinner Friday night at 6:15 PM at Hoss's Steak & Sea House at 1140 York Road, Gettysburg. The restaurant is about 0.75 miles from the Days Inn. Cost is \$23.00, which includes buffet meal, drink, tax, and tip. Make a reservation by sending a check, payable to "YWRW", by October 7, to Bill Lore, 425 Quaker Dr, York, PA 17402-4139. Bill can be contacted at lore25@icloud.com. We can take reservations for only 70 people.

For more information, contact Tom Jackson at thomasjackson@embarqmail.com

SEA WITCH SAVE THE DATE

BY KAREN L KAUFMAN

The First State Webfooters Walking Club of Delaware will host their 35th Annual Sea Witch Triathlon, Saturday, October 25th at the Sussex YMCA, 20080 Church Street, Rehoboth Beach, DE. Start time 8AM.

Our traditional event is in conjunction with the Sea Witch Festival in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. The festival is a three-day Halloween festival that takes place annually in October. It will be held from Friday, October 24th to Sunday, October 26th. The festival features a costume parade along Rehoboth Ave, Pet Parade on the boardwalk, live music, games, and more.

We plan to book end the weekend with our YRE in Milton, DE on Friday, Oct 24th and on Sunday, Oct 26th partner with the Freestate Happy Wanderers for a walk and bike in Ocean City, MD. Stay tuned or check the AVA website for more information.



NEWEST AVA CLUB HOSTS FIRST TRADITIONAL EVENT

BY ANTHONY (TONY) LAING

In December the newest club, 0995, Smith Mountain Lake Walking Club, was established in the Roanoke Virginia area. On April 12, the club hosted their first Traditional Walk in Smith Mountain Lake State Park. Karen Kaufman, now the Atlantic Region Director, attended with her dog Sapphire. Walkers enjoyed stunning views of the lake and surrounding mountains. The club has a small group of dedicated walkers who meet at least twice a month for group walks. The club is walking many "lapsed" Year-Round Events in the area, and hopes to re-sanction many of them soon. Club President Ron Jones thanks his original club, the Northern Virginia Volksmarchers, as well as the Virginia Volkssport Association, for their great support and encouragement. If you are visiting the area contact Ron at wanderingron@myyahoo.com.





MID-AMERICA REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



MA REGION REPORT

BY CRAIG GAUGER

Hello fellow walkers and travelers! I hope many of you enjoyed the walks which were held in conjunction with the AVA Convention in Las Cruces, NM. We sure did. So many interesting sights and sites.

I would like to stress the importance of supporting other club's walks and inviting others to come to your area to enjoy the walks that you host. We need to stick together to grow our organization back to where we were in years past.

When you go on a trip to visit family or just a vacation, seek walks that are near the route getting to where you're going, walks at your destination, and walks getting back home. Going on a short walk definitely makes the driving trip better, by getting your legs stretched out. Contact the club's POC ahead of time. Perhaps, someone can meet you and walk with you. My wife and I have done this many times.

We have all kinds of walks in the Mid America Region. Along the Great Lakes, in city parks, state parks, and National Parks. Rail trails, along waterways, in small towns and cities, there are walks often near the interstate exits. We have event in all 5 states of Mid America.

We all want more walkers and we are all part of the solution by going to the walks, inviting friends along, and talking it up and/or leaving walking information where people will see it.

Our most recent walk in Ohio had a variety of walkers from 6 months to about 80 years. The young family is a couple with a nearly 3-year-old boy and a new 6-months old son. The mother walked many years ago as a child with her folks and she still had her walk books. A year or so ago, they saw our walks advertised. They came out, purchased new walker packets for the husband and son. Since then, they have walked in Texas while visiting there and a few of our events. They have headed to southern California, where her sister lives and she had lived for many years. They bought new walker packets for the sister, BIL, and child and went on a trip to vacation in Las Vegas together.

Just examples of how we should and NEED to keep the walks and the talk of them alive. We expect that this family will get other young couples/friends of theirs out, as well. This should grow our club and help us to plan even more events.

My wife and I are going to Finland and The Baltic States of northeast Europe (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) in July and August, going on an organized tour to volkswalk every day in all 4 countries. We are excited to see the world walking in new and interesting lands. Even if you only go 2-3 hours from home, it's a start. Fun, Fitness, and Friendship. That is our mantra. Let's get out there and enjoy this world, step-by-step! Craig Gauger MA RD



NORTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



NORTH CENTRAL UPDATE

BY KEN JOHNSON

It was a pleasure meeting so many of you at the Las Cruces convention where I began my term as the new North Central RD. Thank you Susan Pinneke for your support and encouragement and for your service. I hope I can be of service in the region's continued success and be of value to the board. In meeting many conventioners from around the country, I was impressed by the way they tailored their activities to suit their local market. Clubs can choose among traditional, seasonal/YRE, guided, traveling guided, ACE, night walking events, bicycling, cross-country skiing, swimming, snowshoeing, and boating. Lengths can vary from minor distance 5 to 9 kilometers. This distance trail may be walked twice to meet the short distance requirement: 10 km to 20 km. A medium distance walk must be a minimum of 20 km and a maximum of 30 km in length and a long-distance walk must be more than 30 km and must be approved by the AVA National Office. A marathon must be 42 km in length.

