

Empire State Volkssport Club held walks and bike events based in Lake George, New York, traveling to various historic Revolutionary sites in the area. Over 150 people from 22 states participated.

# Thank you to everyone who has participated in the our 50th Anniversary events!

Atlantic Regional Conference, March 20-22, 2026

Virginia Volkssport Association hosted 5 walks in 5 days, based in Williamsburg, Virginia. About 120 people participated in these historic towns.



Memories on the Mighty Mo, April 17 - 19, 2026

Nebraska Wander Freunde Trailblazers hosted 101 people from 18 states April 17-19, in Council Bluffs, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska.



# Fun, Fitness, Friendship INSIDE THIS ISSUE



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## MEMBERS PROFILE

BY LORI ANDERSON  
PRESIDENT OF NEBRASKA WANDER FREUNDE TRAILBLAZERS



I first got involved with walking by participating in the Nebraska Cornhusker State Games outdoor walk. Probably because I just wanted to show off my medal to my family which by the way every participant earned by just completing the non-competitive walk.

One of the volunteers working at the sign-in table happened to be a member of the local walking club. She gave me info on how to contact her club. After the event, I investigated this nearby Nebraska club and learned more about their mission to promote fun, fitness, and friendship through walking. My teenage kids had always liked to run and I just could not see the fun in that!

After contacting the club, I was inspired by the encouragement and camaraderie I experienced during my inaugural club's walk. What began as a fun opportunity to stay active and challenge myself with 10Ks, quickly became a meaningful introduction to a welcoming and supportive walking community.

Since then, I've enjoyed the travel opportunities to see new locations, participating in the first cruise, going on tours, bidding on silent auctions and the many new friendships I've made along the way. The positive atmosphere and being fit has kept me excited about staying involved in AVA and making walking part of my routine. I still get a medal yearly in the CSGs but now I've added patches and book stamping.

**AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB** ONLINE ORDERS ONLY

**OFFICIAL MERCH**








You Choose the Style - Color - Logo  
Short/Long Sleeve - Caps - Sweats

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

**BECOME A MEMBER OF  
AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB**

**MEMBERSHIP**

Your membership supports  
the work of AVA in our quest  
of Fun - Fitness - Friendship

**INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP**

**\$25 / YEAR**

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




# AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN MESSAGE



Here we are at the halfway point of our 50th Anniversary celebrations and walks. The signature events thus far have been outstanding with significant publicity generated locally with the public and city officials. I suspect some of you are finding that wasn't as hard as you thought it would be. Take the lessons learned from these signature events and turn them into your normal playbook for future traditional events every year. The rewards of new walkers, new members and new friends will grow and continue the legacy of your clubs. Most importantly share your experience and lessons learned with other clubs in your area, state and region to help them discover the path to revitalize their efforts and growth.

Another area we need to desperately improve (return to normal) is attendance at our Biennial Conventions. Aside from the General Membership Meeting to conduct the business of AVA, it is an opportunity to gather in fun, fitness, and friendship from all regions of the AVA Nation. The low attendance makes it difficult to break even on costs whereas convention used to be a significant boost to operations budget. In addition, it limits what we can do to enhance your experience and lower costs at the Convention.

So you probably guessed by now I am going to ask you to start planning now to attend the AVA 2027 Biennial Convention in Springfield MO June 28-July 3. Note this is after the Luxembourg 20th Olympiad June 16-19 for those that want to attend both. If you want to help with the planning, contact Jerry Wilson at [convention@ava.org](mailto:convention@ava.org). The Convention Committee will work diligently to keep costs reasonable without sacrificing quality. Look for more details, including pre- and post-convention activities in future TAW editions. And one more request. When registration opens, sign up as soon as possible. The earlier you register the better we can adjust to enhance your convention week and manage expenses.

## PLANTING THE SEEDS

Sometimes the solution we need is already in front of us; all we have to do is plant the seeds. I find this to be the case with one of our clubs, the Asheville Amblers in North Carolina. For years, under the sponsorship of the Asheville Amblers and the guidance of Reverend Robert Cooper, the Cardinals Elite Walking Team at Clyde Elementary School has been keeping the Spirit of walking alive and thriving!

I share their story with the hope that it inspires other clubs to follow their lead and help drive the future growth of the AVA. Congratulations to Luke, Ada McGovern, Reverend Cooper, the Cardinals Elite Walking Team, Land of Sky Regional Council, and the Asheville Amblers for carrying our legacy forward. I hope to see you at our next convention to share your achievements.



### The Cardinals Elite Walking Team, Our Success

Article written by Reverend Robert Cooper.  
Asheville Amblers Club

The Cardinals Elite Walking Team at Clyde Elementary School, Clyde NC, has finished its 9th year. The team is sponsored by the Asheville Amblers Walking Club. The faculty sponsor for the team is Amblers Secretary, Robert Cooper.

Luke has been student leader of the team this year. He ends the year with over 780 KM accrued over the last two years. He hopes to start a Walking Team at his middle school next year and to keep on increasing his number of events and kilometers. For his 5th grade promotion, he wrote Robert a note: "You are the teacher who has changed my life the most."

Luke's family recently joined the Asheville Amblers. Luke has also been awarded a New Walker's Packet. His family hopes to walk with the Amblers in the coming year.

During the spring semester, the team partnered with Land of Sky Safe Routes to School to put on a Walk at School event. Ada McGovern from LoS SRTS came to an event in which the team made posters promoting the event. She also came on the day of the event when over 500 students and faculty members walked at school, most walking 2 KM. Ada provided a prize and glowsticks for every student who participated.

Los SRTS also sponsored a contest to design a banner to be displayed at walking and biking events all over Western North Carolina over the next year. Our team submitted two entries, one of those by Luke. His entry was selected for the banner. Ada came to Luke's promotion ceremony to recognize him and to allow Luke to show off the banner to his classmates and their families.

Cardinals Elite Walking Team hopes to sponsor two Walk at School days in the coming school year. The team appreciates the support of the Asheville Amblers and of America's Walking Club. We hope many of our students will be lifelong walkers.

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATES





# COME TO SPRINGFIELD IN 2027

BY JERRY WILSON

Turns out there are 93 populated areas in the United States named Springfield. The location you should have your eyes on in 2027 is Springfield Missouri. According to the US Geological Society the Springfield area in Missouri is the largest of the 93, followed closely by Springfield in Massachusetts, and Illinois.

Now is the time to start planning your visit to Springfield Missouri in 2027. The walking week and convention dates are June 28 - July 1. Pre-convention walks are being planned for the preceding weekend June 26 - 28. Post-convention walks and activities are being planned for July 2 - 4. Save these dates.

More information will be coming soon. Watch AVA.org, future Checkpoint and The American Wanderer articles.

# U.S. FREEDOMWALK CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN 2026

BY DOLORES GRENIER

Don't miss this year's IML U.S. FreedomWalk in Washington DC and Arlington, Virginia, October 17-19, 2026, as they celebrate their 25th Anniversary, along with AVA's 50th Anniversary. This 3-day international walking event will take walkers along scenic and historic routes. Registration is now open. Special hotel rates of \$169 are available at the Comfort Inn – Ballston, at 1211 North Blebe Road in Arlington, VA. [Click on the link](#), or call 571-397-3955, and ask for the Group: US FreedomWalk Festival or FZ75P9.

All events will start at the American Legion Post 139, 3445 Washington Blvd. in Arlington, VA. Free parking is offered at the YMCA adjacent to the start.

Friday's Welcome Walk is a 5K and 10K through Arlington, VA west of the Potomac River.

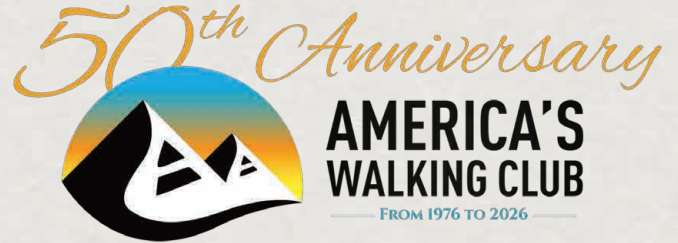
Saturday, USFW is excited to announce that the marathon (42K) has returned, along with the 21K, 12K and 6K in Washington, DC, through the National Mall, embassies, memorials and much more.

Sunday, choose from a 21K, 12K or 6K, to walk to the C&O Canal, the National Cathedral, and parks. Register at [usfreedomwalk.org](http://usfreedomwalk.org). Choose from three, two or one day packages, along with a social and dinner. Questions - email [usfreedomwalk@gmail.com](mailto:usfreedomwalk@gmail.com).



# AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY PLANNING COMMITTEE

BY DIANE HOWELL EVANS, PROGRAMS COMMITTEE CHAIR



If you have yet to visit one of our 50th Anniversary celebrations - don't forget we have information on each event on the main page of the AVA website, listed in the June TAW, as well as this video with the complete list on the AVA YouTube Channel!! Check it out at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3V5PE1Dsu8>

# THE SEARCH IS ON! SPECIAL PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR 2028 AND 2029

BY DIANE HOWELL EVANS



Does your club have an idea for a new AVA Special Program they would like to sponsor beginning in 2028 or 2029? Several Special Programs will end on 12/31/27 and 12/31/2028 so the Programs Committee is looking for new Special Programs to begin on 1/1/2028 and 1/1/2029.

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 2028 and 2029? 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 deadlines for new Special Programs proposals submitted by a club are:

- November 1, 2026 for new 2028 Special Program proposals
- November 1, 2027 for new 2029 Special Program proposals

For a copy of the information required in a new Special Program proposal package, please contact Diane Howell Evans at [Programs@ava.org](mailto:Programs@ava.org).

# RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FOR MACKINAC BRIDGE WALK ON 09/07/26



Recruiting for Volunteers to support the Events and Activities associated with the AVA 50th Anniversary Celebration during the 2026 Mackinac Bridge Walk is now open through Signup Genius. If you seek some adventure while supporting the events and activities of America's Walking Club, please check out the following link. Sign up EARLY to get the volunteer task you seek. <https://www.signupgenius.com/.../8050549A9AF2AABFC1...>

## AVA SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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](http://cb.ava.org/specprog.php)



**REDEMPTION** - the last date to complete any purchased challenge books and redeem for "Lighthouses II" and "Par for the Course" Special Programs is **12/31/2026**.



**PURCHASE** - the last date to purchase a challenge book for the following AVA Special Programs "A-MAZE-ing Labyrinths", "Anniversaries Hurrah", "Rails-to-Trails", and "Step to the Beat" is **12/31/2026**.



Remember to check the AVA Special Programs webpage for information on redeeming or purchasing the Special Program challenge books listed above. [cb.ava.org/specprog.php](http://cb.ava.org/specprog.php).

*THANK YOU! to the many AVA clubs that participated in Celebrate Trails Day, to honor our partnership with [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#). And thank you to Rails to Trails, for publishing [AVA's blog](#). We hope to continue our partnership for years to come.*





# REGIONAL TALES FROM THE TRAILS



## ATLANTIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



### NEW CLUB ANNOUNCES THEIR FIRST "FALL LAKE WALK-ABOUT"

BY RON JONES

The newest club in the AVA, the Smith Mountain Lake Walking Club, invites you to join them for their first Fall Lake Walk-About, to be held October 2-4 in Moneta Virginia, near Roanoke.



The club plans to hold two guided walks on Saturday and one on Sunday. The 5 km walks will traverse the scenic Smith Mountain Lake State Park, the historic Booker T. Washington National Monument, and the very aptly named Lovely Valley.



Stunning views of the Blue Ridge Mountains can be seen along the way. Several YREs will also feature picturesque local towns such as Rocky Mount, Vinton, and Roanoke. Some trails have the "Find the Love" artworks that are a Virginia Special Program. There are plans for a meet-and-greet on Friday and a Farm-to-Table meal on Saturday. A registration brochure will be published the end of May. For more information and to register, contact Club President Ron Jones at [outdoorsy\\_guy1@yahoo.com](mailto:outdoorsy_guy1@yahoo.com) or (703) 217-3140.

### VIRGINIA'S "FIND THE LOVE" SPECIAL PROGRAM

BY RON JONES

At the March Atlantic Regional Conference, the Virginia Volkssport Association (VVA) announced the popular state special program "Find the Love" will continue thru 2031.

Virginia is For Lovers® was created in 1969 and has become one of the most beloved and well-known slogans in the world.



Find the Love Award Patch.

In September 2019, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, owners of the VIFL logo, granted the Virginia Volkssport Association "first use" of a new sibling (co-brand) logo that it requested, "Virginia Is For Walking Lovers." Now the VVA is celebrating the love!

Virginia has more than 350 public "LOVE" artworks across the state. The LOVEwork sculptures represent our communities and provide fun photo ops.

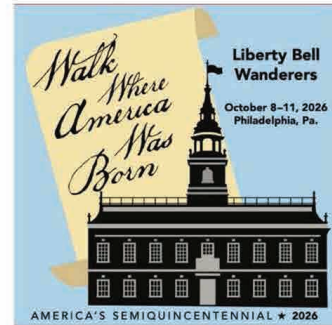
A colorful Love Artwork



Program booklets cost \$12. The walker must complete 16 different "Sweet 16" walks to redeem the book for a unique patch. A list of qualifying trails and other information can be found at

<https://www.walkvirginia.org/loveworks-challenge>.

So walk with us in Virginia and "Find the Love!"



Celebrate America's Semiquincentennial with a walking weekend in Philadelphia!

Walk Where America Was Born  
Philadelphia, PA  
October 8-11, 2026

5 Walks and 1 Bike over 4 Days

Meet and Greet at Historic Arch Street Quaker Meeting House with special appearance!

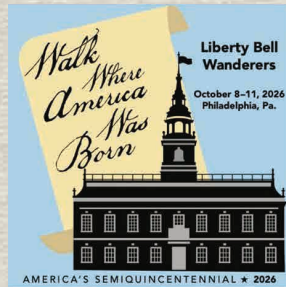
All weekend information can be found at:  
<https://my.ava.org/find-a-fest.php?id=101>

Sponsored by Liberty Bell Wanderers

## WALK WHERE AMERICA WAS BORN PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 8-11, 2026

BY JOYCE KOERT

The Liberty Bell Wanderers are proud to sponsor a weekend in Philadelphia to celebrate the 250th birthday of our country. Walk Where America Was Born, October 8-11, 2026, will offer both group and self-guided walks and bike rides that will allow participants to pass many of the historic sites that were part the founding of our nation.



Points of interest include Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, the Betsy Ross House, and the Museum of the American Revolution. Walks also include stunning views of the city from the Ben Franklin Bridge and the Camden Waterfront. Of course food will be featured as you walk through Philly's famous cheesesteak corner and the Italian Market. You will even have the opportunity to run up the iconic "Rocky Steps" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art!

There are lodging options available in Center City Philadelphia as well as Cherry Hill New Jersey. Most of the walks begin at the Wyndham Historic Hotel in Philadelphia and public transportation is available from Cherry Hill. We will be kicking off the weekend with a Meet and Greet at the Arch Street Meeting House. This historic Quaker Meeting House was built between 1804 and 1811. There will be an assortment of Philly favorite foods to enjoy and even a visit from Philly's most famous and beloved citizen, Ben Franklin!



Walks include breathtaking views of the city.

View of the Philadelphia Art Museum from City Hall.

Our famous LOVE statue is just one of the iconic sites you'll see.

Philadelphia City Hall and the famous statue of William Penn.

This weekend will offer many opportunities to learn about the founding of our nation and the events that took place right here in our city. The Liberty Bell Wanderers sponsor over 30 events in the Greater Philadelphia area, so you may want to extend your trip to take advantage of all our area has to offer. Autumn in the Philadelphia area is a special treat with mild weather and fabulous fall foliage to enjoy in a city famous for being walkable. Don't just take our word for it: in 2025, for the third consecutive year, USA Today chose Philadelphia as it's Number One Most Walkable City in America!

More information about the weekend and links to event and hotel information can be found on the AVA Fests page at: <https://my.ava.org/find-a-fest.php?id=101>. We are looking forward to walking with you in our city Where America Was Born. Questions can be directed to [joycekoert12@gmail.com](mailto:joycekoert12@gmail.com).

## SUGARLOAFERS - "30 CLUB SPECIAL PROGRAM BOOK"

BY ANTHONY (TONY) LAING

Due to the convenience of the Online Start Box (OSB), the Seneca Valley Sugarloafers Volksmarch Club of Montgomery County, Maryland, located outside of Washington, DC, has created 30 YREs throughout the region. And in doing so, the club has created a club member-only Special Program Book whereby if a club member walks the 30 YREs, they get a certificate and three free walk coupons as well as the satisfaction of having completed all of the Sugarloafers club walks. We provided a three-year time period to complete the book from January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028. To make the goal a tad easier, we have included our two seasonal walks. This was done in case we decide to discontinue any of our YREs. Our two beautiful seasonal walks are the Kenwood Cherry Blossoms and Spring Flowers and the Kensington Fall Colors and Holiday Lights.

**'30 Club' Special Program Book**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Description**  
SVSVC members only must walk 30 Sugarloafers YREs or seasons between Jan. 1, 2026, and Dec. 31, 2028, to receive an award. You may receive only one award, and each walk may be walked only once. For questions, contact Tony Laing at [laingat@gmail.com](mailto:laingat@gmail.com).

We sponsor 22 YREs in our home county of Montgomery County that traverse the many beautiful park trails as well as sidewalks in special neighborhoods.

