

50th Anniversary



AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB

— FROM 1976 TO 2026 —

Anniversary Events start this January 2026! Don't forget to register for an event in your area. Read more on pages 5 - 10.



Congratulations to Mary Ptacek with Tater Tours who retired in September, with her last excursion to the South Central states, ending in Kansas City. Mary has been a huge supporter of AVA, guiding travelers to volkswalks throughout the country and Canada, and creating new experiences for everyone involved. For 31 years, her sold-out tours were always fun and engaging, and many people have developed life-long friendships through her endeavors. On behalf of the AVA Board of Directors and the National Office, thank you for all the wonderful memories! We are grateful for your many years of support and will miss you!

THE AMERICAN WANDERER
TAW
The Walking Magazine

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 24TH US FREEDOMWALK FESTIVAL, HELD OCT 17-19, 2025 IN ARLINGTON, VA. IT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS WITH A TOTAL TURNOUT OF 532 WALKERS. PEOPLE FROM 14 COUNTRIES, PLUS 18 U.S. STATES PARTICIPATED. SAVE THE DATES FOR THE EVENT OCT 16-18, 2026 WHEN THEY WILL CELEBRATE THE 25TH FREEDOMWALK, THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF AVA: AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB, AND THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES.



Fun, Fitness, Friendship **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**



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The **Big Give**

\$91,360 RAISED

Thank you



AVA BOARD CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

Happy Holidays from AVA's St. Nick. LOL

I trust everyone had an enjoyable Thanksgiving and I am especially thankful for the generous donations to the 2025 Big Give campaign. I hope you have opportunities to attend some of the special holiday walks clubs offer each year with family and friends.

As you will see throughout this issue AVA turns 50 next year and we are planning lots of celebrations in every region. As you plan on attending these events that are local to you, please make an extra effort to bring new walkers from your community. Find ways and places to advertise the events such as community centers, senior centers, bulletin boards, etc. Talk up America's Walking Club and introduce them to fun, fitness, and friendship. They will sustain the future of the organization.

We've all been on a walk and someone says "what is this all about?" and we give our best elevator speech. But it's even better when you can give them a card that shares our purpose, mission and contact information to find out more about our events. Do you have business cards to hand out? Did you know a template is available on the AVA web site? Go to American Volkssport Graphics and Logos and next to last item is a business card template you can customize with your name and local information.

How do you spread the word about our sport? Submit your stories for a future issue of TAW.



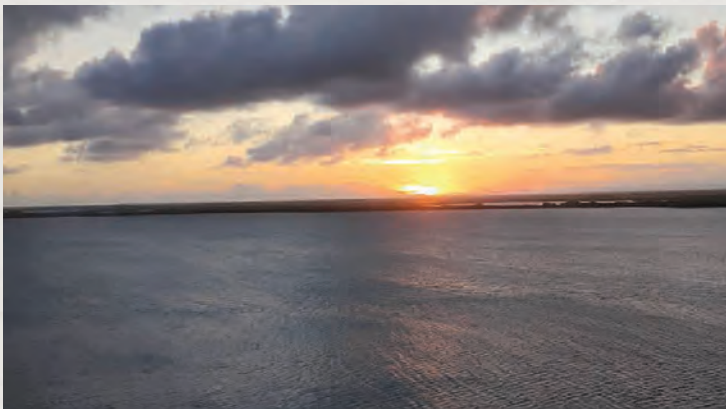
AVA'S INAUGURAL FUNDRAISING CRUISE, SAILING TO NEW HEIGHTS!



When I stepped aboard the ship with my wife, daughter, and sister, for the very first time I felt a wave of excitement — not just for the journey ahead, but for the purpose behind it. This was not just any cruise; it was the AVA's first fundraising cruise with family and friends!

It was quite an experience. The days were filled with laughter, ocean breezes, relaxation, and the joy of conversing with fellow AVA members on the trails, dining halls, and watering holes! I was deeply inspired when I saw someone on the ship sporting an AVA t-shirt — a simple yet impactful way to spread our mission far and wide. Several people came up to me asking, "Who are all those wonderful folks in AVA t-shirts?"

As members of America's Walking Club, you are part of a community that has always thrived on connection, resilience, and a shared commitment to healthier lives. Today, nonprofit membership organizations like ours face new challenges — but with your support, we are ready to meet them head-on.



I know that members join for different reasons — some for health, some for friendship, some for the joy of walking itself. Our challenge is to keep every member engaged and inspired. That is why we are expanding opportunities like cruise ship walks, group walks, and digital connections like the online start box and the walk application, so everyone feels included and valued.

Challenges are nothing new to nonprofits — and every challenge is also an opportunity. By staying proactive, innovative, and united, we can continue to inspire healthier lives, brighter minds, and stronger communities.

With your support, we are not just facing challenges — we are walking toward solutions. Thank you for being part of America's Walking Club and happy 50th Anniversary to all our AVA Clubs and Members!

PRESIDENT'S UPDATES



HENRY ROSALES, PRESIDENT AND CEO

CELEBRATING AVA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH WALK THAT STARTED IT ALL - FREDERICKSBURG TX

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of AVA: America's Walking Club, the annual [Texas Trail Roundup](#) (TTR), February 20-22, 2026, will feature the historic first volkswalk in the United States in Fredericksburg, TX. The event will take place the first day of the TTR, Friday, February 20th, with visitors walking through this historic city about 70 miles northwest of San Antonio, TX. Buses will be available to take participants from San Antonio.

The Texas Trail Roundup is celebrating its 6th year as an IML (International Marching League) walking festival in San Antonio, Texas. The three-day event is one of two IML events in the United States, and is one of the 17 signature events commemorating AVA's 50th birthday. Each day will offer a different schedule of walks featuring some of the most beautiful areas of the region. Here's a sample:

- Friday February 20 – the Anniversary Walk will take place in the beautiful city of Fredericksburg, located in the Hill Country of Texas. Participants can either take the bus from the host hotel in San Antonio, or drive yourself. We'll parade down the street to the Adelsverein covered pavilion, where the grand opening ceremony will welcome everyone. The 5K and 10K walks begin afterward, followed by wine samples from Augusta Vin (Fredericksburg is the epicenter of the Texas wine country, with over 75 wineries and vineyards that produce award-winning wines). We'll also have live entertainment, a food truck and refreshments. The buses will return you to San Antonio that afternoon. See the tentative [schedule here](#).



- Saturday February 21 features various walks to choose from, walking south along the River Walk. For IML participants, choose either the 42K (marathon) or the 21K (half-marathon), where you will visit all four Spanish Missions, a UNESCO world heritage area. 10K walkers visit the Mission Concepcion, the Blue Star Art Complex, and the King William District, where there are several good restaurants. 5K walkers will mostly walk in the King William District and the Blue Star Art Complex. Walks start at the Springhill Suites in downtown San Antonio, and end at the AVA national headquarters. Upon returning you'll get free drinks from The Jewel, free mini-churros at Churrostar, and more.
- Sunday February 22 begins with three walks to choose from along the San Antonio River Walk: 21K visits the Pearl, a historic mid-town community of shops and restaurants (where Pearl Beer was once brewed) and their weekend outdoor market; Japanese Tea Garden – 5 acres of lush year-round floral displays with stone bridges, 60-foot waterfall and ponds filled with koi; and parts of downtown and King William. The 12K will take you along the river to the Pearl; and the 5K visits the river downtown. The walk starts at the Springhill Suites downtown, and ends at the Beethoven Maennerchor, where the closing ceremony will finish the festival.

Registration is available now for the [Texas Trail Roundup](#). There is also a special hotel rate at the [SpringHill Suites San Antonio Downtown/Riverwalk Area](#) of \$125 per night. Must book by January 30, 2026.

We also have a special Golden Boot Award, which is given to the military unit, active reserve guard, ROTC, or Veteran group with the most members who complete the 42K Missions Marathon Walk on Saturday. The winning unit gets their unit name on an engraved golden boot trophy. Contact Amanda Jauregui at amanda@ava.org for details, and to register for this special award.

There is so much to discover in San Antonio, the 7th largest city in the United States, with the largest concentration of Spanish colonial architecture in North America. Come early or stay late to enjoy its history, culinary cuisine, arts, museums and more.

We hope you can join us February 20-22, 2026 for the annual IML [Texas Trail Roundup](#) in San Antonio.





Figure 3.4

Last Two Walkers at First Walkfest Receiving T-shirts From Kenn Knopp.
(Courtesy of Mrs. N.J. Dietel, Fredericksburg, Texas, Radio Post Photo.)

A LITTLE BIT OF AVA HISTORY – CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB

In 1975, the Reverend Kenn Knopp, a Fredericksburg, Texas native, attended a church meeting in Rome 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 bicentennial committee). Without having participated in a volksmarch, Kenn and a small group organized a walk fest on June 12-13, 1976. The walks (6 and 12 miles, not Kilometers) started at the Vereins Kirche in the Marketplatz, the first public building in Fredericksburg, built in 1847. About 230-235 walkers participated.

They formed the first volksmarch club in the U.S., Volkssportverein Friedrichsburg, #001. The club is still in existence, with 9 YREs and several traditional events annually.