Twin Cities Volkssports is hosting its first boating event on September 13, 2025, and they've gotten a lot of interest. Minnesota has no coastline, but with its lakes, rivers, and streams boasts more shoreline than California, Hawaii, and Florida combined: 183,326 miles worth. Needless to say, boating is very popular and seems a natural for an AVA-sanctioned event. There is a paddling club in the state that began many years ago as a corporate-sponsored employee activity club. Clubs like this used to be a popular employee benefit. Companies hosted dinners, dances, golf tournaments, bowling, softball and more. Many of those companies are gone, and the modern workplace isn't graced with these fun activities. In the case of the River Ramblers paddling club, the members believed that their club was too good to lose when the company folded. They formed a stand-alone club and have been together since. Our AVA clubs offer a great opportunity to fill the niche formerly occupied by those employer-sponsored activity groups.

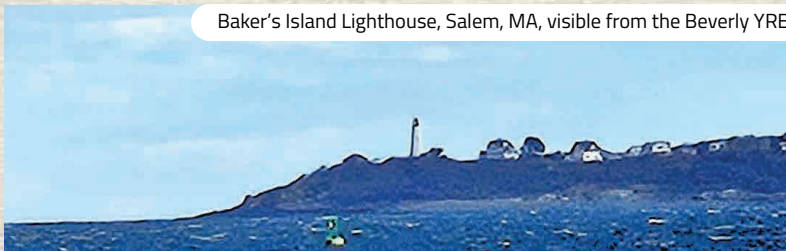
If your club does something that makes for a successful event, share it in TAW or send me a message and get the word out to a wider audience.



NORTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Baker's Island Lighthouse, Salem, MA, visible from the Beverly YRE



THAT'S A LIGHTHOUSE?! AND OTHER STORIES

BY KATHRYN PIFFAT

Lighthouses come in all shapes and sizes. They may be attached to the mainland or visible on an island or jetty across the water. Most are single, but some, like the tall, graceful Twin Lighthouses of Thatcher Island, collectively known as Cape Ann Lighthouse (Rockport, MA SE), are double. While many are conical, some are square, such as Derby Wharf Lighthouse (Salem, MA YRE). Marblehead Lighthouse, visible on an exceptionally clear day from the Beverly, MA YRE, is a skeletal lighthouse looking rather like a giant osprey nest from a distance, while Dog Bar Breakwater Lighthouse, which stands on a dangerous breakwater off Gloucester, MA and visible from the Gloucester YRE, is perched on a high platform (a platform lighthouse) to avoid violent rogue waves.



However, by far the most unusual lighthouse of any on Two Town Walking Club's walks is Hospital Point Range Rear Lighthouse on the Beverly, MA YRE, on both the 6k and 10k trails.

On an exceptionally clear day, walkers may be able to see up to 5 total lighthouses on the 10k trail, including Hospital Point Range Rear Lighthouse, Hospital Point Range Front Lighthouse (on Hospital Point in Beverly), Baker's Island Lighthouse (on Baker's Island, Salem, MA), Fort Pickering Lighthouse (on Winter Island in Salem, MA), and Marblehead Lighthouse (in Marblehead, MA).



The square-towered Hospital Point Range Front Lighthouse, originally Hospital Point Lighthouse until 1927, was named for a smallpox hospital built there in 1801, which served temporarily as a barracks and earthworks fort during the War of 1812. The lighthouse was automated in 1947, and the keeper's house has housed the commander of the First US Coast Guard District ever since.

But would it surprise you to know that the steeple of the First Baptist Church, the tallest spire in downtown Beverly – not on the water and nowhere near Hospital Point – is also known as Hospital Point Range Rear Lighthouse?

In 1927, the beacon from a lightship was used to create a range rear lighthouse with the existing Hospital Point Lighthouse (renamed Hospital Point Range Front Lighthouse). The beacon was placed into the church spire into which a window aperture was built approximately one-third of the way up on the back of the spire, projecting a very narrow (2-degree) beam. Although the church was destroyed in a fire in 1975, the steeple remained intact and was incorporated into the reconstructed church. The spire serves as the range rear light for both Hospital Point Range Front Lighthouse and Baker's Island Lighthouse. The light is in active service and is maintained by the US Coast Guard as an aid to navigation. However, a former US Coast Guardsman who serviced it and other lighthouses has stated that it was his least favorite lighthouse, due to its popularity as a nesting site for pigeons, who made it a very unpleasant place!

As you pass the church on the Beverly YRE, look back and admire this most unusual lighthouse!

EAT, STINK AND BE MERRY!

BY WAYNE KNAPP

That's the actual motto for the Mohawk Valley Garlic and Herb Fest (mvghf.com), to be held this year on Saturday, September 13, 2025. The festival began 23 years ago; eight local garlic farmers wanted to celebrate the harvest season with a modest gathering that resembled a small farmers' market in Canal Place, Little Falls, New York. Over the years the festival expanded with support from the local arts community. Now, there are 90 vendors and a variety of family-friendly activities. The Mohawk Valley in central New York offers an exceptional environment for cultivating garlic and herbs, thanks to a combination of favorable climate and fertile soil.