We host three YREs in the District of Columbia: Georgetown; Adams Morgan/National Zoo/National Cathedral; and Embassy Row/National Cathedral. These walks encompass views of some of the lesser-known but still iconic sights in Washington DC.

West of us in Frederick County, we have a walk at Ijamsville and Urbana. These two walks were created to help walkers complete the Walking the USA A to Z Special Program Book. We have also sanctioned the entire 41-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail in Maryland that traverses Frederick County from historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to the Mason-Dixon Line in Pennsylvania.

East of us, we sponsor a Patuxent Refuge/Tipton Airport walk located near Laurel, MD in Prince George's County.

In neighboring Carroll County to the north, we offer a walk in the town of Westminster that explores McDaniel College.

Check our other exciting activities at our website: [sugarloafers.org](http://sugarloafers.org) or our Facebook page: [Seneca Valley Sugarloafers Volksmarch Club](https://www.facebook.com/SenecaValleySugarloafersVolksmarchClub).



## MID-AMERICA REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Bob Buzolich, MA RD

### ARE YA'LL READY TO WALK INTO HISTORY?? MID-AMERICA REGION OFFERS A SIGNATURE PR ACTIVITY FOR THE AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY

BY BOB BUZOLICH, MID-AMERICA REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Fun, Fitness and Friendship are high on the list for planning the 2026 Mackinac Bridge Walk. So, why delay finalizing your plans for this much anticipated activity to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of America's Walking Club.

The event brochure for this activity is attached to the public facing Electronic Sanction Request (ESR) for The Bridge Walk. The brochure provides full information for pre-registration. You may access the ESR by using the following link:



<https://my.ava.org/event-view.php?sn=131664>

If you believe The Bridge will be the only walking event, think again. The Mid-America Regional Director has a special walking event planned, which will entice your lust for thrills and adventure in Northern Michigan. Keep your eyes open for an additional short-term seasonal event opening on September 7 with a group guided walk.

As may be case for an activity such as The Mackinac Bridge Walk and the Anniversary Celebration, volunteers are critical to support the activity and its goals. Volunteer sign up is now available through Signup Genius for the 2026 Mackinac Bridge Walk. The information at Signup Genius has been recently updated with respect to perks for the volunteers, to include when the volunteers may wish to do The Bridge Walk. The link to Signup Genius is provided below:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050549A9AF2AABFC1-63034982-2026>

Hoping to see many, many Volkssporters in Mackinaw City attracting attention to the activities of America's Walking Club.

Please direct questions to Bob Buzolich, the Mid-America Regional Director, via email to [ma\\_rd@ava.org](mailto:ma_rd@ava.org) or to [sonofbuzz@prodigy.net](mailto:sonofbuzz@prodigy.net).



## NORTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Ken Johnson, NC RD

### NORTH CENTRAL REGION UPDATE

BY KEN JOHNSON, NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Upon becoming Regional Director, I inherited old paperwork that provided me interesting history of the North Central Region over the past 50 years.

There have been a total of 82 clubs in this era. Currently, there are 10. But these numbers don't necessarily tell a tale of decline! Our ten clubs go to great lengths to maintain a tradition of great events throughout the Region. More opportunities than ever when you factor in the introduction of seasonal and YREs that you can do as often as you like. And Headquarters and the Board of Directors are investigating ways to make it easier for clubs to host more events. When Volkssporting was new, its novelty brought with it a wave of interest that spread rapidly across the nation. Many of the first wave of clubs were civic organizations that used the sport to enhance already existing one-off community celebrations, not multiple events.

Over the years the AVA and its clubs have evolved to keep up with the interests and trends of their members and participants. Every few years a new fitness fad comes on the scene. Some hang on but most come and go. Walking has never gone out of style. According to Outside Magazine walking is experiencing a major resurgence, with over 6 in 10 Americans walking for fitness, fun, or transportation. But the greatest fitness trend today is wearable technology. Fifty years ago, wearable technology was a pedometer. Look at what we are doing now with smart devices, fitness trackers, exercise apps and such. Which gives me an opportunity to pitch our forthcoming walking app. I hope you're as excited about it as we on the board are. This will be revolutionary and our greatest opportunity yet for growth and sustainability. Please be ready to support this long-awaited enhancement to our Volkssporting.

In North Central each of our ten clubs has tailored their sanctions to meet the interests of their local market and currently offer 169 events total. Among the North Central Clubs, the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association offers a complete array of traditional, seasonal, YRE, and guided events. NorthStar Trail Travelers continues to feature traditional events at Minnesota State Park trails. Twin Cities Volkssports has been trending away from traditional events to focus on group walking its many seasonals and YREs. Bismarck-Mandan CVB ensures that all have the opportunity to walk the North Dakota State Capital. Koda Manipe Volkssport Club gives us a venue in Wahpeton ND. Nebraska Wander Freunde Trailblazers provides all manner of events reaching throughout the state via Traveling Guided Walks. Northwest Nebraska Trails Association further extends walking opportunities in NW Nebraska. Black Hills Volkssport Association leads the Region in traditional events with a whopping twenty including the massively popular Crazy Horse walk now in its 40th year. BHVAs seventeen seasonal and YREs make South Dakota a must-see destination. Also in South Dakota the Prairie Wanderers Volkssport Club give us eight more reasons to visit the state including the capital. Madison Area Volkssport Association has the greatest number of North Central event offerings with forty at present. They also make great use of the Traveling Guided Walk programs to extend its reach throughout the state. I am so proud to be associated with these dedicated clubs and members for all they do. Thank you!

And thank you John McClellan for your recent Facebook posts promoting the North Central Region!

### SANDY SPAULDING WITH THE NEBRASKA WANDER FREUNDE TRAILBLAZERS WAS FEATURED IN THE OMAHA MAGAZINE IN MARCH

BY SANDY SPAULDING

Literally translated to English as "people marching," volksmarching began in Germany in the 1960s. It's a noncompetitive way to get the same benefits of sports competition (being outside, meeting new people, making and exceeding goals), but without the competitive aspect.

# Sandy Spaulding Keeps Marching One Mile at a Time

by **tamsenbutler** — March 9, 2026 in 60+ Magazine



Instead, volksmarching is an organized way for people to get together and to walk, seeing things they would probably never see from the window of a vehicle.

When Sandy Spaulding and her husband temporarily lived in Germany for work around 30 years ago, they discovered volksmarching. Spaulding was drawn to the social aspect and the opportunity to see Germany in a different way. She also liked how the walks weren't competitive at all.

Read the article in the [Omaha Magazine](#) here.



## NORTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Carol Giesecke, NE RD

### CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF AVA IN BOSTON

BY JOSEPH LAPOINTE

Please join Walk 'n Mass on Friday, August 28 and Saturday August 29 for our Boston, MA AVA 50th signature event.

There are four Volkswalk routes available and two social gatherings.

On Friday from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. we will have a meet and greet. On Saturday from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. we will have a 50th anniversary cake and games. Both events will take place at the host hotel Courtyard by Marriott - South Boston. There is a \$5.00 registration fee for both social events. Details and registration available on our website.

The four walk routes explore Castle Island, Freedom Trail, Back Bay and Boston Special Places/Hidden Gems.

Castle Island leads through South Boston showcasing brick row houses, old brick churches and Medal of Honor Park.



Back Bay routes focus on the charming Beacon Hill residential district, the center mall of Commonwealth Avenue, the sidewalk cafés of Newbury Street, the Public Garden and more.

The Special Places routes explore some of Boston's lesser known points of interest. Some highlights are the Charles River Esplanade, Bay Village, Boston Common, the Armory and New Old South Church.

Further details and registrations are available on our website. We look forward to hosting you.

Start times, directions to the start, and updates to the walk schedules can all be found at our website [walknmass.org](http://walknmass.org) or on Facebook at AVA Walk 'n Mass Volkssport Club ([m.facebook.com/WalknMass](https://m.facebook.com/WalknMass)). These resources are updated frequently so please check in often to see what new adventures await.

### CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE! ESCVWALKS.ORG

BY TERRY GITNICK, BRENDA STREED AND LINDA MORZILLO

Several members of the Empire State Capital Volkssporters (ESCV) expressed the need for our club's website to have 21st century features that enhance its use as well as provide different levels of security. There was much discussion at meetings and among individuals about the pros and cons of changing the way ESCV communicates and informs its members and how it presents itself to the public. In addition, concerns were expressed about the rising cost of printing and mailing a Membership Directory, catalogues of our permanent Year-Round and Seasonal Events, and our Wednesday Walk Series. There was also concern with the cost charged by web page platform vendors. It was determined that eliminating the printing and postage costs basically covered the cost of the platform. Once those cost figures were presented to the club and compared, there was a majority vote - in favor - to begin the search for a website platform for ESCV. A committee of four, Terry Gitnick, Brenda Streed, Karin Berzins and Marjorie Wytzka, volunteered to explore the options.