After this first volksmarch in the US, Kenn returned to Germany and participated in one in Europe. Known as "The Founding Father of Volkssporting in the U.S.", Kenn died in 2013 and is buried in Fredericksburg, TX. His gravesite is on the Cemetery YRE route.

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.

HOW I GOT HOOKED ON VOLKSMARCHING

BY DORIS A. CLINTON, TOLEDO OHIO

Volksmarching in the United States was a well-kept secret, especially in northern Ohio. I'd heard of volksmarching, a walking sport held in Europe, mainly in Germany, but I had no idea it had caught on in this country.

I learned just how it had caught on here when my daughter, Cindi and her husband Richard, both in the Army, went to Germany in 1983 for a two-year tour of duty.

They were immediately introduced to volksmarching by the other military personnel, and started participating nearly every weekend they had free, quite often both Saturday and Sunday. When Cindi learned about The American Wanderer, she ordered a subscription, wrote telling me about it, and I also subscribed.

I decided that I had to find out more about these events, and wrote some of the clubs, and most of my letters were answered, giving me quite a lot of information. But before I had the chance to participate in any events in Ohio, I went to Germany to visit Cindi and Richard.

I'd written, telling Cindi I wanted to go on a volksmarch or two while I was there, and the day after I landed there, on a Saturday morning, off I went with a group of military people, in an Army van, to Fulda, Germany, and my first volksmarch. It was a seasonally warm day in April of 1984.

The group was allowed to use the Army vehicle through the morale support system, giving transportation to these events, making it possible for military people to participate, so they would have more to do with their spare time.

I thoroughly enjoyed the walk through the quiet, quaint, picturesque village and out into the countryside, basically seeing Germany up close, on foot. And it was great, getting a medal, for just taking a nice walk. That's the only way I'll ever win a medal for a sport event.

We all piled back into the van for what I thought was our return trip to the base, but when the scenery looked different, I learned that we were on our way to Kutzberg, and a second march. Two? All in one day? I was certain I'd fall flat on my face.

The last two miles were grueling, but I made it, then found out everyone else had felt the effects, two marches in one day, a first for them, too. It turned out to be the last for that first. I went on a number of marches before leaving Germany, but only one at a time.



My first volksmarch in this country was in mid-summer in 1984, at Richwood, Ohio, a two and a half hour drive south of Toledo. And since then I've been on quite a few, having to drive three or four hours just to get to one, but now that I'm hooked on volksmarching, I'll go any distance to participate.

By October of 1985, Cindi and Richard were based at Fort Gordon, Georgia. I went to visit, we went on a volksmarch through the fort on a hot, hazy, humid day. As we plodded along, a platoon of soldiers marched past us, looking just as hot and sweaty, but more so since they were in uniform with field packs. Later, we came upon them resting, and as we trudged by them, I heard one soldier ask another, "Why are all those civilians out here walking?" "They're volksmarching." "What's that?" "It's walking 10 kilometers or a little over six miles for the fun of it." "For fun? You're kidding. In this weather? They gotta be crazy."

Crazy? Well, maybe, but once you're hooked on volksmarching, there's no distance too great, no weather that bad to stop you from participating. It's fun, relaxing, good exercise, a way to meet people and see new places. And my collection of medals makes me feel like a winner!

There are no clubs in northwestern Ohio, so I am on my own, depending on The American Wanderer for all information and lists of events. I don't have to go alone, my husband goes to drive part of the way, then he strolls around to see the sights, and sits on a bench, watching the volksmarches come back in.

When I finished on a very hot day in Richmond, Indiana, he remarked, "everyone looks rotten when they come out of the woods." He'd been nice and cool on his bench in the shade. I won't repeat what I told him.

Doris passed away on September 4, 2022, but the memories of her many walking adventures are always with her daughter Cindi.

[Editor's note: Since the article was written in the late 1980's, Ohio now has several volksmarch clubs, including near Toledo; the AVA website provides easy access to find upcoming walks; and the TAW is electronic. It's wonderful to see the passion of walkers from the past, and today].

AVA SPECIAL PROGRAMS USA/AVA ANNIVERSARY HURRAH

BY TERRY LUNGHOFFER

The USA-AVA Anniversary Hurrah is a new Special Program starting in 2026 – The 250th Anniversary of the USA and the 50th of the AVA. Due to the uniqueness of the anniversary years, this program will only run from January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026, with completed books redeemed by December 31, 2027. This program is designed to emphasize the entire history of both the USA and the AVA, not just the events around 1776 or 1976. Each of us has our own sense of the history that we wish to celebrate: It could be the men elected to office, the conflicts we've had, the geography we celebrate, the evolution of transportation, the trails and waterways followed, the arts we preserve, the culture we wish to know better, the schools and the museums which preserve history, the events of the 23 remaining AVA clubs from the original 100, the 181 still sanctioned YRE/Sea events of the original 250, the sites of our first 22 national biennial conventions, or all of the expired special programs which you missed. The sub-program you wish to accomplish within this Special Program is your choice. Space has been provided within the record book for recording your personal selected sub-program(s) or you may devise your own. Complete twenty-five (25) events to receive an embroidered patch reflecting the national geography highlighted in the Song "America the Beautiful". Every AVA sanctioned event: Traditional, YRE, SEA, or guided walk, is a qualifying event. You may complete 25 different events or you can complete a single event 25 times if your geography is isolated. Each stamp impression must be paid for and completed at a separate time. Since many locations may not have a sanctioned event which goes by a site you wish to see or visit, complete the closest event which is available and visit the true site before or after.

You will find descriptions of all AVA sanctioned events, both traditional and YRE/SEA, at the website ava.org under the Find an Event tab. Revisiting this site often is recommended as new events may be sanctioned which celebrate an individual club's version of history. Please visit the website: falconwanderers.org, to find links giving some ideas for a sub-category for emphasis; for a list of all AVA Special Programs since 1991; for the remaining clubs of the first 100 sorted by club number and by state; and for the remaining walks of the first 250 YRE/SEAs.

This Special Program is hosted by Falcon Wanderers Volkssport Association in Colorado Springs. The books have been available since November 1, 2025. Mail your book request, and a check for \$14 payable to Falcon Wanderers, to the Falcon Wanderers, c/o Terry Lunghofer, P.O. Box 17162, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7162. Please include your mailing address and email address with your request. For more information, contact Terry Lunghofer at tlunghofer0031@gmail.com or 719-597-4307 (H).



CELEBRATE AVA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2026 WITH ONE OF 17 WALKING EVENTS

BY SUSAN FINE, PUBLICITY COMMITTEE CHAIR

2026 is our "Golden Jubilee" – 50 years of volkssporting in the United States, so we're having a celebration in every region across the country, that coincides with America's 250th birthday anniversary. There are 17 different volkswalk events throughout the year, most multi-day walks, to commemorate Fun, Fitness and Friendship with America's Walking Club.

Plan your travels now: some of the events need pre-registration; most have hotel special rates. All walks may be found at: ava.org/50th-anniversary

We're going to highlight the first six months of featured events in this issue of TAW:

January 9-11 – Boulder City, NV (Pacific Region) – AVA Chairman's Anniversary Celebration

Carl Cordes, Chair of the AVA Board, has planned a three-day kickoff celebration in Boulder City, Nevada, 25 miles south of Las Vegas, and home of Hoover Dam. Sponsored by the Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers, there will be a mix of self-guided and group walks, as well as two socials. Walks include:



- Historic Railroad Tunnels Trail in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area is a gravel and dirt trail that will take you through five mountain tunnels where the old railroad track was used to deliver materials for the Hoover Dam construction. There are also great panoramic views of Lake Mead and its mountain setting.
- Bootleg Canyon, which showcases views of both the Las Vegas Valley and Lake Mead. Then continue on the wide-paved River Mountain Loop Trails, and the Boulder City Parkways with several food places. On your way back to the park, you'll pass the Nevada State Railroad Museum.
- Veterans Memorial Park, a beautiful 25-acre park, with 2 ponds, and multiple walking paths interspersed with several sports fields. The walk also takes you to the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The Boulder City Municipal Airport is adjacent to cemetery and is the 3rd busiest airport in Nevada.
- Two YREs are available on your own, including Hoover Dam and Boulder City Historic Downtown.

A fajita group dinner will be Friday night. Saturday evening, the city is sponsoring the Best Dam Wine Walk through historic Boulder City, which counts as a 5K (and we get a discounted price of only \$15). The host hotel (the Best Western) is out of its special-rate rooms but you can find other [Hotels in Boulder City, NV](#) and [Motels in Boulder City, NV](#) for lodging options. Get information on all the walks, socials, and [pre-registration form here](#).