Welcome to Little Falls! Photo by Kathy Mack



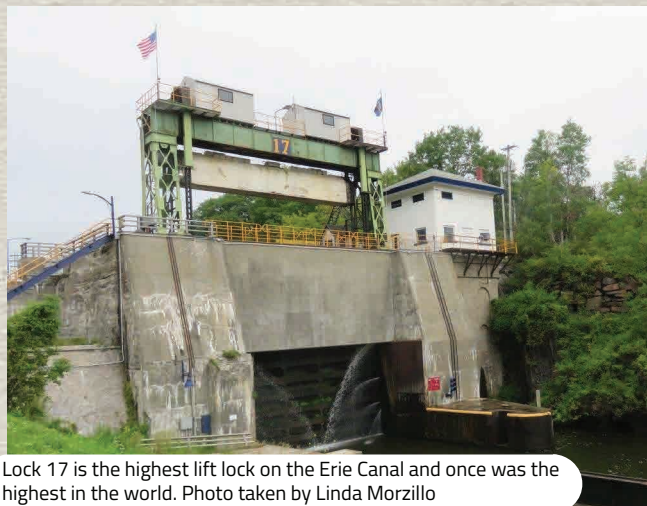
Little Falls, New York, boasts a rich history shaped by its strategic location along the Mohawk River and its dynamic role in early American industry and transportation. The area was first settled by European colonists around 1723 including land granted to German Palatine immigrants. The name "Little Falls" distinguishes it from the "great falls" in Cohoes, New York (second only to Niagara Falls), the site of a walk during the 2019 AVA Convention held in the Northeast Region. The necessity to portage around the Mohawk River's rapids made it a natural hub for trade and settlement. Even though Little Falls endured a series of attacks during both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, it was rebuilt each time.

Festival attendees can enjoy many different activities. Photo taken by Linda Morzillo



The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 (two hundred years ago this year), significantly boosted Little Falls' economy by facilitating the transport of goods and attracting industries. The city became a center for cheese manufacturing in the 19th century, with products shipped to major markets like New York City. Textile and glove manufacturing also flourished, drawing immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe.

Today, Little Falls honors its heritage through preserved historic districts and annual festivals. From its early days as a frontier settlement to its rise as an industrial hub, Little Falls embodies the resilience and innovation characteristic of many American towns.



Lock 17 is the highest lift lock on the Erie Canal and once was the highest in the world. Photo taken by Linda Morzillo

Besides many different kinds of garlic, other locally produced items are for sale.



Join us on September 13, 2025, when the Empire State Capital Volkssporters (ESCV) will have a Traditional Event in Little Falls to both walk and enjoy the Garlic and Herb Festival. We have redesigned the routes to take advantage of good parking and restroom facilities at the Little Falls Marina – Rotary Park, along the shores of the Mohawk River. A nearby shuttle bus stop will take participants directly to the festival and back. Walk options will include regular and alternate 5k and 10k routes. One route circumscribes a section of the Mohawk River via two bridges, one of them going over lock #17, the highest lift lock on the Erie Canal, and once the highest in the world. Both walks will go along the old towpath of the canal, now a walking and biking trail. The cliffs along the route are a popular site for rock climbing. Both 5k and 10k walkers can also walk through the town and residential neighborhoods.

Following the walk, the Mohawk Valley Garlic and Herb Festival will entice you to try garlic ice cream, garlic fudge and the opportunity to view and purchase more types of garlic than you ever knew existed. There will also be live music, food and other vendors – a fun way to end your day in Little Falls.



WALKING/HIKING IN THE NW REGION

BY SHARON MOATS

The AVA NW Region is busy welcoming and training our new Regional Director, Sandi Severtsen and Deputy Regional Director, Pat Jewett. Sandi lives in Washington and Pat lives in Oregon.

This is a great time to visit the NW as you travel. Our region hosts 442 SYR/YR and there are traditional events nearly all weekends. Clubs are busy refreshing walks and enjoying the mountain walks that are becoming available as the snow melts off the trails.

We have many multi-day events coming as listed in the TAW.

Join us in the NW for your vacations!



LVHRS 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION WALK

BY CARL CORDES

Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers are celebrating their 40th anniversary with a nature walk in the Clark County Wetlands Park. It spans 2,900 acres on the eastern edge of the Las Vegas Valley. Included within the park is a 210-acre nature preserve and multiple paved/natural trails. Dogs are prohibited in the nature preserve area. You'll get a very different view from the bright lights of Las Vegas in this lush habitat with over 300 species of plants and animals. The trails are open dawn to dusk every day while the Nature Center is open Tuesday-Sunday, 9am to 3pm.

This is our first time sanctioning a walk in this park and it will be available as a seasonal event October 1 through December 31, 2025 via the Online Start Box. The Club will hold a group walk for our Anniversary celebration Saturday October 25, 2025. Details for the group walk will be posted to LVHRS.org when finalized. Physical onsite registration and stamping will be available at our group walk only.

This will be a great time of year to visit Las Vegas. We have twelve other year-round walks available on OSB to keep you busy! If you have questions contact us at LVHRS1985@yahoo.com.





ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



SOUTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



NEW ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL DIRECTOR INTRO

BY CHRISTOPHER BEGNOCHE

Greetings from the Rocky Mountain Region. As the new Regional Director of this amazing region, I would like to start by introducing myself. I started walking with the AVA back in the mid to late 1990s while on summer break from school. Those first walks were with the First State Webfooters from Delaware. Once back home in Southern Nevada from summer break, my parents let me continue walking the local events hosted by the Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers where I lived at the time. Several years ago, I decided to finally become an associate member of the AVA. With the enjoyment that I have gotten out of walking with the AVA over the years I started to have a desire to start giving back a little bit more. I started by expressing interest in hosting a walk in St. George, Utah where I now live. At the time there was just one walk in the entire state of Utah. That was the Capital Walk in Salt Lake City. Within a few short months there was a walk in St. George, Utah. About three years ago, I noticed the Rocky Mountain Region did not have a Deputy Director. Since I now live within this region, I became intrigued by the idea. Fortunately, I already had a faint idea of the responsibilities of a Regional Director and Deputy Regional Director due to knowing the Pacific Region Regional Director at the time. After a few e-mail exchanges with them I decided to express an interest in the Rocky Mountain Deputy Regional Director post. After several e-mail exchanges with the Rocky Mountain Director at the time, I decided to continue forward with my interest in the position. Needless to say, the rest is history since now I am taking on the challenge of being the next Rocky Mountain Regional Director. I am looking forward to the challenges this position will present and doing what I can to take on those challenges.