The committee first made a list of both required and nonessential features. Broken down into several categories, the features (membership, payment, events, website, email, security and support), were entered into a spreadsheet to organize the information. Many platform products are available and after careful research, the list was narrowed down to the three that appeared to be aimed at clubs such as ours. After each of the three vendors made a presentation to the committee, the platform Wild Apricot was chosen because it offered the required features at a price our club could afford.

We are concerned about online security, especially with personal information. In fact, in the April 2026 issue of Checkpoint, there was a link to an article by the National Council of Nonprofits called Cybersecurity for Nonprofits. While protecting personal data, the website needed to allow a way to pay online for various club activities. At the same time, we wished to allow access to multiple people to use the website to manage the different aspects of club management. For example, the Membership Chair has password access to the membership list so that it can be updated. Current members also have password access to find contact information of other current members and can update their own listing. Nonmembers have no access to this information.

The platform allows targeted emails to be sent to all members or subsets of members.

Many members wished to pay for social activities and membership dues online, as they do for payments in other areas of their lives. Until the inauguration of this popular feature, we wrote checks only. There is strong encryption and a small fee is charged for paying online with a credit card; a provision allows payment by check. The person paying dues or signing up for an event receives a receipt via email.

Our website platform includes pre-built membership forms. Notices for renewals are generated and sent automatically. Event forms are used to list our walks and replace the paper catalogue mailed to members. Event forms are used to enable sign-up for social events; people who attended Northeast Weekend in May used an event form to sign up and pay for walks and social activities. This streamlines the tracking of money and registrants resulting in easier administration of events in a more secure fashion.

Prebuilt themes and gadgets and page layout templates were included. The layouts and objects are dynamic, so they automatically look good on cell phones. Ease of development by laypeople is essential.

Our new website, [Escvwalks.org](http://Escvwalks.org), was launched early in 2026 and the feedback has been enthusiastic!

**AVA'S WALKING WAVES II: MAINE PORTS OF CALL**

BY DENISE MACARONAS

Southern Maine Volkssport Association looks forward to meeting the walkers who will be cruising on AVA's Walking Waves II: AVA Fundraising Cruise. The fun starts in Boston with 2 days of pre-cruise walks and social events. The ship leaves on its 7-day cruise from Boston on August 30.



Portland Observatory, built in 1807, is the last remaining Maritime Signal Tower in the US

The ports of call in Maine are Portland and Bar Harbor. The ship then continues to Saint Johns, New Brunswick and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The ship will dock in Portland on Monday, August 31. Portland has been recognized as "America's Foodiest Small Town" by Bon Appetit magazine, and one of the Food Network's top five "Most Delicious Destinations".

Experience Portland by walking along the Eastern Promenade with beautiful views of Casco Bay and the islands. You will pass the Portland Observatory, Eastern Cemetery, Portland City Hall and First Parish Church while walking on Congress Street. Then go through the Old Port with its cobblestone streets filled with many shops, restaurants and bars. Continue down to the working waterfront. Enjoy the many boutiques, unique shops, restaurants and bakeries you will see throughout the walk.

On Wednesday, September 2, the ship will be in Bar Harbor. This scenic walk travels along sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly streets through the historic village. Walkers will pass the Village Green, Saint Saviour's Church, the Bar Harbor Historical Society which is housed in La Rochelle, the "cottage" of the Bowdoins and landmarks tied to the 1947 Fire. The route includes portions of the historic Shore Path with beautiful views of Frenchman Bay and the Porcupine Islands, and more of the old "summer cottages" such as the ones visited by the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Roosevelts and many other millionaires.



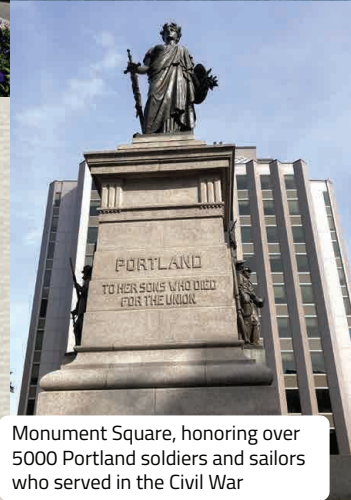
View from Eastern Prom. About 100 cruise ships dock in Portland yearly



View of Ells Pier from Agamont Park, Bar Harbor, ME

Walkers planning on meeting the ship in Portland and/or Bar Harbor must register for these walks using the Online Start Box. Driving directions, parking details and Start Point location are received after completing registration and payment.

For more information about the Portland and Bar Harbor walks, contact Denise at [walkinginmaine@yahoo.com](mailto:walkinginmaine@yahoo.com)



Monument Square, honoring over 5000 Portland soldiers and sailors who served in the Civil War

For more information about the cruise, go to <http://www.nwztravel.com>, click Groups and events, then select AVA's 50th Anniversary and use the password AVA 50th to access the group-rate cabins and cruise information.

Bon Voyage! Happy Sailing! Enjoy Fun, Fitness and Friendship on the sea and on the land!

**NORTHWEST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS**

Sandi Severtsen, NW RD

**NORTHWEST REGIONAL UPDATE**

BY SANDI SEVERTSEN

September is the NW Regions' time to shine and celebrate AVA's 50th Anniversary! Hopefully by now, you have made plans to visit Astoria, Oregon from September 23-28, 2026 for "Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark". Astoria is known as the oldest American settlement west of the Rockies, famous for its' rich maritime history, Victorian architecture, stunning Columbia River views, and vibrant arts/food scene, heavily influenced by its' port city status, and scene role in films like The Goonies.



. Key attractions include the Columbia River Maritime Museum, the Astoria Column, historic downtown with breweries, and sites related to Lewis & Clark. We are offering 6 new walks, plus 5 YRE's in the surrounding area, dinners on both Friday and Saturday. For more information and registration, visit [www.otsva.org](http://www.otsva.org), under "menu" tab.



The NW region opens their seasonal walks in April and May. Idaho has 3, Alaska has 8, Oregon State has 18, and Washington State has 60+. These amazing walks open for a limited time due to weather conditions and travel ability. This is the best time to explore these beautiful parts of our Northwest Region!

All of our clubs are sponsoring walks every weekend from June to September. It's the busiest time of year for walkers to get together! One of our clubs enjoyed sponsoring a cruise to Alaska in 2025 so much that they are sponsoring two cruises in 2026!



I'm excited to announce that Washington State just opened up the extended portions of the Sound Transit – Link Light Rail stations. This has given Volkssport Clubs the opportunity to have 5k and 10k walks start from new areas. It has also encouraged walkers to take the train while I-5 Ship Canal Bridge is being repaired, with two northbound lanes closed through the end of 2026. With that in mind, clubs from around the area have opened walks south of Sea-Tac Airport, and east of downtown Seattle. What a great adventure to land in Sea-Tac, book a hotel, and then catch the Link Light Rail to each of these walk destinations. You can find them in [my.ava.org](http://my.ava.org) by looking for "light rail". Enjoy!

## THE WILLAMETTE WANDERERS OF SALEM/KEIZER OREGON CELEBRATE THEIR 40TH ANNIVERSARY

BY JULIA WESTERBERG

The Willamette Wanderers of Salem/Keizer Oregon are celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2026. The club was founded by a Salem woman and her two daughters in May 1986 and became affiliated with AVA in June 1986. It seems there were 19 members by March 1987. It was the fifth AVA club in Oregon. It is now the second oldest club in Oregon. No explanation has been found for the club's name, but the club continues to wander to walks sponsored by other AVA clubs in the Willamette Valley.



The club's archives include walks' maps/directions, flyers, membership lists, meeting minutes, and club news in two publications issued by the Oregon Trail State Volkssport Association. A former club President was able to obtain important personal files from two earlier leaders, but there are gaps.

Reading the files for the club's first 10 years shows the highs/lows for the club which continued in later years. Strong leadership and members' involvement naturally led to successes. One club president in 1992 wrote that 6 events were already planned for that year. These were the years of high walker participation for the club's 10k event walks (5k walks were permitted later). There was an annual Christmas evening walk through a Salem neighborhood which drew 1400 people. Later another such event drew 100 walkers for the daytime walk and 400 for the evening walk. Those were the golden years for AVA walks! These walks were traditional events with full staffing for longer event hours and trail marking. Medals/hat pins with club designs were available with pre-registrations. Over the years these items were not wanted by walkers and the club still has many of them.

Details about the club's first Salem walk are unknown, but there is a lovely Salem medal dated November 8, 1986. Early sponsored walks in other towns occurred often with another AVA club or with a community entity. Weekend two-day events also were included with another club. Later there were a few annual YRE's added and the number of TE's lessened. Some of the walks are still evidenced in more recent YRE's. The club's Salem Waterways walk which is very popular for AVA walkers doing the States/Capitals challenge includes the attractive Riverfront Park. The Park, formerly an industrial area, wasn't developed until late 1990s/early 2000s. Looking at old club walking maps reveal much history about the development of areas.