February 20-22 – San Antonio, TX (Southwest Region) – 6th Annual Texas Trail Roundup IML



The three-day annual IML Texas Trail Roundup returns in 2026 to San Antonio, TX, one of only two IML events in the United States. The event is held in San Antonio each year, welcoming visitors with its history, culinary delights, arts, museums and UNESCO World Heritage Missions. Walks include:

- Friday Feb 20: 50th Anniversary Walk in Fredericksburg, TX where the first volkswalk took place in 1976. The walk will take you through this beautiful hill-country town of German heritage, with many shops and restaurants. Buses will take you back and forth from San Antonio to the Adelsverein covered pavilion, for the opening ceremony. 5K and 10K walks will then commence, followed by live entertainment, food truck, refreshments, plus wine samples from Augusta Vin (one of the 75 vineyards in the Fredericksburg area).
- Saturday Feb 21, the IML kicks off in San Antonio with 42K and 21K events that take you to visit all four of the UNESCO Spanish Missions, and along the San Antonio River Walk. Or choose the 10K, where you'll walk along the River Walk to Mission Concepcion, the Blue Star Art Complex with its many restaurants, and the King William District, a historic neighborhood. Afterwood enjoy free drinks from The Jewell, free mini-churros at Churrostar, and more.
- Sunday Feb 22, choose walks of 21K to complete your IML event, taking you north along the San Antonio River Walk to The Pearl filled with restaurants and shops, to the Japanese Tea Garden filled with lush year-round flora, waterfall and more, plus you'll wind back to downtown area and King William District. 12K walkers will walk along the river to the Pearl and back through downtown; and 5K visitors walk the river downtown. The finish will be at Beethoven Maennerchor, where the closing ceremony occurs.

Registration is now open: texastrailroundup.org. Get a special hotel rate of \$125 at the [Springhill Suites by Marriott Downtown/Riverwalk](#) – must book by January 30, 2026.

March 20-23 – Williamsburg, VA (Atlantic Region) – Atlantic Regional Conference

The Virginia Volkssport Association is sponsoring the 2026 Atlantic Regional Conference in Williamsburg, VA to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route. A pre-walk will be in Fredericksburg on March 19th. Other walks will take place in Colonial Williamsburg, the Civil War Redoubts, and the New Town section of Williamsburg, along with Jamestown, the original English settlement, and Yorktown, the site of the surrender of the British forces to the Americans and French. Two bike routes will be available, one in Williamsburg and one in Yorktown. There is also a swim available at the hotel all three days. Details are being planned now. A special hotel rate is available at the Best Western Historic District, 351 York St. in Williamsburg, for \$130 per night Friday and Saturday, \$94 for Thursday and Sunday. Call 757-229-4100.



**April 17-19 - North Central Region
– Memories on the Mighty MO**



Join the Nebraska Trailblazers for Miles of Memories Across the Mighty Missouri.

- Friday, April 17th – Group walk on Council Bluffs First Avenue Trail at 5 p.m. on Friday evening to help celebrate Rails to Trails 40th anniversary. First Avenue

Trail is part of the Great American Rail Trail that spans 3,700 miles between Washington, D.C., and Washington State and traverses through Council Bluffs! This portion of the trail is lined with trees, native prairie plantings and a series of murals.

- Saturday, April 18th – Traditional event starting from 9-11 a.m, finish by 1 p.m. at Rivers Edge Pavilion, walking the newly opened Tree Top Trail, the Bob Kerrey Bridge, an award-winning pedestrian bridge connecting Iowa and Nebraska, and the beautiful downtown Omaha RiverFront Parks. Lunch will be available at the Rivers Edge Pavilion. This walk is sponsored by Council Bluffs Convention and Visitor's Bureau.
- Saturday, April 18th afternoon museum tours in Council Bluffs-Tour the Squirrel Cage Jail, a rare three-story rotary jail designed for maximum security with minimal staff. Now a museum, it offers a glimpse into a unique chapter of penal history and is known for its intriguing architecture and reported hauntings. After visiting the Squirrel Cage Jail, walk next door to the Union Pacific Railroad Museum. Housed in a historic Carnegie Library you can explore 150 years of our nation's westward expansion history.
- Sunday, April 19th – Group walk at 10 a.m. in Nebraska City, walking the trails through Arbor Lodge State Historical, a beautiful 72 acre arboretum and home to the estate which was the original home of J. Sterling Morton of Morton Salt fame, the founder of Arbor Day. The walk will include a visit to Arbor Day Farm, the Lied Lodge and traverse tree-lined streets in the historical downtown.

For more information, visit our website at nebraskatrailblazers.com.

**May 16-20 – Northeast Region
– Walk the Story that Changed the World: A Multi-day Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites**

Empire State Capital Volkssporters invites you to "Walk the Story that Changed the World: A Multiday Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites" from May 16-20, 2026.

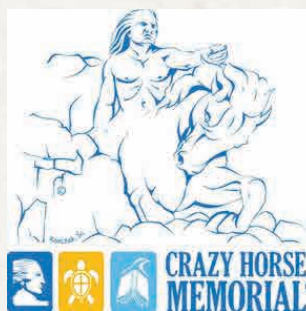


- The first walk in historic Johnstown, NY on Saturday, May 16 includes a parade and an historic reenactment.
- Sunday, May 17 offers up to 3 options, Crown Point, with a scavenger hunt, Ft. Ticonderoga and Ticonderoga Village, home of Trekonderoga, the Star Trek Museum and Ticonderoga pencils.
- Monday May 18 takes us to Schuylerville, the surrender site for the Battle of Saratoga, the Turning Point of the Revolution.

- On Tuesday walk Lake George Village, showcasing the strategic waterways for military movement and operations during the Revolution.
- Wednesday, ESCV's regularly scheduled Wednesday walk series, is in Round Lake, a former 19th century Methodist Camp, now listed on the National Historic Register.
- Two bike rides are offered, one from Lake George on a rails to trails path, the other through Saratoga National Historic Park and Gerald B. Solomon National Cemetery.

The host hotel has changed to Georgian Lakeside Resort, (518) 668-5401, booking code WALKNE26. Courtyard rooms cost \$119 + tax, Lakeside rooms \$169 + tax, no elevators for the upper level. The Galley will serve a hot & cold buffet breakfast for a special \$15 p/p on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. On other days breakfast can be directly purchased there or in town. Earlier registrants can remain at the Quality Inn, a half mile away, or transfer to the new location. Further information will appear at ESCVWalks.org, as it becomes available. An exciting innovation this year is the opportunity to register and pay online.

**June 6-7 –Black Hills, SD (North Central Region)
– 40th Annual Crazy Horse Memorial Volksmarch (Saturday Only) and Black Hills Walk Sunday**



Join the Black Hills Volkssport Association for the 40th Annual [Crazy Horse Memorial](http://CrazyHorseMemorial.com) Volksmarch at the world's largest mountain carving in progress. A Drumming ceremony will begin your trek up the mountain. This is a delightful hike to the top of the mountain to walk on the arm of the Crazy Horse Memorial. Bring 3 cans of food, and only pay \$4 fee to walk to the top.



On June 7 we will do a morning Volksmarch at Outlaw Ranch outside of Custer, a . A possible celebratory lunch will take place at a local venue. There are more than a dozen year round or seasonal walks available in the Black Hills area with physical start boxes.

[More information](#) to follow on socials and the events.

**June 19-21, 2026 - Indiana and Illinois
- Mid-America Regional Conference**

Come join us for the Mid-America Region's Conference in June.



- Friday June 19, start off your adventure at a city walk in the vibrant and exciting town of Terre Haute, Indiana. Then head on across the border to Illinois for an evening social at the Stix Bar & Grille in the new, growing section of Mattoon, Illinois, easily assessable to Interstate 57.
- Saturday June 20, head down the road to historic Charleston, Illinois, home to the fighting Panthers of Eastern Illinois University. The 10KM walk will take you on a walk to the downtown square of Charleston passing through parks and up a few hills and finishing on the campus of Eastern Illinois University. The 5KM walk is a campus walk through EIU past several beautiful and historical campus buildings and over to the

campus pond and on a portion of the Woodall trail. Eastern is one of the most easily walked and user friendly campuses in the United States. Take a quick breather and head a short distance over to Fox Ridge State Park. We will spend Saturday afternoon and evening in this wonderful Illinois State park. We will meet at the Stone Shelter built in 1936 by the Civil Conservation Corps for a picnic lunch ending with a piece 50th anniversary cake. The afternoon walk will take you through the park on paved and some short trails. Stick around after the walk for an evening of pizza and fellowship under the stars far away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

- Sunday June 21, before heading home join us for one more walk in Casey, IL, known for the world's largest things, like the World's Largest Windchime; World's Largest Rocking Chair, and 10 more unbelievable things.

More details to follow. You know what they say – the midwest has some of the friendliest people in the world. So come join us for fun, fitness and friendship.

Save the dates for the rest of the year's 50th Anniversary Celebrations. We'll have more details of these in the next TAW:

June 24-25, 2026 in San Francisco, CA for "50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking

June 28 – August 1, 2026 in Colorado Spring, CO, for the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous

August 28-29, 2026 in Boston, MA for 50th Anniversary Walks in Boston

September 7, 2026 in Mackinaw City and St. Ignace, MI, for the Annual Mackinac Bridge Walk

September 24-27, 2026 in Astoria, OR, for the Northwest Regional Conference: "Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark"

October 16-18, 2026 in Arlington, VA for the 25th Annual FreedomWalk Festival

October 28-November 1, 2026 in Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma for "Halloween Clicks on Route 66"

November 6-8, 2026 in Bradenton, FL for Walk Around Florida 35

November 14, 2026 in Dayton, OH for the Ohio Wander Freunde Honors Veterans Walk

December 5, 2026 in Helen, GA for the Weihnachten Lights Spectacular



ABOUT 180 VOLKSWALKERS SET SAIL ON THE WALKING THE WAVES CRUISE - AVA'S FUNDRAISING CRUISE FROM NEW ORLEANS, NOVEMBER 15-22, 2025.