I would like to also encourage everyone to look at the many walking opportunities within the Rocky Mountain Region which include the states of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. This region may be on the smaller side, if not the smallest of all, but I would put money on the idea that we have some of the most breathtaking, memorable, and picturesque walks in the country.

UTAH COUNTY SEAT CHALLENGE

If you are visiting Utah, take a look at the Utah County Seat Challenge hosted by the Woodland Wanderers. These walks take you around the cities and towns who host the twenty-nine county governments. Many of these small, sometimes tiny, towns are very rural and can seem disconnected from the hustle and bustle of modern-day life of the big cities. Heck, there may be times you might encounter more wildlife within these city and towns than you encounter people. Portions of these towns don't even have sidewalks either. If you are participating in the Walking with America's Veterans Program, then the Utah County Seat Challenge is for you. Most, if not all, of these walks have at least one qualifier for this program let alone qualifiers for other programs as well.

UTAH NATIONAL PARKS WALKS

As a resident of Utah, I would like to mention two spectacular walks at two scenic National Parks we have in this state. Zion National Park in the Southwestern corner of the state is a popular location in the area. The geology of the area is amazing and provides ample photographic opportunities, especially along the portions along the local Virgin River. As a side note: Please Please Please don't feed the local wildlife. The local Rock Squirrels and Ground Squirrels love to beg for and steal snacks. The local Mule Deer also seem unafraid of humans. Remember they are wild animals who have the potential to cause harm. Take only pictures and leave only footprints. Bryce Canyon National Park is another breathtaking walk we have in Utah and the Rocky Mountain Region. Located in the South-Central part of the state it provides outstanding views of the unique geology of the area. With the elevation ranging from 8,000 feet to 9,000 feet (2,400 meters to 2,700 meters), don't rush the walk and take the time to take in your surrounds and enjoy the area.



SOUTH CENTRAL - ST. LOUIS WALK

BY STEVE MCGRATH

The Saint Louis Walkers will sponsor a walk at Tower Grove Park in St. Louis, MO on August 23, 2025. The park is located at 4257 Northeast Dr, St. Louis, MO 63110. Tower Grove Park was founded on October 20, 1868. The land for the park was donated by retired St. Louis merchant Henry Shaw who also donated Shaw's Garden (Missouri Botanical Garden) to the city. Tower Grove Park is a 289-acre public park and a level II arboretum with nearly four hundred species of trees and plants. The park has seven miles of running/walking trails, tennis and pickleball courts, and softball, baseball, and soccer fields. It has twelve historic Victorian pavilions (32 pavilions in all). The St Louis Walkers' 5K and 10K walks give the walker an overall picture of the park and provide access to park events. Both walks pass by the following points of interest inside the park: the Alexander Von Humbolt sculpture, the Chinese Pavilion, the Cypress South Shelter, the Stupp Center, the William Shakespeare stature, and the Turkish Pavilion.

A park visitor has access to several events including the Farmers' Market and birding. The Tower Grove Farmers' Market is open on Saturdays from 8 am–12:30 pm (April through October) and Tuesdays from 4 pm to sunset (May through September). The market has experienced tremendous growth since its beginning in 2006 and has become a popular gathering place for thousands of St. Louisans every week during the season. The Tower Grove Farmers' Market is located just west of Center Cross Drive in the heart of Tower Grove park.

Birding is another activity available at Tower Grove Park. The park serves as a natural refuge for many different bird species. The park has been designated as a location on the Great Missouri Birding Trail. With peak sightings during the fall and spring, the park's species list is now well over two hundred. Serious birders throughout the metro area regularly visit the park during these peak times to enjoy the many species that visit the park.

Tower Grove Park will hold its annual Festival of Nations event. The two-day festival is open to the public, featuring traditions, flavors, sounds, and art of more than eighty nations. The event is held on the weekend of September 27-28.

Registration for the 5K and 10K walks is between 9 am and 11 am at the Hartford Coffee Company located at 3974 Hartford St, St. Louis, MO. The 5K walk starts at the coffee shop, entering Tower Grove Park on the south side. The walk traverses the southeast quadrant of Tower Grove Park in a counterclockwise circle. After completing the tour of the park, the 5K walk exits on the south side of the park, passing through the reviving Morgan Ford/Tower Grove South neighborhood and business district. The walk ends back at the Hartford Coffee Company.

For more information, visit the club's website at www.saintlouiswalkers.com and enjoy a walk through Tower Grove Park in St. Louis, MO.

SOUTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



SAVE THE DATES!



UPDATE ON WALK AROUND FLORIDA 34

BY CATHY METHERELL, JOHN MCCLELLAN AND ALICE LAWRENCE

The Mid-Florida Miler's Walking Club, Suncoast Sandpipers and The Happy Wanderers are in the planning stages for the Walk Around Florida 34 which is taking place November 7 – 9, just south of Orlando with walks in Kissimmee, St Cloud, Celebration, and Lake Nona.

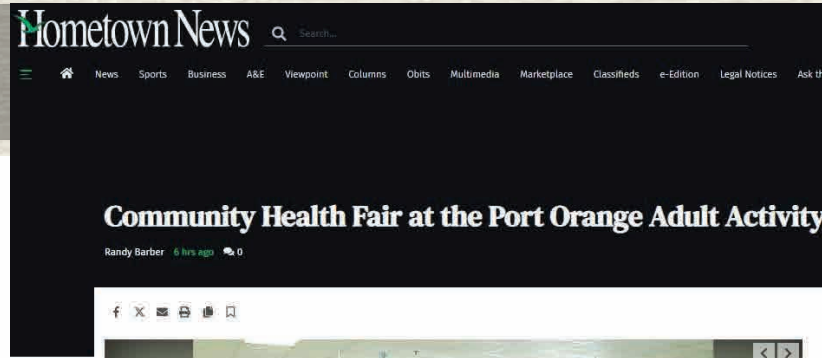
The hotel for the weekend is the Fairfield Inn and Suites on highway 192 across from Celebration FL just east of Interstate 4.