An AVA convention was held in Salem in 2015 with additional local walks provided by the Wanderers. The Wanderers today number 50 members and have 16 YRE's in 2026. Four are in Salem and the others are in Independence, Monmouth, Dallas, McMinnville, Newberg, Lincoln City, Depoe Bay, Silverton, Silver Falls State Park, and Mt. Angel. Some of these YRE's were walks originally sponsored by other later disbanded AVA clubs. The club sponsors a monthly Sunday Stroll and weekly Thursday walks. Group walks are now preferred by many walkers along with Traveling Guided Walks.



The Wanderers will be celebrating this important 40th anniversary milestone on Saturday, June 20, at the Salem Saturday Market when one of the earlier club walks will be done. A 5k has been added. It is a traditional event with registration between 9 & 11 and ending at 2pm with group walks at 9:30am. For information, see <https://my.ava.org/event-view.php?sn=131961> or contact me at [pjwesterberg@comcast.net](mailto:pjwesterberg@comcast.net). I will be at this event to answer club questions, and I will have a collection of free medals/pins. I hope to meet former members who can add information to the club's history.

You will see some of the fruits of these programs during our 50 Years of AVA celebratory walk, "50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking" on July 24 & 25, 2026. The artworks are very diverse, from murals to canvasses, fountains, statues, collages and "pieces," my favorite art term when I don't know what to call something! Not everything is accessible during weekends, hence our Friday (July 24) option. But no worries. Most of the art is placed outside and Saturday participants will not be disappointed.



We look forward to seeing you here and to sharing our beautiful, historic city with you! Please print the form below to pre-register or use the [link here](#).

**PRE-REGISTRATION FORM - 50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking**

<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Phone #:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>City:</b>	<b>State: Zip:</b>
<b>Event Location:</b> San Francisco, CA	<b>Date:</b> July 24____ or July 25____, 2026
<b>Number of Walkers:</b>	<b>X \$4 =</b>
<b>Payment by Zelle:</b> to <a href="mailto:sfbaybandits@aol.com">sfbaybandits@aol.com</a>	Email above information to <a href="mailto:bondsf@gmail.com">bondsf@gmail.com</a> or mail form as noted below.
<b>Payment by check:</b> payable to <b>San Francisco Bay Bandits</b> and mail <b>by July 15, 2026</b>	Mail this form and your check to: Mary Bond, 1737 Chestnut St, #8, San Francisco, CA 94123



**Holly Pelking, PA RD**

## PACIFIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



**50 WORKS OF ART FOR 50 YEARS OF WALKING - JULY 24-25**

BY MARY BOND, SAN FRANCISCO BAY BANDITS

[NOTE: after this article appeared in March, the Bay Bandits have discovered some possible construction issues, so they are asking everyone to pre-register for the event by July 15, 2026. Below is the article from March, and the pre-registration form. Please print the form, or contact Mary Bond: [bondsf@gmail.com](mailto:bondsf@gmail.com).]

San Francisco is rife with public art thanks to programs as old as The New Deal, or the 1980s 1% for Art requirement in new construction regulations, and last year's more temporary Big Art Loop agreement.



**Christopher Begnoche, RM RD**

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



**ROCKY MOUNTAIN RENDEZVOUS UPDATED**

BY FRANK AND SHERRY SAYERS

Thanks for reading about our six AVA 50th Anniversary events at the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous during the last week of July, being held in and around Colorado Springs, Colorado. All the trails for these walks have been created especially for the Rendezvous. We also have additional recommendations for Year-Round Events (YREs) in the region for your traveling pleasure. You will be able to sign up for most of these in the hospitality room (see below).

Take a look at the Rendezvous website at <https://AVAClubs.org/RMR/> for all related information, including the brochure and registration through Zeffy.

Our walk hospitality room will be located at the Drury Plaza Hotel in Colorado Springs near the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) on Interquest Parkway. We have set aside a block of rooms you can reserve before June 13.

Remember, this is the high tourist season in Colorado and the hotels near USAFA sell out quite often. Reserve your spot on the Drury Inn website (<https://www.druryhotels.com/bookandstay/newreservation/?groupno=10181350>) or by calling 1-800-325-0720, using the group number 10181350 for the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous. There are also several other hotels nearby on Interquest Parkway, as well as an abundance of eating and drinking establishments.

If you have pre-registered, please stop by the hospitality room (7-3 on July 28, 9-3 Wednesday through Friday, July 29 to July 31) to pick up your packet and bling. While all the events can be done on your own schedule, we will have a person or two at the start for each event on the following dates: July 28, Black Forest Regional Park; July 29, Stratton Open Space; July 30, Garden of the Gods; July 31, Paint Mines Interpretive Park; August 1, Victor, City of Mines; and August 2, Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Commerce City. If pre-registered, please stop by and let us know your phone number and when you are off the trail, and that you had a good walk! This is just a little bit of extra safety, and we will have water and sunscreen available. After all, July in Colorado can be high heat and extreme UV.



On Monday night, July 27, we will host a Meet-and-Greet at the historic Chadbourn Community Church, located next to America the Beautiful Park west of downtown Colorado Springs. The church was founded in 1930 by Ruth Chadbourn. It served as a place of religious and educational support to the Conejos District, home to the Mexican community that worked on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. The church is the only structure that remains, according to the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. A complete restoration was recently completed, bringing it back to its original splendor. There is limited parking at the church; please try and carpool if feasible.

On a related note, we will be serving 50th Anniversary Cake at the Meet-and-Greet!!

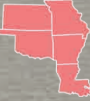


Our group dinner will be held on Wednesday, July 29, at the Edelweiss German Restaurant. They have been family owned and operated for over 50 years. We have arranged a choice of five entrees, which includes a salad, non-alcoholic beverage, and dessert. Register on our Zeffy page (<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/rocky-mountain-rendezvous-july-28-august-2--2026>) as attendance will be limited.

Should you have any questions that are not answered on our website, please contact us via email at [rendezvous@AVAClubs.org](mailto:rendezvous@AVAClubs.org) for a quick response.

We are looking forward to seeing you all in July.

## SOUTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Terri Tyler, SC RD

### HISTORIC HIGHLIGHT ON ROUTE 66

BY TERRI TYLER

Coming to Kansas in October for the South Central Regional Roundup aka "Halloween Klicks on Route 66"? Then you will have an opportunity to travel all 13 miles of Route 66 in Kansas. These 13 miles are officially named "Historic Route 66 Byway". This Byway is found in the Ozark Plateau or the very Southeast corner of the state. Along that stretch of old highway you will have the opportunity to take part in a traditional walking event in the town of Riverton.



One of the highlights of this small community is Nelson's Old Riverton Store. It is known as one of the most authentic, still working 75+ year old stores of its kind on all of US 66. The store was originally built in 1925, one year before the highway was designated as US 66. It started as Williams' AG Food Market and retained that name for many years. Now, for over a century, this small-town establishment has provided locals and tourists alike with hometown service, delicious food and Route 66 gifts in a unique atmosphere of the "Mother Road". You can find that the meat case in the back of the store can provide you with a "deli" sandwich with meats that most of us ate as we were growing up. And, of course, don't miss the "Daily Special and Fountain Drink".

An FYI: Pixar's *Cars* was directly inspired not only by US 66 but the Old Riverton Store itself. Guests can see a glimpse of the Store in the behind-the-scenes *Cars* documentary playing continuously while inside the store.

And one more fact! Scott Nelson, the owner, has agreed to be a check point for the Sunflower Sod Stompers' event.

Hopefully this little piece of America's history will help entice you to come enjoy "Halloween Klicks on Route 66" this fall. There definitely will be fun, fitness, friendship and food on the agenda, so come enjoy volkssporting in the South Central Region!

If you need further information, please contact: **Terri Tyler** [ttyler50@gmail.com](mailto:ttyler50@gmail.com) 785-817-6333. E-mails are preferred. A printed brochure will be available when all events and the details are finalized.

## **SOUTH CENTRAL TRAVELING STAMP**

BY BARB RAMSAY

The Kansas City area clubs, Clay-Platte Trackers, Pace Setters and Kansas Jaywalkers, have started using the Traveling Guided Walk stamp. We are doing some new walks in the area and also repeating some old traditional and year round walks.

In June we are doing the Overland Park Kansas Arboretum on the 2nd and Jacob L. Loose Park in Kansas City MO on the 19th.

Our tentative plans are to do the Prairie Creek Greenway in Platte City MO in July, Shawnee Mission Park in Shawnee Kansas, Burr Oaks Nature Center in Blue Springs MO and Smithville Lake Smithville MO in August. September will have St Joseph MO & a Kansas City walk where we will ride the KC Streetcar in between 2 or 3 shorter walks.