Get Your Passport Book
Celebrating AVA's 50th Anniversary

Attend either 8 Anniversary 'Signature' 8 events or all 17 events in 2026. Get special awards.

ava.org/50th-anniversary

**Become a Member
of America's
Walking Club!**

Only \$25/Year
Helps Continue the
Fun - Fitness -
Friendship

Click on this ad for
membership form & benefits



PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

BY DIANE HOWELL EVANS, CHAIR

The Programs Committee members in November 2023 were busy reviewing Special Program applications and were excited to approve "Grain Elevators: Monarchs of the Plains" and "Walking With the Wild Things" for 2025. In January this year many walkers began their quest to find grain elevators, silos, mills, grain loading facilities, granaries, grain cribs, trolls, gargoyles, fairies and gnomes! What a variety of qualifiers and certainly attainable using one's imagination. If a walk goes past a history museum displaying photos of olden times it might show a type of grain elevator used in the town when it was first populated, or a window display might show a fairy or a repurposed mill on a pillow. Dambo Trolls are becoming popular across our country with Facebook pages devoted to finding the Trolls. I have heard start/finish points which are located within grocery stores are a great repository for beers with unusual names that might include the word "troll."

Folks are very creative when it comes to suggesting ideas for new special programs and I am always excited to hear their ideas. Just as excited as hearing from a club hosting an event about all the special programs and qualifiers their trail will offer walkers. Special events promote America's Walking Club and also motivate our fellow walkers to see their local area, as well as the rest of the USA, with a new set of eyes.

The following POCs for Special Programs took the initiative to research an idea, submit a proposal and bring the special program to fruition for our AVA community. Please thank any of the POCs you know or encounter on the trail. The POCs have given their valuable time, energy and other resources to promote, maintain and support their club's special program.

Current Standard 3-Year Special Programs

Amazing Labyrinths (1/1/24 – 12/31/27)
POCs: Betty Green (AVA Angel) and Mike Green

Grain Elevators (1/1/25 – 12/31/28)
POCs: Sherry Sayers, Frank Sayers, and Terri Tyler

Lighthouses II (1/1/23 – 12/31/26)
POC: Sue Capp

Par for the Course (1/1/23 – 12/31/26)
POCs: Karen Kaufman and Margie MacLeish

Step to the Beat (1/1/24 – 12/31/27)
POC: Lori Anderson

Walking With the Wild Things (1/1/25 – 12/31/28)
POC: Pam Greig-Davis

Current Extended Years Special Programs

Appalachian Trail (1/1/18 – 12/31/29)
POCs: Susan Medlin (AVA Angel) and Susan Noonan

Walking with America's Veterans (1/1/21 – 12/31/29)
POC: Tim Miner

Washington-Rochambeau NHT (9/1/22 – 12/31/22)
POC: Tim Miner

AVA Administered Special Programs

50 States/51 State Capitals (no end date)
POC: AVA HQ

Walk the United States A-Z (no end date)
POC: AVA HQ

IVV-Americas & Oceania Special Program

POCs: Tim Miner & CVF

Programs to be completed by 12/31/25

Border Crossings
POC: Tom Crabill

Town Hall/City Hall
POC: Sandy Croushore

Extended to December 31, 2027

Rails-to-Trails
POC: Sherry Sayers

Coming in 2026
Anniversaries Hurrah
POC: Terry Lunghofer



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

AVA SPECIAL PROGRAMS – ARE THEY A THING OF THE PAST?

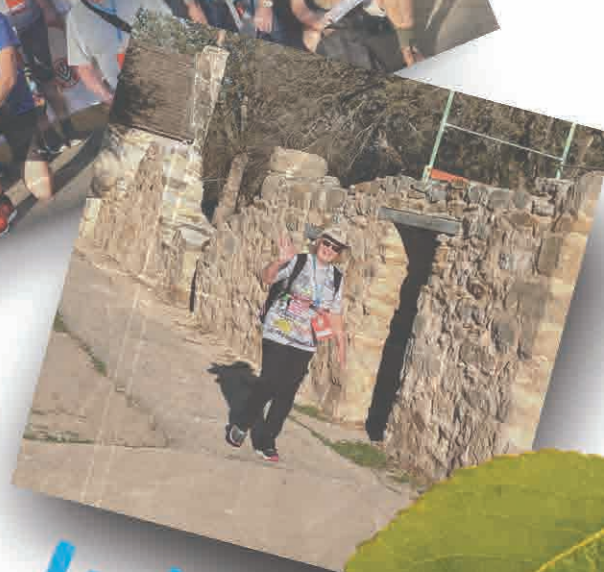
Currently we have a total of twelve AVA Special Programs hosted and administered by AVA Volkssport/Walking clubs. Two special programs will expire at the end of this year – Border Crossings and Town Hall/City Halls. Only one new special program – Anniversaries Hurrah – will begin in January 2026, thus decreasing the total active special programs hosted by clubs to eleven.

At the end of 2026, two more special programs will expire. At the end of 2027, four more special programs will expire. 2028 – 2 more. 2029 – 2 more. Beginning in 2030, if there are no other active special programs, there will only be one active special program – the long running Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail Special Program which expires at the end of 2032.

Are Special Programs soon to be a thing of the past like the Lifetime Membership category, checkpoints at events, 2-day events, etc?

The Programs Committee is interested in knowing what inspires host clubs to host Special Programs. What has been your experience hosting a special program? If a club has hosted a special program in the past what has deterred the club from hosting another special program? Are there too many rules? Too costly? Too time consuming? No benefits? Change of officers and lack of knowledge on how to propose and host another Special Program? Lack of manpower? No interest within club to do it again and why? Approval process too hard?

It would be most appreciated if Special Program host clubs and POCs would forward their feedback regarding the above questions to:
Programs@ava.org



You're invited to roundup for our 3-day international walk fest known as the:

Texas Trail Roundup

A premier three-day international walking festival hosted in the beautiful city of San Antonio, Texas. Each year, walkers from around the world come together to explore one of America's most historic and culturally rich cities on foot. Whether you are an experienced walker or just starting out, you will discover San Antonio in a way few people ever do! You can join us for fun, one, two, or all three days!

February 20th - 22nd, 2026

- Friday Opening Ceremony & Walk in Fredericksburg - \$30
 - Saturday Walk in San Antonio (45k, 21k, 10k, 5k) - \$30
 - Sunday Closing Reception & Walk in San Antonio (21k, 10k, 5k) - \$30
- Kids 12 and under are free!
- Receive an exclusive pin with your walk.*

**REGISTER
TODAY**

Visit our website:
texastrailroundup.org





REGIONAL TALES FROM THE TRAILS



ATLANTIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



WALK EVENTS IN SAVAGE, MARYLAND -NEW YEAR'S EVE AND NEW YEAR'S DAY

BY LINDA HASSELL

Come walk and finish 2025 at the Freestate Happy Wanderers annual walk events on New Year's Eve, December 31 and begin 2026 at our New Year's Day, January 1 walks at the Savage United Methodist Church, 9050 Baltimore St. in Savage, MD. The walk events will feature four 5km trails loops with credit stamps for two 10km trails for walkers to enjoy each day. The trails are on paved paths and natural wooded areas in and near the Savage Mill Historic District and Savage Park.



Freestate Members invite you to come walk the fun trails in Savage, Maryland

Start between 9 a.m. and 12 noon and finish by 3 p.m. Enjoy the friendly walking atmosphere of fun and fellowship. For complete brochure information checkout our website <https://sites.google.com/svsvc.org/fhw/home> or email wahasse1798@verizon.net

VIRGINIA WALKERS COMPLETE IVV WORLD CUP SPECIAL PROGRAM

BY RON JONES

Heather Warden and Ron Jones began a journey six years ago, not knowing where it would lead them or where it would end. But with good planning and a little luck, in 2025 they completed the IVV World Cup Special Program by volksmarching in two countries in three different continents and attending two IVV Olympiads.

They have great memories. In August 2019 they started their adventure by walking in Rosheim, France in the morning and Gegenbach, Germany in the afternoon, to complete one continent. They had lots of experience with European walks as they had already completed the IVV Europa Cup. In September 2019, they started on continent number two by completing their first walk in Burke VA with their new club, the Northern Virginia Volksmarchers. In February 2023 they attended their first Olympiad in San Antonio, TX hosted by the AVA.