You can make the hotel reservation for two, three or four nights with check in beginning November 6th and check out no later than November 10th at the price of \$117.00 per night plus tax. Reservations must be made by October 7th. If you need to cancel your reservation you must do so 72 hours in advance. You may call the hotel directly and request the promo code "Mid-Florida Walking Club" when making a reservation. The hotel reservation telephone number is (407) 390-1532 or use this link to make your reservation: [WAF 34 Hotel Reservation](#).

We are finalizing the walks with start points and routes in place. The theme for WAF 34 is anticipated to be Celebrate The Benefits Of Walking.

Updated WAF 34 information will be provided in future articles and at the three club websites: www.midfloridamilers.org; www.happywanderersfl.org; www.suncoastsandpipers.org

East Tennessee Wanderers on the Townsend, TN Historic Walk on February 22, 2025.



Happy Wanderers President John McClellan, right, shows Anita and Norman Ericson of Ponce Inlet where they walk during the Community Health Fair at the Port Orange Adult Activity Center on Friday, March 7. Port Orange Parks & Recreation sponsored the event.
Randy Barber/soff photographer

The Happy Wanderers were featured in their local newspaper when they worked a booth at their community health fair.

SOUTHWEST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



HIKE IN THE LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST - RUIDOSO, NEW MEXICO - OCTOBER 10-12, 2025

BY SUSAN NOONAN, WEST TEXAS TRAIL WALKERS PRESIDENT

Hike with an Altitude! Join the West Texas Trail Walkers to hike the rugged Sacramento Mountains of Southern New Mexico near Ruidoso. See these beautiful mountains in full fall color and discover the local history and legends of Lincoln County, New Mexico, known as the "Land of Enchantment". Ruidoso and Lincoln County in New Mexico are famous for the legends of "Smokey Bear" and "Billy the Kid".

Challenge yourself to hike three trails in the Lincoln National Forest. Friday, October 10, hike the Grindstone Lake trails with either a challenging 10k or an easier 6k. Hike the Little Bonita/Crest trails on Saturday, October 11, with the options of 5, 10 or 20k. Sunday, October 12, concludes the weekend with a 6 or 10k hike on the newest trail, the Sawmill Trail. Select the shorter trail lengths for gradual inclines to see magnificent views and nature, i.e., alligator junipers, Ponderosa pines, and wildlife. For more rigorous hikes, the longer distances to the ridgetops offer panoramic views of the mountain range and the city of Ruidoso below. Be aware, all the hikes are at altitudes above 6700 feet so give yourself time to acclimate.

Back by popular demand are the "Fun Shorties." These walks are easier, shorter distances and together accumulate to 10k. You can hike the fun shorties anytime from October 7-12. Consider also walking the City of Ruidoso trail offered by the local Sun County Striders Club. You can register for this year-round walk through the online start box.

After an exhilarating first day, wind down at the "Happy Hour" at Downshift Brew Pub - Riverside, Ruidoso. The "Happy Hour" is from 3:00 to 5:00 pm on Friday, October 10. On Saturday, our annual dinner and awards ceremony features genuine New Mexican cuisine with Hatch Green Chili enchiladas. Dinner begins at 6:00 pm, Saturday, October 11, at the Ruidoso Community Center.

LaQuinta Inn is our host hotel and has a negotiated rate of \$99 (before taxes) for October 7-13. Call 575-378-3514 for reservations, select option 3 and then option 0, and mention you are with the West Texas Trail Walkers. You can find vacation home rentals and other hotels by accessing Hotels.com, Airbnb, VRBO, or other lodging apps.

Camping sites near our hikes are available in the Lincoln National Forest. Many private camping resorts are also available in Ruidoso.

Join us for the long weekend or extend your stay to enjoy all the year-round walks in neighboring towns in New Mexico. Check our website www.westtexastrailwalkers.org for the latest information. The brochure and registration forms will be available on-line in June 2025.

KEEPING THE FRIENDSHIPS GOING DURING HOT SUMMERS IN TEXAS

BY SUSAN FINE

Texas summers are so hot that we usually don't have outdoor walks during the heat. So the North Texas clubs will be walking inside malls every other Tuesday this summer. While these are not sanctioned walks, we wanted to continue the social connections, the "friendship" part of America's Walking Club. Everyone is welcome to join us. We will meet at 10am and walk for an hour in each mall. Then choose a lunch spot for more socializing. Exact locations inside the mall will be announced, so please contact the Dallas Trekkers if you can walk with us: dallastrekkers@earthlink.net



June 10: Stonebriar Mall in Frisco
June 24: Hulen Mall in Fort Worth
July 8: Northeast Mall in Hurst
July 22: Town East Mall in Mesquite
August 5: North Park Mall in Dallas
August 19: Parks Mall in Arlington
September 9: Galleria Mall in Dallas

BANDERA YRE

BY TINA BOHNERT

Come to Bandera to enjoy the Cowboy Capital of Texas Walk and the Smithsonian Exhibit!

The world-renowned Smithsonian Institute's Museum on Main Street Crossroads: Change in Rural America is coming to Bandera, one of only seven host towns in Texas. Discover how small towns responded to changes in America throughout the 1900s by cultivating new pathways and by honoring the culture and heritage that make them unique. Experience Bandera's own journey through local displays and events that celebrate their western lifestyle and cowboy heritage.