October will be some repeat counties: Oskaloosa in Jefferson County Kansas and 3 Missouri counties – Henry, Benton and St Clair. The November & December schedule includes Watkins Mill State Park, Lawson MO, Unity Village MO and the Plaza Lights walk in Kansas City MO.

All the walks will be available on the AVA website about a month before the walks.



A Florida scrub jay views its surroundings

Volkssports and Florida State Parks have a long history together. Over 40 years ago, Frank Demoli, an FVA representative, established a series of YREs in state parks throughout Florida. The YREs thrived, treating national and international visitors with an up-close look at the "real" Florida. With the dissolution of the FVA, the state parks program slowly shut down, although clubs still return to host walks on the old trails and even find a stray FVA sign here and there.

Organizers have been hard at work re-establishing a trail through the Oscar Scherer State Park scrub and pine flatwoods, using less sandy territory when possible. The park is home to a large variety of wildlife, including the American alligator, but the star of this rugged terrain is the Florida scrub jay, a threatened species found only in this state. For years, there have been initiatives to establish this as the state bird. The latest proposal gave it the title of State Songbird, yielding possible designation of State Bird to the American flamingo. Unfortunately, the Northern mockingbird maintained its hold yet again. Be sure to stop by the Nature Center, just steps away from the walk start. You may not see any scrub jays on the route but you can admire them in the center's dioramas.

After the walk, head 20 miles north to WAF35 Headquarters, the Quality Inn Bradenton-Sarasota North for official check-in. You'll receive a card with all the activities for which you registered and a WAF35 name tag, as well as a list of nearby restaurants. The lobby's Trojan Horse Taverna opens at 6 p.m. and will feature truly epic Mocktails.

Look for the brochure and registration form no later than Jul 1. They will be posted on [suncoastsandpipers.org](http://suncoastsandpipers.org) and [facebook.com/WalkaroundFlorida35](https://facebook.com/WalkaroundFlorida35). In the meantime, check those sites for the latest details on hotel registration. For more information, contact Alice Lawrence at 727-542-9742/[pipers@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:pipers@tampabay.rr.com).

## **SUN KISSED GOLDEN BEACHES AND MARSHES**

BY HOLLY SPAULDING

Have you always wanted to explore the barrier islands off the coast of Georgia called the "Golden Isles"? The First Coast Trail Forgers (Jacksonville, FL) are excited to announce two new online start boxes on Jekyll and St. Simons Islands - two of the four Golden Isles.




**SOUTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS**



Jeanne Stokes, SE RD

## **WALK AROUND FLORIDA 35: A PARK ODYSSEY BEGINS OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK**

BY ALICE LAWRENCE, JOHN MCCLELLAND, CATHY METHERRILL

The Happy Wanderers, Mid-Florida Milers, and Suncoast Sandpipers will launch Walk Around Florida 35 (WAF35): A Park Odyssey on Nov 6 in Oscar Scherer State Park, once home to a Florida Volkssport Association (FVA) Year Round Event (YRE). The FVA was the governing body for Florida volkssport clubs.

NEW WAF PROCEDURE! On Fri, Nov 6, it will not be necessary to check in at the hotel prior to walking at this event. You may proceed directly to the park, walk, and then go to the hotel. See official flier for start times. Note: park fees are: \$5 per car with up to 8 occupants and \$4 for single occupant vehicle.

Jekyll Island is the location of the Millionaire's Club established in 1888 during the Gilded Age in the United States. Only the wealthiest applicants were admitted as members. Members included J.P. Morgan, William Rockefeller, Joseph Pulitzer, Vincent Astor, and William K. Vanderbilt. In 1910 a group of millionaires met on Jekyll Island and developed a plan for the Federal Reserve to prevent periodic economic panics which caused bank failures such as the one that had just happened in 1907. The Millionaires Club is a National Historic Landmark with hotel rooms, a beautiful dining room and lounge. The club building is surrounded by individual get away "cottages" of the wealthy. The historical district faces Jekyll Creek along which our walk takes you. The 5K and 10K start at the Jekyll Island Golf Club where there is free parking. From there you walk to the historic district. The 5K walk explores the fascinating and beautiful historic district and returns to the golf club. After exploring the Historic District, the 10K continues along a walking path to the other side of the island. On the other side of the island walkers walk back toward the golf club along the Atlantic Ocean on a multiuse path. There are beautiful views of the dunes and ocean with plenty of restroom and covered areas to rest and enjoy the view. (Bring your bikes to ride the path around the entire island if you like.) Both the Georgia Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center and the Mosaic Jekyll Island Museum are on the walking route.

If you're visiting the area this summer, join us for a walk (plus we will walk some early Saturday YRE group walks, too). For more details, email [dallastrekkers@earthlink.net](mailto:dallastrekkers@earthlink.net).

• Tues 6/9	Parks Mall in Arlington	10am
• Tues 6/23	Meadows Museum in Dallas	10am
• Sat 6/27	<a href="#">Historic Irving Heritage</a>	7am
• Sat 7/4	<a href="#">Waxahachie</a>	7am
• Tues 7/7	Frontiers of Flight Museum	10am
• Tues 7/21	Grapevine Mills	10am
• Sat 7/25	<a href="#">Downtown Dallas</a>	7am
• Tues 8/4	Northpark Mall Dallas	10am
• Sat 8/8	<a href="#">Downtown Fort Worth</a>	8am
• Sat 8/15	<a href="#">Las Colinas in Irving</a>	7am
• Tues 8/18	Amon Carter Museum in FW	10am
• Sat 8/29	<a href="#">Highland Park (Dallas)</a>	7am
• Tues 9/1	Galleria Mall in Dallas	10am
• Tues 9/15	Dallas Museum of Art	10am
• Sat 9/19	<a href="#">Fort Worth Nature Center</a>	7am
• Tues 9/29	Northeast Mall in Hurst	10am

You can also join the Trekkers every Sunday morning at 7am to walk along [White Rock Lake](#) in Dallas. Or join the Hood County Hummers in [Granbury](#), Texas every Saturday at 8am.



**St. Simons Island, GA**

The St. Simons Island start point is in the heart of the charming shopping village. St. Simons is the largest of Georgia's barrier islands. The walk is along the Atlantic Ocean on a walking path which goes past the iconic St. Simons Lighthouse. Climb the 129-step cast iron spiral staircase to the top for stellar,

panoramic views if you like. Enjoy the eclectic mixture of island homes when the walk turns into the coastal neighborhoods. You will return along Mallery Street in Pier Village which is filled with shops and restaurants. When you return to your car, you may want to stop at the visitors center which is near where you parked. You will find there a great selection of Eugenia Price novels. She is a prolific author of historical novels which take place on St. Simons Island.

**SAN ANTONIO PATHFINDERS' BEAT THE HEAT: NORTH STAR MALL FEATURED YRE WALK**

BY MARTIN CALLAHAN



From left to right, Gayle Weinraub, Jill Troyer and Michael Ann Merlanson all stop for a picture along the walk trail in front of the mural titled "North Star Fiesta" by Mauricio along the YRE trail inside North Star Mall in San Antonio, Texas. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)




**SOUTHWEST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS**

Andy Thomas, SW RD

**DALLAS/FORT WORTH SUMMER WALKING SCHEDULE**

BY SUSAN FINE

With the heat of summer in Texas, the Dallas/Fort Worth area walkers are hosting social walks every other Tuesday inside a mall or museum, to keep in touch, with walking and talking.

The San Antonio Pathfinders' Volkssport club offers a unique Year Round Event (YRE) that you can do every day of the week, even in the worst of weather at North Star Mall in San Antonio, Texas. The Mall first opened in 1960 with 250,000 square feet of retail space at the intersection of Loop 410 and San Pedro Avenue in an upscale part of town.

The mall now has over 1.2 million square feet of retail floor space with anchor stores like Dillard's, J.C. Penney, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Forever 21. It also has over 200 specialty stores, some of which are exclusive to San Antonio. You can learn more about North Star Mall online at: [www.northstarmall.com](http://www.northstarmall.com). Parking is free and mall store hours are Monday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday noon to 6 p.m. The mall is open for walkers at 9 a.m.



Jackie Lytle poses for a picture in front of the World's Largest Cowboy Boots in front of North Star Mall in San Antonio, Texas that were created by artist Bob "Daddy-O" Wade in 1979. These boots are not visible along the walk trail and to see them you must exit the mall and walk a short distance. (Photo credit: Martin Callahan)

The mall is a well-known city landmark for its 35-foot-tall Texas cowboy boots that were created by Texas artist Bob "Daddy-O" Wade in 1979. The boots are located next to the mall and not visible along the walk trail, but you can exit the YRE trail nearby to see them. You can learn more online about the boots at: [www.roadsideamerica.com/story/7815](http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/7815).