Left to right: Heather Warden, Carl Cordes, Tanja Mueller, Ron Jones

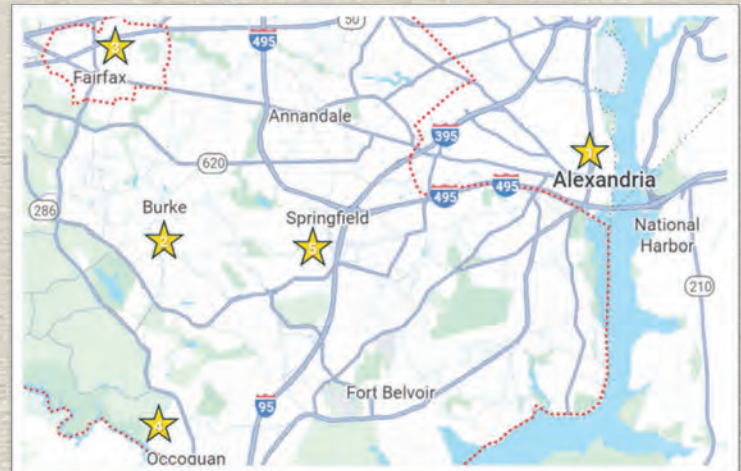
In 2025 they decided to get serious. In January, they walked on two continents, Antarctica and South America. They walked Argentina with Walking Adventures International and then worked with Tanja Mueller, IVV Executive Secretary, to put together a walk in Montevideo, Uruguay to complete the second country in South America. At the AVA National Convention in April, they walked in Mexico thus completing North America and continent number three. In August they completed their second Olympiad in Tampere, Finland. Tanja and Carl Cordes, Chair, AVA Board, took a moment for a photo op with their certificates and baseball caps.

WEDNESDAY WALKS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

BY STEVE BROWN



The Northern Virginia Volksmarchers (NVV) Club has hosted dozens of guided group walks since 2021. Each 5-to-10-kilometer stroll is typically scheduled on the third Wednesday of month from March to November. Two lengths are often offered by the walk leaders, club members who created the event directions. "Wednesday Walk" highlights include natural scenery, historical sites, and one even showcases bald eagles. All the routes are dog-friendly with parking and bathrooms available at each of the nine starting points in five cities shown on the map below. The following paragraphs describe a few attractions and popular post-walk eateries. NVV Club's guided group walks not only exemplify the AVA motto "Walking for Fun, Fitness, Friendship," but also feature food.



Gold stars on Northern Virginia map indicate NVV "Wednesday Walk" locations

1) Two volksmarches in Alexandria, which was founded in 1749, include a National Memorial and a Memorial Parkway named after George Washington. A lighthouse and canal lock are seen on routes along the Potomac River. Walkers often visit the Bread and Water Café after watching eagles and other birds in a National Park Service managed wildlife preserve.

2) The pair of walks in Burke, VA wind around lakes, ponds, and windmills. Egrets, turtles, and other animals are frequently spotted along the picturesque waterfronts. The photo below was taken during a rest step in a Burke Centre neighborhood gazebo. Super Italian and Mexican restaurants, coffee, and ice cream shops are located near the start/finish points.



"Wednesday Walk" in Burke, VA where the NVV Club was founded in 1983

3) During City of Fairfax walk, view inscriptions by Civil War soldiers at the Blenheim house, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Do not miss opportunity to eat afterwards at Orner Beer Company and Public House, located in the historic downtown.



NVV "Wednesday Walk" cofounders Steve Brown and Ron Jones

4) The Workhouse Arts Center is most frequent start/finish location for strolls through the former prison complex in Lorton, Virginia. Participants on the 10-kilometer route also visit the "Turning Point Memorial," which honors millions of suffragists who fought for decades to win the vote for women in national elections. The Bunnyman Brewing Café courtyard and Brickmakers Café riverside deck are ideal places to enjoy post-walk refreshments.



Northern Virginia Volksmarchers host Fredericksburg Walking Club at Lake Accotink

5) Springfield walks feature loops around scenic lakes. The longer route from South Run Recreation Center features two lakes and spillways. Everyone looks forward to dining at the Swiss Bakery and Pastry Shop before and/or after hiking around 476-acre Lake Accotink Park.

NVV "Wednesday Walks" are promoted on social media sites including Meetup and Facebook, in addition to the NVV Club website. While co-founders Ron Jones and Steve Brown led many of the initial guided group events, other wonderful walk leaders have included Susan Brown & dog "Kip," Helen & Jim Garamone, Rob Grunewald, Sandy & Ralph Koontz, and Karen & Barry Plott.

In conjunction with the 2026 AVA Atlantic Region Conference, Northern Virginia Volksmarchers Club plans to host a special event on **March 23** along the Washington–Rochambeau Revolutionary Route. Since this guided group event will depart from Jones Point Park in Alexandria on a Monday, perhaps the NVV Club should promote it as a "Weekday Walk."

Everyone is welcome to join "Wednesday Walks," during 2026, whether long-time volksmarchers or newcomers. Enjoy Northern Virginia's splendid scenery, while engaging with historic heritage of the American Revolution, George Washington, Civil War soldiers, suffragettes, and more.

For the latest details about NVV guided group walks, traditional volksmarches, year-round events, and other activities, see the club website at northernvirginiavolksmarchers.club.



FIRE AND ICE SCULPTURE FESTIVAL IN MARYLAND

BY MARIE WISER

Please join the Annapolis Amblers Walking Club, Inc. for a spectacular viewing of the Easton, Maryland, Fire and Ice Sculpture Event. Our club has enjoyed this as an Event for several years. Now we invite other ambitious walkers to join us.

The walk is Saturday, February 21, 2026, start point at the Easton YMCA, 202 Peachblossom Road, Easton, Maryland, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

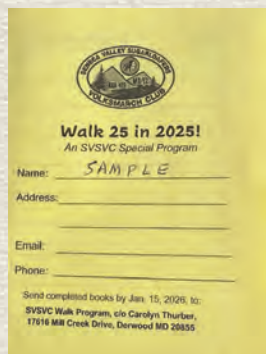
Our Point of Contact is Jane Steele, who may be reached on 410-829-3045.

Walkers of all ages and their families are invited to join us. There is no charge to enjoy the sculptures. For additional information please check <https://discovereaston.com/fireandice/>

SUGARLOAFERS – THE JOY OF WALKING

BY ANTHONY (TONY) LAING

The Seneca Valley Sugarloafers Volksmarch Club of Montgomery County, Maryland are an active and vibrant walking club that experiences the joy of walking with fun, fitness, and friendship. When you walk with others, you forget about and sometimes don't notice any aches or pains that you may be having. This is part of the joy of walking.



In 2026, the Sugarloafers are looking forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of the AVA as well as the 250th anniversary of the USA. We plan to sponsor five Traditional Events (TEs) and we will be hosting 30 Year Round Events (YREs) as well as two Seasonal Events.

Because we have so many YREs, we can hold group walks every Wednesday morning that are enjoyed by an average of 18 walkers with sometimes up to 30 walkers showing up – depending on the weather. We walk on the scenic outdoor trails in our beautiful county, and to keep the Wednesday walk continuity, we'll walk in a shopping mall in inclement weather.



For several years now, we have been sponsoring a Club Special Program Book whereby club members walk the same number of walks that are in the year: Walk 24 in 2024; Walk 25 in 2025; Walk 26 in 2026, etc. The prize for finishing the book is three free walk coupons. We plan to keep

offering this special program book for the foreseeable future. Because we walk every Wednesday, members can easily finish the designated number of walks.

And speaking of Special Programs, many club members take advantage of the various programs that AVA offers. Probably the most challenging one is the Appalachian Trail, which, due to our east coast proximity, several club members have walked at the trailheads of all 14 states – more joy of walking!

The club TE with the highest number of participants is the Frederick Oktoberfest, held annually on the last Saturday in September. We've been holding this walk for the past ten years and will continue to do so as long as the Frederick community holds their Oktoberfest. The organizers welcome our walk and waive the \$10 entry fee for walkers. This freebie is an added benefit to the joy of walking.



We recently held a TE in the RIO/Crown complex in Gaithersburg, and a local fitness center allowed us to set up our Start and Finish Table under a portico near their entrance. From this experience, we have a Tip and Lessons Learned to share: try to have a Start Point near a gym or fitness center – people going in and out are interested in exercise and are prospective members.

Also, as part of the friendship aspect of our club, we also hold monthly dinners and or luncheons where camaraderie abounds.

View the above and other Sugarloafers activities on our website: sugarloafers.org.



Robert Buzolich, MA RD

MID-AMERICA REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



MID-AMERICA REGION PREPARES

FOR THE AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2026

BY ROBERT (BOB) BUZOLICH

The Mid-America Region, comprised of the states of Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, is leading the way with three of the featured events/activities for America's Walking Club 50th Anniversary in 2026. This is more than any other region. Each of the three anniversary events/activities will highlight the natural beauty, the cultural and historic qualities of an activities' locale and spread the message of Volkssporting to attract our potentially newest followers.



The Vigo County Courthouse in Terre Haute, IN.

The first series of events will be the Mid-America Walking Weekend (Conference), which will offer four walking events in East Central Illinois and West Central Indiana from June 19 to June 21. The first walk will be in Terre Haute, Indiana, on Friday, June 19, which is hosted by the Clubs of Ohio. On Saturday, June 20, the Clubs of Michigan and Illinois will host one walk in Charleston, the County Seat of Coles County and home of Eastern Illinois University, and a second walk at Fox Ridge State Park, where all participants may partake of refreshment and, hopefully, a starlite sky. The final walk for the weekend will be hosted by Indiana on Sunday, June 21, in Casey, Illinois, which is a location that attracts many travelers each weekend to marvel at Casey's claim to fame, namely their many household items identified as the largest such items in the world.



A mural on the campus of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, IL.

The second event is the Annual Mackinaw Bridge walk in Northern Michigan September 7th, which, in addition to the Bridge Walk will provide participants with opportunities for a fun time.