The Main Exhibit location will be at Bandera Middle School, 1005 Cherry Street, Bandera, TX. June 21 to July 26, 2025. It will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 12-4 pm. Local exhibits to be included are Bandera Electric Cooperative - Rural Electrification, Stampede Days & The Free State of Bandera, Schoolhouses of the Past, Bandera Rodeos, Wool & Mohair - Hooves to Handwoven, Dudes, Dances & Delights - Bandera Birthplace of the Dude Ranch in Texas.

Visit a place where everything you ever heard about Texas still exists. Walk the city of Bandera, also the county seat of Bandera County. Established in 1853 by John James, Charles de Montel and John H Herndon, Bandera retains many of its early buildings. Amid the scenic beauty, Bandera still has the atmosphere of a small frontier village. You will pass places with interesting history along the route, see some countryside and maybe even a Wild West Gunfight!

The Hill Country Volkssportsverein is featuring their Bandera YRE along with the Smithsonian Exhibit on June 28th. The Manned Start time will be from 7:00-9:00 AM. If you can't make it that weekend, we invite you to walk the unique town of Bandera and visit the exhibits at your convenience. The Start Box is available every day all day on the porch of the Bandera County Convention & Visitors Bureau, 126 Highway 16, Bandera, Texas.



FOUNDERS DAY 2025

BY DAVID ROBERTS

Fifty years ago, the chain of events leading to the establishment of the first volkssporting club in the USA and the AVA began. The Reverend Kenn Knopp, a Fredericksburg native, attended a church meeting in Rome in 1975 and detoured on his way home to visit his aunt and uncle in Germany. They were avid walkers and walked with him around town. Although Kenn was in his early 40's, he was overweight and out of shape. His walking tour drove him to his bed. His uncle and aunt told him he should do something about his condition and that walking was the best all-around way to achieve it. They also told him that there was a walking club in town and showed him a poster promoting the IVV. Kenn contacted the club, who referred him to the IVV President, Herr Gunther Hartmetz. Upon his return to Fredericksburg, Kenn wrote Herr Hartmetz about having a walk in Fredericksburg as part of the American Bicentennial (Kenn was on the town's heritage committee for the bicentennial). Without participating in a volksmarch or even witnessing one, Kenn and the newly formed Volkssportverein Fredericksburg (VVF) organized a walk fest on June 12-13, 1976. The walks (6 and 12 miles, not km) started at the Vereins Kirche and involved 230 walkers. Only after this first volksmarch in the US did Kenn return to Germany and participate in one in Europe. For further information on the early days of volkssporting in the US, Charlene Agne-Traub's "History of Volkssporting in the U.S.A. 1976-1989" is recommended.

In recognition of the first volkswalk in the US, a Founders Day walk is held annually (as near to June 12 as possible) from the same start point. This year the event will be held June 14, with the start point at the Kinder Halle, next to the Vereins Kirche (126 W. Main Street). Start time is 8-11 a.m. For further information, see the brochure on MyAVA or contact Dave Roberts, 830-992-7584 dliroberts34@hotmail.com.

In addition, there are a number of YREs in the area - Fredericksburg (3), Enchanted Rock, Comfort, Kerrville (4), Stonewall, Bandera (2), Mason, Lost Maples, and Junction (2).



EVERY STEP GETS US CLOSER!

"Closer to what?" you may ask.
Closer to Traffic Equity, friends!
"What in the world is "traffic equity"?"
And why should it even matter to me?!"
I'm so glad you asked!

Traffic Equity would mean that every single one of us would be able to get wherever we're going safely. No matter how we get around! However, in our society those who are outside the protection of a motor vehicle, "vulnerable road users", are at a distinct disadvantage! Faster, heavier, more maneuverable cars, trucks, and SUVs dominate (and too often discriminate) in our world of "self-centered road use"!

All across our country, the number of fatalities and serious injuries involving motor vehicles is appallingly high! This national crisis has impacted some of us more closely than others, but making significant change will require every one of us to do our part! Each of us is a vulnerable road user at some point: walking our dogs, in the parking lot of the grocery store, or just crossing the street (even at a crosswalk) Sadly, even designated areas like parks and walking paths aren't always safe places!

The fact is, each and every one of us can take steps, even little ones, to help insure safer tomorrows! I'd like to offer some easy, actionable steps that make it possible for anybody to take personal responsibility for helping bring about change! It's absolutely vital that the job not be left just to the "professionals"!

I became a "professional advocate" 5 years ago, after my high-school sweetheart and husband of 48 years was nearly killed while riding his bicycle. The 17-year-old driver was not ticketed, and no investigation of the incident took place, so we actually know very few details.

What I do know, beyond any doubt, is that this was not an accident! On a sunny day on a wide, flat, straight road there were certainly any number of ways a collision could have been avoided! Most likely the driver was speeding, and although we have no idea what was distracting him, he was obviously paying attention to something other than who he was sharing the road with. It appears that he didn't even know my husband was there until the impact tossed him and his bicycle high into the air!

Crashing to the pavement on his back, Jim suffered 4 broken vertebrae and a 5th was completely shattered. By the grace of God, his spinal cord was not completely severed! Because it held by a thread, they were able to build a "protective cage" to keep it intact. Thankfully, he's not in a wheelchair. However, his mobility is extremely limited.

A grueling surgery, weeks in hospitals, months of PT, dealing with issues related to head injury..... He's worked long and hard to recover what he could of his previous excellent health! We're extremely grateful for the life we still share, but there are a great many challenges! That 17-year-old driver may not have taken my Jim's life, but he certainly stole an enormous amount of his quality of life!