While strolling in the air-conditioned comfort of this elegant mall you can window shop at the wide variety of stores and kiosks throughout the mall and also visit the food court with a wide selection of tasty treats. The 10k trail is four complete laps of the mall and the 5k trail is two laps.

On August 22 the North Star Mall Walk will be offered as a featured YRE with the start point at the patio in the back of the Taco Cabana at 7339 San Pedro Ave, San Antonio, TX 78216, with the start time between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. At this featured event you will not need to register online as the start point will be manned, and you can also get your books stamped.

For information on this featured event contact Ellen Ott at 210-723-8574 or email her at: [ellenott@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ellenott@sbcglobal.net). You can print copies of the walk brochures for this walk and other events by visiting the club website at: [www.sanantoniofinders.org](http://www.sanantoniofinders.org).

**HIKE THE GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS WITH THE WEST TEXAS TRAIL WALKERS OCTOBER 9-11, 2026**

BY SUSAN NOONAN

Hike with an Altitude! Join the West Texas Trail Walkers for a hiking adventure in the Guadalupe Mountains National Park, which features the highest mountain peaks in Texas. Participants are encouraged to hike the three classic trails: McKittrick Canyon, Guadalupe and El Capitan peaks, and Devil's Hall. For those seeking less strenuous hikes, the West Texas Trail Walkers will be offering four Guadalupe Mountains "Shorties" that are lower in altitude, shorter in distance, and feature easier trail surfaces: Pinery trail, Manzanita Spring, Smith Spring, and the Indian Nature trail. During the fall season, the mountain canyons display spectacular colors, and the weather is cooler when starting hikes early. Climbing Guadalupe Peak provides beautiful views across miles of the desert. Hikers are encouraged to look for fossils in the rocks and boulders along the hiking trails, as this mountain range was once a vast sea 250 million years ago.

We are also pleased to offer easy Fun Shorties in and around Carlsbad, New Mexico. Carlsbad offers many attractions, including the Historical Downtown, the Pecos River Trail in the heart of the city, and the Ocotillo Trail, which begins on the campus of Southeast New Mexico University. Do not miss the fun shorty at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, where you will find plants, animals, and ecosystems from the Chihuahuan Desert. Another option is the Carlsbad Cavern hike, an online, year-round walk sponsored by the Midland AVA club.

Participants are encouraged to personalize their walking schedule. All five hikes/walks are sanctioned from October 7-12, 2026, allowing for individuals to walk the trails any day. For your safety, it is recommended to hike McKittrick Canyon on Friday, October 9, Guadalupe Peak or El Capitan on Saturday, October 10, and Devil's Hall on Sunday, October 11. Designated start/end points and checkpoints will be in place on these days, with a suggested start time between 7:30 and 8:30 am to avoid the heat and crowds.

Following the hike on Friday, October 9, attendees are invited to attend the "Happy Hour" at Guadalupe Mountain Brewery from 5:00 pm to ? On Saturday, October 10, at 7:00 pm, an annual dinner and awards ceremony will be held at P J and B's Cafe in Carlsbad, NM, along the Pecos River. A fajita buffet with chicken, beef, and vegetarian options will be served.



The Quality Inn in Carlsbad, NM, serves as our designated host hotel and offers a negotiated rate of \$149 (exclusive of taxes) for the period of October 6-12. Please contact the Quality Inn at 575-689-8782 before September 15 to make your reservations, and be sure to mention your affiliation with the West Texas Trail Walkers. While you may discover a more affordable option at White's City Cavern Inn 575-361-2687, located outside Carlsbad Caverns, we encourage you to make your reservation promptly, as availability may be limited. Numerous major hotel chains provide lodging accommodations in Carlsbad. It is important to note that Carlsbad experiences higher accommodation costs due to the presence of nearby oil and gas operations.

We cordially invite you to join us for an extended weekend or to prolong your stay in order to partake in all five sanctioned walks and the Carlsbad Caverns YRE. Please visit our website at <http://www.westtexastrailwalkers.org> for the most current information. The brochure and registration forms will be accessible online starting in June 2026.



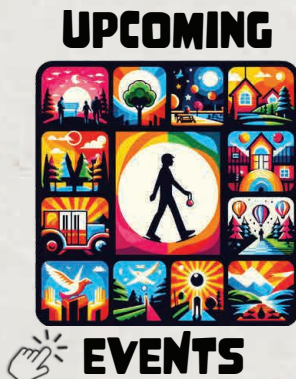


**HERE IS A LIST OF UPCOMING MULTI-DAY EVENTS FOR YOUR TRAVEL PLANNING. CLICK ON THE LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THESE CLUBS.**

2026 AVA Multiple Event Listing				
Month	Date	Multi-day Event Description	Host Club	Location
June	19 - 21	<a href="#">Mid-America Walking Weekend</a> 	Mid-America Region	IL & IN
July	24 - 25	<a href="#">San Francisco - 50 Years of Art</a>	Bay Bandits Walking Club	CA
July	28 - 1	<a href="#">Rocky Mountain Rendezvous</a>	Falcon Wanderers	CO
August	28 - 29	<a href="#">Anniversary Walk in Boston</a>	Walk 'N Mass Volkssport Club	MA
September	7	<a href="#">Mackinaw City &amp; St. Ignace</a>	Mid-America Region	MI
September	24 - 27	<a href="#">Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis &amp; Clark</a>	Oregon Trails State Volkssport Association	OR
October	9 - 11	<a href="#">Philadelphia - Where the Nation Was Born</a>	Liberty Bell Wanderers	PA
October	9 - 11	<a href="#">Hike Guadalupe Mountains</a>	West Texas Trail Walkers	TX
October	16 - 18	<a href="#">U.S. FreedomWalk Festival IML</a>	U.S. FreedomWalk	VA
October	28 - 1	<a href="#">Halloween Clicks on Route 66</a>	South Central Region	KS, MO, OK
November	6 - 8	<a href="#">35th Walk Around Florida</a> 	Suncoast Sandpipers, Mid-Florida Milers, and the Happy Wanderers	FL
November	14	Honoring Veterans	Ohio Wander Freunde	OH
December	5	<a href="#">Weihnachten Lights Spectacular</a>	Alpine Helen Volksmarch Club	GA

# PARTICIPANTS CORNER

**CLICK ICONS TO VIEW ANNIVERSARIES, EVENTS AND AWARDS.**



# AVA FEATURED EVENTS

## Mid-America Regional Conf



**Indiana & Illinois  
June 19-21, 2026**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event**

Walk in Terre Haute, IN, Charleston, IL &  
Fox Ridge State Park, IL  
Welcome Reception, Lunch & Dinner  
Socials Available

Sponsored by Mid-America Region

[Click Here for More Information](#)

## 50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking



**San Francisco, CA  
July 24-25, 2026**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event**

Walk the downtown Big Art Loop and more

Hosted by the San Francisco Bay Bandits

[Click here for more information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: [ava.org](http://ava.org) – find a walk

## Rocky Mountain Rendezvous



**Colorado Springs, CO  
July 28 – Aug 1, 2026**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event  
5 walks planned**

Walk Garden of the Gods, The Paint Mines, a  
gold-mining town, German dinner & more.

[Special hotel rates at Drury Inn Hotel](#)

Sponsored by Falcon Wanderers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Boston



**Boston, MA  
August 28-29, 2026**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event**

Four walk routes including Castle Island,  
Freedom Trail, the Back Bay and  
Boston's Hidden Gems/Special places  
Special Hotel Rates at 3 Hotels

Sponsored by Walk'N Mass Volkssport Club

[Click Here for More Information](#)

See all the walks/bike/swim events: [ava.org](http://ava.org) – find a walk

## Mackinac Bridge Walk



**Mackinaw City &  
St. Ignace, MI  
September 7**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event**

Walk across the bridge for a 5K, 10K, 15K.  
Start on either side of the bridge

Sponsored by Mid-America Regional Director

[Click Here for More Information](#)

## Footsteps of Lewis & Clark



**Astoria, Oregon  
September 24-27, 2026**

**'Signature' AVA 50<sup>th</sup> Event**

Multiple walks, Bike event, a Meet and Greet  
and a Dinner are planned.  
Registration opens in June.

Sponsored by Oregon Trails State Volkssport Assoc

[Click Here for More Information](#)

# SIMPLE HEAD-TO-TOE WELLNESS HABITS EVERY WALKING CLUB MEMBER CAN START TODAY

BY PATRICIA SARMIENTO

Community walking club members across the U.S. often do the hard part, showing up for group miles, yet still feel run-down, stiff, or inconsistent between meetups. The challenge is that wellness advice can be time-heavy or scattered, and real schedules leave little room for perfect routines. Whole-body health habits don't need to be complicated to matter, especially when they're built as daily wellness routines that support energy, recovery, and comfort from head to toe. With a few steady, realistic head-to-toe health strategies, simple health improvements can start to feel noticeable.