A scenic view of Ridge Lake at Fox Ridge State Park near Charleston, IL.

The third event is the annual Ohio Wander Freunde (OWF) walk to honor America's Veterans on the Saturday nearest Veteran's Day. In 2026, the OWF event will fall on Saturday, November 14, in the vicinity of Fairborn and Dayton, Ohio.

Brochures with additional and detailed information for these activities and events will be available by the close of 2025. Search for the event of interest at my.ava.org, where you will be able to download a copy of the brochure, when available.

The Clubs of the Mid-America look forward to seeing you on the trail as we all celebrate the 50th anniversary of America's Walking Club.



The largest post box on display in Casey, IL.



Ken Johnson, NC RD

NORTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



NORTH CENTRAL UPDATE

BY KEN JOHNSON, NC REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Twin Cities Volkssports held its first canoe event on September 13th on the St Croix River. It was a great success, (nobody went into the river), and everyone had a good time. A leisure paddle with at one of the designated canoe landings, what else could you ask for? It was so much fun that we are looking forward to doing it twice next year, once in the spring and again in the fall.

Another exciting event for 2026 is Meander Minnesota, a three-day three club event with five different walks. Friday, September 11th through Sunday, September 13th. Friday the 11th, Lake Country Wanderers will be sponsoring a morning walk in Mantorville, and an afternoon walk in Northfield in conjunction with Northfield's annual Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration. Saturday Twin Cities Volkssport will be sponsoring a morning walk in St. Paul starting at the German American Institute and heading up to the Minnesota State Capitol.



This will be followed by an afternoon walk in Whitetail Woods Regional Park in Farmington followed by a Booya Feed. Last, but not least, North Star Trail Travelers will be hosting an event at Nerstrand State Park accompanied by one of their famous Brat lunches.



Fifteen years ago, Bonnie Johnson answered the AVA president's call to grow the number of clubs, and the Lake Country Wanderers was born. The club went on to provide myriad great events including walks in each of Minnesota's 87 counties. Bonnie is now preparing a well-deserved retirement. But the walks continue. This is less of a closing than a merger with Twin Cities Volkssports. Bonnie plans to continue the popular Tuesday Walk-n-Lunch bunch events as well as serving as a POC. Thank you, Bonnie!

IOWA'S WALKING CLUB CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY

BY DIANA WHITED



Iowa's Walking Club celebrated 40 years of Fun, Fitness and Friendship on August 23, 2025. The day exemplified all three, with 35 registered walkers, a wonderful potluck dinner for over 50 and lots of fun. As has been their tradition at every anniversary celebration, Rhonda and Kevin Heim grilled brats and provided sauerkraut. A definite nod to the German heritage of Volkssport.

We were honored to have founding member, Carol Rizzardi, from Chicago, who along with other organizers submitted the Articles of Incorporation for the Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association, now known as Iowa's Walking Club, to AVA. It was great to have Ardith Ortgies, Barb John and Don Corrigan, some the first members to join AVA club number 250. Adding to the day's festivities were photo boards showcasing many of the events held by the club over the 40 years. It was a fun walk down memory lane. A highlight was the "The Where in the World Have You Walked" map of the world (see photo). Guests were invited to place pins on the locations of Volkssport events they had completed. Each pin presents multiple people who have done the same walk over the years.

Iowa's Walking Club has a history of hosting engaging and fun events every year. The most well known ones include:

- Hosting the 2011 convention, "walk a-maize-ing Iowa"
- In collaboration with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Iowa State Parks Centennial in 2020, the club developed walks in 20 different State Parks
- Currently, the club is more than halfway finished developing a walk in each of Iowa's 99 counties

Iowa's Walking Club is also known for their travels, both in and out of the country. The fourteen overseas trips included walks in most of the countries in Europe. They have also traveled as a group to sixteen national conventions, including the Olympiad in San Antonio, Texas in 2023. Several members have traveled to Olympiads in other countries. Many of the club's members have also completed walks in all 50 states and/or 51 capitals.

The club is looking to continue this rich history far into the future.

A big thank you goes out to Phyllis Olson and Norma Wessel for co-chairing the Anniversary Committee, and producing the photo board and "Where in the World Have you Traveled" activity.



MAKING MEMORIES ON THE MIGHTY MO - AN AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

BY JEANNE MILLER

You're going to want to mark your calendars for April 17 – 19, 2026 and join the Nebraska Wander Freunde Trailblazers across the Missouri River in the Gateway to the West: Council Bluffs, Iowa. We've planned 3 great walks, a group dinner, local museum tours and, of course, cake, to welcome walkers across the country to celebrate AVA's 50th Anniversary with us.



We start the weekend with a Friday Group Walk of the First Avenue Trail in Council Bluffs. The trail is a new addition to the Rails-to-Trails network, featuring beautiful murals, landscaping and a quiet walk in the heart of the city. Following the walk will be the group dinner.

Saturday's Traditional Walk starts in Council Bluffs and crosses over the Mighty Mo to Omaha, NE, exploring the vibrant riverfronts on both sides of the river. That afternoon, we'll explore local history at the Squirrel Cage Jail and Union Pacific Railroad Museums in Council Bluffs.



The next morning sees the Trailblazers on the move to Nebraska City, NE, the home of Arbor Day. True to its name, the area will be filled with trees in bloom. The Arbor Day Farm in this large apple-producing region is the starting point for this Group Walk.

Hotel rooms in Council Bluffs have been reserved for this event. The hotel will provide free breakfast and Wi-Fi, shuttles to the airport and our local events. The club will be carpooling to Nebraska City.

You can download the flyer for this memorable weekend at our website, bit.ly/MMotMM. Be sure to register early to take advantage of special hotel rates and limited spaces at the dinner and museum tours.



NORTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



WINTER WALKING WITH WALK 'N MASS

BY JOSEPH LAPOINTE

Please join Walk 'n Mass and warm your bodies up with some fun walks. Our club is preparing for a busy winter of scheduled group walks. We look forward to seeing you at our group walks or enjoy any of our beautiful walking routes on your own time. Keep an eye out on our website and Facebook pages for details on our annual New Year's Day group walk in Boston.

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

WALK THE STORY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

BY LINDA MORZILLO

The year 2026 will be noted for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the 50th anniversary of AVA. The year 2026 will be especially noteworthy for the Empire State Capital Volkssporters (ESCV) because they are planning the next exciting Northeast Weekend that will take place in May. Participants will have the opportunity to walk in places where events occurred that led to the formation of our nation and changed the course of world history. Indeed, there is much to celebrate in 2026!



It's time to make your plans by first marking your calendar to reserve May 16 – 20, 2026. You will enjoy fun, fitness and friendship while walking in places that are historic, scenic and cultural as you learn about some of the rich heritage of Upstate New York.

The Champlain Bridge connects Crown Point in NY with Chimney Rock in VT



Paul Stark's sculpture of Major Robert Rogers and 5 Mohicans during French and Indian War



Visitors to Fort Ticonderoga will enjoy Living History and many displays



Johnstown's history portrayed on a mural



History at the Schuylerville walk start point.

Mt Defiance an expansive view of Fort Ticonderoga, Lake Champlain and Vermont.



The first event will be on Saturday, May 16th with a walk in Johnstown, founded by Sir William Johnson in 1760. He built Johnson Hall in 1763, now owned by New York State. There will be a reenactment on the grounds of that historic building and a parade as a part of the festivities.

On Sunday the 17th, three events will be available. A walk at Fort Ticonderoga and Mt Defiance, which highlights the strategic place at the southern end of Lake Champlain, is one event. Built by the French between 1755 and 1757 during the French and Indian War, the fort played an important role during the Revolutionary War by controlling the 3.5-mile portage to Lake George. Besides displays, living history takes place during the hours the fort is open. The King's Garden is a part of the walk route. Walkers will need to purchase a group-priced ticket to complete the walk around the fort area and will get a token to use the road leading to the lookout at the top of Mt Defiance.

A second event will be a two-state walk beginning at Crown Point NY and leading to Chimney Point VT. The highlights for walkers are the ruins of Fort Frederik and Fort Crown Point, a walk on the Lake Champlain Bridge, the Crown Point Lighthouse (aka Champlain Memorial Lighthouse), and possibly three museums and visitor centers to explore. Participants can complete Quest, a 7-item scavenger hunt and receive a Heritage Area Coin.

The third event will be a walk around the Hamlet of Ticonderoga. A lovely park with a covered bridge and the Falls of Carillon is next to the Ticonderoga Heritage Museum and History Center, the start point. Trekkies will love the Star Trek Original Series Set Tour, open 11-4, by purchasing a group-priced ticket. Ticonderoga pencils were once produced in this Hamlet.



Round Lake is known for Victorian architecture and lovely gardens.

Relax at Historic Lake George



Monday's walk will be in Schuylerville, NY, where the British surrendered after their defeat at the Battle of Saratoga, the Turning Point of the war.

Lake George Village will be the site of Tuesday's walk. Known as the Queen of American Lakes, the lake was a strategic military location.

Join us on May 20th for our regularly scheduled Wednesday walk. This week it will be through the picturesque Victorian village of Round Lake, originally a Methodist Summer Camp and now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other events planned include 2 bike rides, one on a Rails-to-Trails route between Queensbury and Lake George and the other will be around Saratoga National Historic Park and the National Cemetery. A Meet and Greet and a dinner are scheduled.