We were newly retired, running a small business we loved, and eager to set out on travel and other adventures. Due to the negligence of someone who never intended to do harm, our world was changed forever in a mere second! Most heartbreaking, these type of occurrences are epidemic in far too many of our communities! Suddenly I was catapulted into work I'd never envisioned myself doing. Given what we'd gone through, and survived, how could I not turn my time and energy toward helping to change a system that has gotten so out of control?

By founding a non-profit, speaking out within my community, and being part of a group that took our concerns to Washington DC I've discovered my voice and a "calling" I'd never dreamed of. This advocacy is not only vital, but it has also proven to be redemptive in my own life. My passion for safer streets is fueled by receptive, respectful young drivers and by citizens who are becoming aware of the need to proactively address the problem they had previously not given much thought to. I fully expect to see a reversal of this deadly situation in my lifetime!

Death and destruction are not something we have to accept, with regret, in our fast-paced world! It is possible to change the future, but it's far more than we who have taken on this cause can manage on our own! There are many seemingly small, but vital, steps that anyone can take!

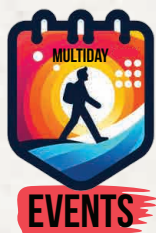
First and foremost, I encourage everyone to take our organization's Safe Driving Pledge at <https://www.vrunm.org/vru-safe-driving-pledge>. A huge percentage of collisions are attributed to distracted driving. Deciding to drive undistracted is a life-saving choice which models to those around us that we are serious about safe driving behaviors!

It's easy to talk to friends and family about safe driving. Bringing the topic up in general conversation helps create a community of people who value safety on and around our roads. Just talking about making safe choices behind the wheel enhances awareness of individual behavior, prompting others to initiate similar conversations. Nobody wants to see roadway violence continue to spiral out of control, but we seldom realize just how impactful a simple conversation can be.

Once we start paying more attention to changing the driving culture in our communities, we begin to recognize others who hold the same values. Perhaps a group is setting up a safe driving awareness booth at an upcoming event – volunteering to help for a couple hours is a practical way to show support. Or make a donation to help fund safety campaigns at local schools or businesses. You might offer to help put up posters or assist in a door-to-door outreach. These kinds of practical help are vital to the work of such organizations, and don't require a lot on your part. Greater involvement is always welcomed, but most of us who do advocacy work are deeply appreciative of extra hands and hearts we can count on!

I'm convinced that significant change must be initiated and followed through on an individual basis! Safe behavior can't be legislated, but sincere commitments on a personal level can be powerfully motivating! There are, of course, many aspects of roadway safety that come before our city and county officials. Issues such as infrastructure, funding priorities, as well as statutes and regulations which are intended to mitigate dangerous behavior. Special-interest groups typically keep track of these sort of local government issues and communicate about them to the public. Without a big commitment, you can lend important support by signing a petition, reaching out to elected officials, or showing up for "public comment" at City Council meetings, etc.

As we all rethink road use in our country, our communities will become significantly safer. Loss of life will be greatly reduced! It is an extraordinary privilege for me to be deeply involved with this work; a huge part of my own personal commitment is to encourage and empower others to join me in doing your part. Never underestimate the importance of even "small" steps, every effort toward safer streets contributes to much-needed change! Everyone must step up to accomplish real change! The kind of change that will allow us all to live, work, and play more safely!



HERE IS A LIST OF UPCOMING MULTI-DAY EVENTS FOR YOUR TRAVEL PLANNING. CLICK ON THE LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THESE CLUBS.

2025 AVA Multiple Event Listing				
Month	Date	Multi-day Event Description	Host Club	Location
2025				
June	27-28	Iowa County Weekend	Iowa's Walking Club and Nebraska Trailblazers	IA
October	2 - 5	Walking Stevens Pass to Leavenworth	Interlaken & Central WA Sun Striders	WA
October	11 - 13	Hike Lincoln National Forest in Ruidoso	West Texas Trail Walkers	NM
October	16 - 19	Shady Cove, Oregon	Columbia River Volkssport Club	OR
October	17 - 29	24th U.S. FreedomWalk Festival	U.S. Freedom Walk Festival Club	VA/D.C.
November	7 - 9	Walk Around Florida 34	Mid-Florida Milers	FL
November	14 - 16	Haunted Gettysburg Weekend	York White Rose Wanderers	PA
2025/2026				
December/January	31- 1	New Year's Eve/Day in Savage, MD	Freestate Happy Wanderers	MD

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UPCOMING



EVENTS

IVV EVENT



AWARDS

AVA FEATURED EVENTS

Iowa County Weekend



**Group Walk of Four
Counties in 2 Days
June 27 - 28, 2025**



Start: Corning, Iowa

Includes Group Dinner/Special Hotel Rate

Sponsored by Iowa's Walking Club and
Nebraska Trailblazers

[Click here for more information](#)

Leavenworth, WA & Beyond

*Interlachen
Trailblazers &
Central
Washington
Sunstriders*

**Four Autumn
Walks & Bike
October 2-5, 2025**

Headquarters: Lake Wenatchee Club House.

Walks in state parks, trails and downtown
Socials, plus 10 nearby YREs

Information: Irene Stanford: irenestanford@msn.com

[Click here for more information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: ava.org – find a walk

Hike Lincoln Forest Natl Park



**Ruidoso, NM
October 10-12, 2025**

**Three Trails in Lincoln Natl Forest
5K – 20K available**

Social Event plus Dinner
Special Hotel rate of \$99 at La Quinta

Sponsored by West Texas Trail Walkers
susan.noonan@gmail.com

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Shady Cove, Oregon

*Columbia
River
Volkssport
Club*

**Shady Cove, OR
October 16-19, 2025**

5 Walks in town, parks & trails.

More info to come.