## QUICK SUMMARY: HEAD-TO-TOE WELLNESS HABITS

- Start each day with a simple morning stretching routine to loosen up before club walks.
- Build restorative sleep habits to support recovery and steady energy for walking events.
- Use practical stress management techniques to stay calm and present on and off the trail.
- Follow basic skin care essentials and oral hygiene practices to protect overall health.
- Prioritize hydration throughout the day to support comfort, stamina, and well-being.

## SMALL WEEKLY RITUALS FOR HEAD-TO-TOE WELLNESS

Small, repeatable habits build “whole-body” wellness without adding pressure, especially when you are balancing trail meetups, club events, and everyday life. Pick a few that fit your routine, then let your walking community help you stay consistent over time.

### Two-Minute Mobility Reset

- **What it is:** Gentle ankle circles, calf stretches, and shoulder rolls before leaving home.
- **How often:** Before each walk.
- **Why it helps:** Looser joints can make hills and uneven trails feel steadier.

### Bedtime Wind-Down Cue

- **What it is:** Dim lights and do a five-minute breathing practice before sleep.
- **How often:** Nightly.
- **Why it helps:** Better sleep supports recovery for tomorrow's walk.

### Trail-Day Hydration Check

- **What it is:** Drink water at breakfast and pack a refillable bottle.
- **How often:** Daily, plus every walk.
- **Why it helps:** Hydration supports energy and helps regulate body temperature.

### Face and Hands Cleanse and Moisturize

- **What it is:** Wash skin after outdoor time, then apply moisturizer.
- **How often:** After walks.
- **Why it helps:** It clears sweat and supports the skin barrier.

### Two-Minute Oral Care Anchor

- **What it is:** Brush and floss, even on busy days when you feel tense.
- **How often:** Daily.
- **Why it helps:** Many have [avoided dental care, due to anxiety](#), so tiny steps keep momentum.

## WALK MORE, FEEL BETTER: USE THE CLUB TO MAKE IT STICK

Walking is one of the simplest outdoor fitness activities to build into a busy week, and [a walking club makes it far easier](#) to follow through because you're not doing it alone. Use the ideas below to turn your club calendar into steady, head-to-toe wellness.

1. Start with a “minimum dose” week: Pick two short walks you can complete even on hectic days, think 15–20 minutes on Tuesday and Thursday. Consistency supports the same goals you're building with hydration, sleep, and stress routines because your body starts to expect the habit. If you're motivated, add a third “bonus” walk, but protect the two basics first.
2. Let the group schedule do the decision-making: Choose one standing club time (like Saturday mornings) and treat it like an appointment. Community support boosts follow-through because someone notices if you're missing and you get built-in encouragement. If you can't make the main walk, message the group and ask if anyone wants a 30-minute backup loop, many members are also looking for low-pressure options.
3. Use a simple weekly goal with a real health payoff: Aim for a weekly total you can count, minutes, steps, or miles, and track it with whatever you already use (notes app, calendar, or a paper log). A practical target is adding 1 mile per week until it feels normal, then holding steady for a month. Harvard Health notes that [walking five to six miles a week can help prevent arthritis](#), which is a strong reminder that small totals can matter.
4. Choose accessible trails on purpose (and rotate them): Build a short list of “default routes” that work for different bodies and energy levels, flat, wide paths; predictable footing; benches; and nearby restrooms. This keeps walks inclusive for new members, anyone returning from injury, and those pairing walks with other rituals like gentle stretching. Rotate one accessible route each month so no one feels like they're “holding the group back.”
5. Plan ahead for trail days so they stay fun, not stressful: Before any trail walk, check distance, elevation, surface, and likely weather, then match the route to the newest member's comfort level. The Road Scholar safety guidance on how to [plan ahead](#) translates well to local trails too: know the variables before you go. Set a clear turnaround time (not just a turnaround point) so the group finishes together and daylight doesn't become a pressure.
6. Make group walking events beginner-friendly by design: Offer “conversation pace” walks where the goal is steady breathing and social connection, not speed. Use simple roles, one person sets a relaxed pace up front and one person stays at the back, so nobody gets dropped. Bring the head-to-toe basics from your weekly rituals: water, a light snack, sunscreen, and a 3-minute cool-down stretch before everyone heads home.

# COMMON QUESTIONS FROM WALKING CLUB MEMBERS

**Q: What are some easy daily stretches that can improve overall flexibility and reduce muscle stiffness?**

**A:** Try a 5 minute sequence: ankle circles, calf stretch on a curb, standing quad stretch, chest opener with hands clasped behind you, and gentle neck side bends. Hold each stretch 20 to 30 seconds and keep breathing slow, stopping short of pain. After a trail walk, add a seated hamstring stretch to settle tight legs.

**Q: How can establishing a consistent bedtime routine enhance sleep quality and overall well-being?**

**A:** A predictable wind-down tells your nervous system it is safe to power down, which can lower stress the next day. Aim for the same sleep and wake times most days and keep the last 30 minutes screen-free. Getting movement earlier helps too, since [regular moderate exercise about 150 minutes per week](#) can improve sleep over time.

**Q: What simple mindfulness or breathing techniques help manage stress in everyday life?**

**A:** Use "box breathing": inhale 4 counts, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4, repeating for 2 minutes before work or a club meetup. On the trail, try a "name 5 things you see" grounding scan to ease uncertainty and bring you back to the moment.

**Q: How can staying hydrated throughout the day impact my physical and mental health?**

**A:** Hydration supports steadier energy, clearer focus, and more comfortable joints and muscles on walks. Set a simple cue like drinking several big sips when you arrive at work, before your walk, and when you get home. If you feel lightheaded, crampy, or unusually irritable, pause and drink, and consider electrolytes from food when sweating heavily.

**Q: If I'm feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about my next steps in life, what resources can help me explore new healthcare career paths online?**

**A:** Start with low-pressure exploration: career quizzes, informational interviews with nurses or clinic managers in your walking club network, and short online intro courses to test interest. If leadership appeals to you, look for accredited online programs, clear admissions advising, and transparent clinical or practicum expectations, including [healthcare administration degree programs online](#). For emotional support while you decide, a primary care clinician or counselor can help you sort stress from true misfit.

## BUILD LASTING WELLNESS THROUGH ONE SMALL HABIT AND WEEKLY WALKS

It's easy to feel pulled between good intentions and a schedule that doesn't leave much room for health. The steadier path is consistent health habit integration: a simple daily health commitment, repeated often, and reinforced by community support for wellness, especially regular walks that keep momentum realistic. Over time, those small choices become motivating lifestyle changes that support energy, sleep, and stress tolerance without needing perfection. One small habit, repeated with your walking club, becomes a long-term well-being strategy. Choose one habit this week and tell a club member so they can check in at the next walk. That kind of shared follow-through builds resilience and connection that lasts beyond any single season.



Support AVA: America's Walking Club

## CHARITABLE GIFT GIVING with your IRA



Your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) can help support the American Volkssport Association (AVA) — a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to promoting fun, fitness, and friendship for all ages and abilities.

If you are age 70½ or older, you can make a tax-free gift directly from your IRA to AVA. This is known as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

### Why Consider a QCD Gift?

- May count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)
- No federal income tax on the transferred amount
- Simple, direct way to give—no itemizing required
- Supports AVA's mission and programs nationwide
- Creates a lasting impact on community wellness

### Timing Matters

To count toward your current year's Required Minimum Distribution, your gift must be transferred directly from your IRA by December 31.

### How to Make a Gift from Your IRA

Contact your IRA administrator and request a Qualified Charitable Distribution payable to:  
American Volkssport Association, Inc. (EIN: 74-2164037)  
1032 S. Alamo Street, San Antonio, TX 78210

Ask your IRA custodian to include your name and contact information so AVA can acknowledge your gift.

### Questions? We're Here to Help

Phone: 210-659-2112 Email: [Erin@ava.org](mailto:Erin@ava.org) Website: [www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org)

Consult your financial or tax advisor to determine how a Qualified Charitable Distribution applies to your situation.



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Help our communities live a longer, healthier life, by becoming a monthly donor.

# BECOME A AVA MEMBER



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## 40th Annual Spring Volksmarch June 6, 2026



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**SEE OUR [GUIDELINES](#).**

**TO PURCHASE AD SPACE CONTACT [HENRY@AVA.ORG](mailto:HENRY@AVA.ORG)**

**AVA IS AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB,**  
WHICH IS THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP WALKING  
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WE ARE DEDICATED TO PROMOTING HEALTH AND  
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WELL-PLANNED AND INFORMATIVE  
WALKS. THESE WALKS ARE  
NON-COMPETITIVE, WHICH ALLOWS  
PARTICIPANTS TO WALK AT  
THEIR OWN PACE. WE ALSO HOST  
HIKES, BIKE RIDES, SWIM,  
AND IN SOME REGIONS, CROSS-COUNTRY  
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