The host hotel has changed to Georgian Lakeside Resort, (518) 668-5401, booking code WALKNE26. Courtyard rooms cost \$119 + tax, Lakeside rooms \$169 + tax, no elevators for the upper level.

Have you heard of the Thomas Damfo Trolls? The Northwest has five of them, in the State of Washington: Frank Feetsplinter in Ballard, Oscar the Bird King in Vashon Island, Jacob Two Trees in Issaquah, Bruun Idun in West Seattle, Pia the Peace Keeper in Bainbridge Island, AND in Portland Oregon, you can see Ole Bolle. They are expected to be on display for 3 years, 2 of which have already passed. This would be a fabulous opportunity to take several days to see the great northwest in 2026, through the eye's of these huge wooden trolls.



Do you have a small town in your state that would appreciate some walking visitors? We do. One of our clubs met at Wilkenson, WA to walk a 5k/10k. This small town was affected by a bridge closure, that prevented traffic from easy access in and out of town. Walkers stayed for lunch, and were greeted warmly by the appreciated staff, because their business had been slow. Think of a place in your area that might need a little boost in their economy by stopping for lunch, or to shop in their stores, after a walk. Use your TGW (Traveling Guide Walk) stamp for a new route. You'll get your exercise, have a good meal, and maybe bring a purchased item from the town, home with you to share with others. Your efforts will be appreciated.



NORTHWEST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

Sandi Severtsen, NW RD

NORTHWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR

BY SANDI SEVERTSEN

During the last few months of Autumn, the Northwest had several traditional events. The changing colors of the leaves were stunning, the sun was bright and warm, and the company was good. Washington State clubs hosted walks in Leavenworth, Lake Wenatchee, Carnation, and Oregon hosted walks in Shady Cove, and Yachats. We do traditional walks every Autumn, so even though these events have past, make plans on coming next year to see the beauty of the Northwest this time of year.



PACIFIC REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

Holly Polking, PA RD



The Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers celebrated their 40th Anniversary with a walk at Wetlands Park located in Henderson, Nevada! Plus they enjoyed cake. Congrats to the LVHRS club.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS

Christopher Begnoche, RM RD

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF MY COUNTY SEAT WALK CHALLENGE: MONTANA

BY SHERRY SAYERS

Woodland Wanderers has sanctioned 56 new county seat walks in Montana for 2026, so we (Frank and I) took a trip to Montana to "proof" the walks. Well, half of them. We decided to do the western half first, then we'll do the eastern half in early 2026. We accomplished the western half, walking in 28 county seats in approximately 30 days.

Here are some fun facts about Montana. First, there is no sales tax in Montana - no sales tax on food, no sales tax on clothing, no sales tax on anything, except they do have lodging fees (such as motels and campgrounds). Next, Montana has a state law that allows casino betting in almost every town in the state, so, there are casinos in gas stations, casinos in bars, just about everywhere. Next, huckleberries are big in Montana, so you find huckleberry candy, huckleberry coffee, huckleberry jams/jellies, huckleberry beer, and (from personal experience) huckleberry shakes and ice cream. Yummy!!

Finally, there are grain elevators just about everywhere, so be sure to order your Grain Elevators: Monarchs of the Plains Special Program book from me and then go on an awesome quest to Montana to fill up your book!

The western part of Montana is truly beautiful, and I'd like to tell you about a few highlights of our trip. Missoula is a very nice city with lots of activities to participate in. The University of Montana is in Missoula - home of the Grizzlies. There is a neat carousel along the trail to ride for only \$2.00.



Bozeman was probably my favorite town - it has it all. The Bon Ton Historical District has many amazing homes from the 1880s with historical information plaques on many. Part of the trail walks along the linear Gallagator Trail, where you will spot a Labyrinth near the public library. The downtown area has lots of unique shops and restaurants. Bozeman is also home to Montana State University, home of the Bobcats, with around 5,000 employees and 17,000 students.

Butte is known as the "Richest Hill on Earth," due to its rich mining history, particularly copper. In 1888, mining operations had generated around \$23 million, and it became a boomtown. There are 17 headframes remaining throughout the town. Some of the series "Yellowstone" has been filmed in Butte.



Cut Bank is known as the coldest spot in the nation and is only about 30 miles from the Canadian border. It was one of the bleaker spots to me, flat with no trees, and lots of wheat fields, although the Coulee Trail was quite scenic, walking along the bluffs high above the Cut Bank Creek with many unique rock formations along the way.

In Hamilton, you have the opportunity to walk past the Rocky Mountain Laboratories, a high-security research facility that studies infectious diseases. It is under the National Institutes of Health, and I had a very interesting chat with the security guard, who shared with me some fascinating history about the facility.

Libby is known as the "City of Eagles," with statues of eagles throughout the town, as well as a few Sasquatches scattered throughout the town. Sasquatch is big in this part of Montana, with quite a few people claiming to have seen one, with Missoula, Flathead, Gallatin and Lewis and Clark Counties registering the highest concentrations of sightings.



In Deer Lodge, you can walk to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, which is the only national park-owned working cattle ranch maintained by the National Park Service. The nature trail is an out-and-back, and you can meander through the ranch headquarters, exploring the barns, bunkhouse, and sheds and imagine what it was like working on a cattle ranch back in the 1860s. It is a free site.

Polson is a beautiful town, which sits on the southern shore of Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in the western United States, and you walk along the shoreline for a bit. It is on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Helena, the capital, is another beautiful city, but rather hard to get to. And did I mention, it is hilly! The capitol building was open on a Saturday, so we explored that, and just as we were finishing the walk, we happened upon a soap box derby, with handmade cars careening down the (hilly) streets. The streets were lined with screaming parents, friends and the like, so we joined in. There is also an awesome carousel in Helena, with not just horses, but animals native to Montana (wolf, river otter, bobcat, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, buffalo, and antelope).

Stanford is a tiny town, but the flower displays were beautiful works of art. There were flowers in an old truck, an old wagon, an old pickup, multiple cement planters and everywhere along the businesses and streets.



Philipsburg is worth a visit to see The Sweet Palace, a candy store with over 1,000 varieties of candy, to include taffy, fudge, truffles, caramels, and many old-fashioned varieties you can't find in stores.

Virginia City was the territorial capital of Montana from 1865 to 1875, and the town remains pretty much the same as it was. The boardwalk on both sides of the main street is really cool and there are vignettes in many of the businesses that show what the town was like in the bad old days. The trail takes you up to Boot Hill with a great view of the town. The bar scene in "Little Big Man" was filmed in the Bale of Hay Saloon, which is where we ate lunch!

All the walks start either at the courthouse or administrative building in the towns, except Great Falls, which starts at a river park, since there is no free parking downtown.

Frank has poured his heart and soul into the Montana county seat challenge website, so please check it out at <https://woodlandwanderers.org/Montana/>. Be sure and take the time to listen to and watch Dan Seals and Marie Osmond sing "Meet Me in Montana," as well as John Denver singing "Wild Montana Skies." I always get goose bumps watching John, as I attended his memorial service in 1997, in Aurora, Colorado, which is where his mom lived. I pretty much sang these two songs in my head the entire time we were in Montana!

Stay tuned for my upcoming installment next spring for the eastern half of the Montana county seats, as well as the Nevada county seats (only 16, easy-peasy!), which we are hoping to get to in January or February.



Route 66 Rock Island RR crossing in El Reno, OK, 1926.

As you head west out of the OKC metro you will enter El Reno, where Rt 66 intersects with the Chisholm Trail, now US 81. It is one of the original U.S. numbered highways, established in 1926, and extends 1220 miles north and south through the US. In El Reno, walkers will walk the two major US highways spanning the US. Nearby Ft Reno was established in 1874 in this historic Cheyenne and Arapaho land; the town was formed after an 1889 land run. The Fort housed POWs during WWII, and the cemetery includes some of them. The railroad played a big part in the town's economic development, but now the former [train depot](#) and some other buildings are part of the Canadian County Historical Society museum complex. Local lore says the "onion burger" was invented in El Reno, and there are 3 restaurants featuring it.

Not far from Oklahoma's western border is Elk City. In 1541, [Francisco Vásquez de Coronado](#) became the first known [European](#) to pass through this area. Historically Cheyenne and Arapaho land, the first white settlers made their appearance in April, 1892. Prior to this time, many early ranchers had driven cattle over the [Great Western Cattle Trail](#) from [Texas](#) to [Dodge City, Kansas](#); Elk City lies on the route of that trail. A sprawling museum complex has developed, which includes the National Route 66 Museum, the Old Town Museum, the Transportation Museum, the Farm and Ranch Museum, and the Blacksmith Museum. Each museum is housed in separate buildings, which altogether depict a mockup of early Elk City, complete with general stores, bank, a railroad depot and train caboose, opera house, and other buildings.

Restored Phillips gasoline station in Chandler OK.



Traditional walks planned during the year will be near these YREs, so you will be able to get two nearby events during one outing. We will also be hosting a traditional walk in Bristow as part of the South-Central Conference events at the end of October 2026.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Terri Tyler, SC RD

WALKING THE MOTHER ROAD OKLAHOMA'S ROUTE 66 EVENTS

BY BARBARA KLEIN

Route 66 will be celebrating 100 years in 2026. Oklahoma City's Wandergruppe Walking Club is offering walking events along the route as it passes through Oklahoma. Here are the YREs available:



National Route 66 Museum in Elk City, OK.