Info: Ed Hainline: opahainline49@gmail.com

[Click Here for More Information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: ava.org – find a walk

US FreedomWalk



**IML Events
October 17 - 19, 2025**

**3 Walks (5K – 22K)
+ Swim & Bike Events**

Arlington, Va & Washington DC

Registration open now.
Info: info@usfreedomwalk.org

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Walk Around Florida 34



**November 7-9, 2025
Kissimmee/Orlando FL**

Walk Orange & Osceola Counties

**4 Walks and a Swim near Orlando
Socials and Dinner
Special Hotel Rate at Fairfield Inn**

Sponsored by The Mid-Florida Milers, Happy Wanderers,
and Suncoast Sandpipers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

THE LONG GAME: HOW TO STAY CONSISTENT WITH YOUR WELLNESS AND SELF-CARE GOALS



Image via [Pexels](#)

BY PATRICIA SARMIENTO, PUBLIC HEALTH CORPS
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You already know the drill. You buy the journals, clear space on your calendar, stack fresh produce in the fridge like a Pinterest board come to life. You make promises: This time will be different. But two weeks later, life resumes its chaos, and your intentions sit in the corner like abandoned gym clothes. The truth is, wellness isn't about quick hacks or perfectly curated routines—it's about sticking with it when it's not convenient, not Instagrammable, and definitely not easy. And the people who manage to do that? They lean on something a bit sturdier than willpower.

RITUAL BEATS ROUTINE EVERY TIME



You probably don't need another morning routine. What you might need is a ritual—something that feels a little sacred, even if it's just five minutes of stillness before anyone else wakes up. Unlike routines, which tend to fall apart under pressure, [rituals offer a sense of meaning](#) that makes them worth returning to. Maybe it's lighting a candle before journaling or taking a short walk without your phone—whatever you can turn into a grounding, almost automatic part of your day. When there's emotional glue holding your habit in place, you don't need to think so hard about keeping it.

INVESTING IN CAREER GROWTH AS SELF-CARE

Sometimes, taking care of yourself means thinking about where you're headed professionally and making sure you're building a future that actually excites you. If you've hit a plateau or want to pivot, sharpening your skills by going back to school and enrolling in an online degree program can be a smart move. Look for programs that also offer access to industry certification exams so you're not just learning—you're becoming more marketable. For instance, if you're aiming for a role in tech, pairing a degree with [IT certifications](#) gives you both the credibility and hands-on skills to open new doors.



BUILD A PERSONAL WHY THAT ACTUALLY MATTERS TO YOU

Let's be honest: "I want to be healthy" is vague and a little lifeless. If you're chasing a goal that doesn't feel rooted in something real, you'll drop it the moment you get distracted. Instead, [ask what wellness lets you do](#)—what version of life becomes possible when you're taking care of yourself. Maybe it's having the energy to play with your kids without checking your phone every five minutes. Maybe it's being sharp in meetings because your sleep isn't garbage. Get specific. Make it personal. That's the kind of motivation that stays put.

CUT THE BINARY THINKING—PROGRESS ISN'T A STRAIGHT LINE

[Consistency doesn't mean perfection](#). It means coming back, again and again, even when you've slipped. The all-or-nothing mindset—that if you miss a day, the whole thing's ruined—is a surefire way to burn out. Life's not a spreadsheet; it's messy and nonlinear, and your wellness journey should have room for that. The key is to stop starting over and start continuing, even if you're not at 100 percent. You don't need to be flawless—you just need to keep going.

BUDGETING AS A FOUNDATION OF SELF-CARE

When you're trying to stay grounded in your wellness goals, few things are more quietly essential than getting a handle on your finances. Creating a budget—and actually sticking to it—gives you structure, reduces daily stress, and keeps you from drifting into that low-grade anxiety that comes with financial uncertainty. Budgeting isn't about restriction; it's about clarity. You can start by using free templates to create a monthly household budget—[this is a good one](#) if you're looking for something intuitive. There's usually a variety of styles to choose from, so you can find one that fits your particular circumstances and tweak it as needed to keep your financial life on track.



MAKE REST A STRATEGY, NOT A REWARD

Too often, [rest gets treated like a luxury](#) you earn after grinding yourself to dust. But if you want to show up for your goals every day, rest has to be part of the plan from the beginning. That means baking in downtime, not cramming it in once you crash. It's okay to have a night where you watch a dumb movie and do nothing "productive." In fact, that kind of rest might be what gives you the stamina to keep going the next day. Wellness isn't just about action—it's also about pause.

REDEFINE WHAT "RESULTS" LOOK LIKE

It's easy to think you're failing if you don't see immediate changes on the outside. But often, the first signs of success are internal: clearer thinking, steadier moods, better boundaries. Start noticing the less visible wins, because those are the ones that keep you grounded. Physical transformations or milestones might show up eventually, but they're not the whole story. When your wellness goals are tethered to how you feel, not just how you look, your reasons to stay consistent become much more durable.

There's no secret weapon. No one-size-fits-all method. Staying consistent with your wellness and self-care goals isn't about finding the perfect system—it's about finding what's honest, what's doable, and what feels like it belongs to you. The quieter truth is this: the people who stick with it aren't the most disciplined. They're the ones who get good at beginning again. Over and over, gently and without drama. And that's how the real change happens—quietly, in the background, while no one's watching.

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13th Annual Fall Volksmarch September 28, 2025



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