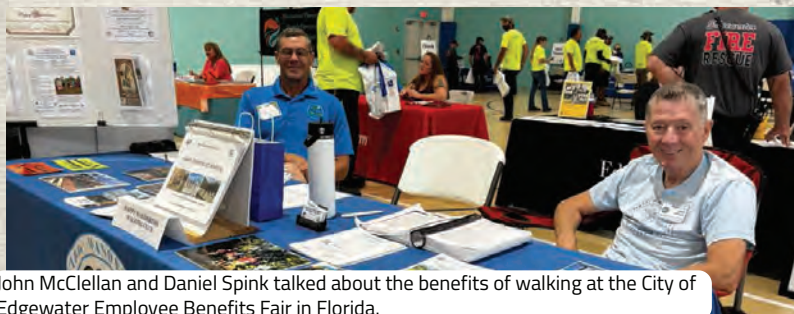
Chandler, just northeast of Oklahoma City, was started in an 1891 land run, and soon became tied to the railroad. Attractions include the Route 66 Interpretive Center, the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Museum and Hall of Fame, the Lincoln County Museum of Pioneer History, several Route 66-themed murals, the newly restored old cottage-style Phillips 66 gas station, and one of the last remaining painted barns advertising [Meramec Caverns](#), which is on Route 66 in Missouri.

The Oklahoma Capitol Walk takes you through parts of the downtown as well as around the History Center; the Capitol has had a recent total restoration, with artwork on every floor. We also already have a course in the quiet suburb of Bethany, where you will see a small college campus and the large Children's Health Center

SOUTHEAST REGION TALES FROM THE TRAILS



Jeannie Stokes, SE RD



John McClellan and Daniel Spink talked about the benefits of walking at the City of Edgewater Employee Benefits Fair in Florida.

WALK AROUND FLORIDA

The 34th Walk Around Florida was November 8-10, 2025. Walks were held in Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Celebration, Florida, plus a swim event. The theme this year was "Celebrating Walking and Walkers."

Between 90-100 people attended from 10 states across six AVA Regions, and as far away as Alaska. Special guests were AVA Board Chair, Southeast RD Jeanne Stokes, and DRD Mike Lanpher. A Award was a stemless wine glass.



WAF 34 (KISSIMMEE AREA)

BY D. J. MOORE

What an enjoyable weekend in central Florida! The Suncoast Sandpipers, Mid-Florida Milers, and Happy Wanderers hosted a set of 4 walks and a swim in delightful, possibly a bit humid weather. The first event was hosted at the American Legion Post 10 directly on Lake Tohopekaliga. What a delightful setting. I started late having done a local YRE in the morning. Several others had not started either for various reasons. I saw many walkers that I knew throughout the walk, walked awhile with a few, and thoroughly enjoyed the historic buildings and colorful murals. There were several Walk with America's Veteran memorials and an amazing, one-of-a-kind Monument of States memorial within a block of the finish. Walk #2 was hosted in a parking lot, which worked out fine, despite annoyance to our hosts. I walked the 10K with Lou Albrecht, whom I met numerous years ago at an event in the Jacksonville area. The St Cloud Walk was enjoyable--2 areas exceptionally noteworthy were the nicely landscaped sidewalks safely laid out within the road medians. We walked out to Dan Tarrell Memorial Point, seeing only one alligator. I found a very large Apple Snail shell.... HAPPY! The walk continued along Lake George and soon we were encountering hordes of runners and walkers participating in some kind of endurance event; possibly the reason our walk start was relocated. The final stretch of the walk was thru the historic downtown area of St Cloud, full of brightly colored murals, some depicting history as well.

I walked the Celebration 6K with my roommate and another friend. We were totally excited about its location to our hotel. This provided time to return from the walk and get cleaned up for the dinner at Ford's Garage. Celebration is a planned community with gorgeous newer homes. It is centered between a few lakes and a golf course but not far off Hwy 192. We walked trails and boardwalks around the lake and streets passing nice parks. We also saw a bit of the golf course, but unfortunately; no alligators. We ran into and walked with 3 walkers from TN, one being our SE Regional Director, a very enthusiastic individual. I almost forgot to mention the swim which could be done at our hotel or a local pool that charged. OK, it WAS cold! But we managed to get it done and truthfully, once you completed a lap, the cold did not bother you. I guess you just get used to it, or maybe the \$7 at the local pool helped.

We culminated the weekend with a 5K at Shingle Creek and Pioneer Village. We were the first ones out of the gate, literally. We faced a 7+ hour drive home. Gosh was this a nice area with walking paths throughout the entire walk along with a few wooden bridges. We saw birds, squirrels, and other walkers. We circled the entire Pioneer Village, which was not open this early on a Sunday, but you could still get pictures of most of the buildings. The backside of the village was considered a wildlife walk. We finished, despite my partner's issues with the humidity and hit the road for a safe, but long ride home.

This is an annual event hosted the end of October or beginning of November every year. It will be in Bradenton in 2026.



FREDERICKSBURG'S END OF THE YEAR EVENT

BY DAVE ROBERTS

Volkssportverein Friedrichsburg's traditional New Year's Eve/Day Walk will again be held on December 31/January 1 in Fredericksburg, TX in conjunction with the town's NYE/NYD activities. Fredericksburg during Weihnachtszeit (Christmas season) has often been compared to a holiday Hallmark movie and with good reason. Whether it's skating at the Eisbahn (ice rink), walking around the 30-foot Christmas tree and authentic 26-foot carousel Weihnachtspyramide (German Christmas pyramid), shopping along a Main Street decked out in its holiday finest, enjoying a festive wine event and local cuisine, or experiencing one of the many special events, Fredericksburg is the perfect way to end 2025 and start 2026.

Three YREs will be conducted during the two days. The first will start at Cross Mountain Park on NYE 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and goes through various residential areas.

The second of the NYE walks is the Pilgrimage YRE, starting at the Sunday House Inn, where the first organizational meeting for volkssporting in the US was held. The walk meanders through Fredericksburg's historic area, including the Marktplatz (Marketplace) – where you can wander at to see Fredericksburg's heritage and holiday spirit. The route includes not only the holiday sights listed above, but also the Vereins Kirche (Society's Church), the Pioneer Museum, and the National Museum of the Pacific War. I didn't even mention the NYE events for children. Registration is from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The third walk (on New Year's Day 1 January (Thursday) is the St. Mary's Cemeteries YRE, starting at the Sunday House Inn. Registration will be from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. This route is through residential areas to two of the town cemeteries, in one of which the Reverend Kenn Knopp, who started volkssporting in the US, lies.

There are so many other sites to see in the area. Come for the walk but stay to visit the Hill Country sights.

Questions can be directed to Dave Roberts, 830-992-7584 or dloberts34@hotmail.com.

TARRANT COUNTY WALKERS SPONSOR TWO NEW YEAR ROUND EVENTS

BY DAVID SHEPPARD

Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge

A National Natural Landmark and Lone Star Steward, the Nature Center comprises over 3,600 acres and more than 20 miles of hiking trails. The refuge includes forests, prairies, wetlands, a buffalo herd, and a prairie dog town.

Trails are uneven and unpaved with plenty of intermittent shade. Trail signs are marked with corresponding, nature icons. Visitors should wear long pants, hiking footwear, and carry/use bug spray, sun screen, and water. Carpooling is recommended.

Please see the Nature Center website (<https://www.fwnaturecenter.org/>) for loads of information on visiting and for extensive trail descriptions.



Texas Christian University Campus

Walk the 4th most beautiful campus in the country, according to Princeton Review. The walk also includes charming, neighborhood homes. In spring, the campus is awash in purple flowers sponsored by a TCU alumnus. Sculptures of the horned frog mascot are scattered about the campus.

Special Programs include A-MAZE-ing Labyrinths, Step to the Beat, and Walking with America's Veterans.



SNUG - A FREE DAILY CHECK-IN APP CREATED BY A VOLKSWALKER!



BY BY JAN VAN VLACK

Hi, Fellow Volkswalkers. I know many of you from Volkswalking over the years, mostly in and around Indiana, Ohio, and Florida. And several years ago, we did the AVA 401K Invest in Your Health Program together.

Today, I want to tell you about Snug, a simple FREE daily check-in app for people living by themselves. Nine years ago I was hit in the head by a pickleball, slammed at me by an aggressive player. Being a retired Registered Nurse, I knew when I awoke the next morning I'd had a seizure. Luckily, I had awakened... but I might not have. Living alone, this really bothered me. What if I don't wake up one morning? There are products that want you to call or push a button for help. What if I cannot call or push a button for help? What if I lie there for days before being found? And what would happen to my beloved dog?

I began thinking of a solution that would help people who live alone and wouldn't be able to call for help if something happened—heart attack, stroke, seizure, fall, or any other reason. I imagined a simple app: press one button every morning, and if you don't, your Emergency Contacts get a notification to check on you. It seemed perfect for people who live alone, caregivers supporting someone with disabilities, single parents with young children, or those traveling without their partners.

I contacted a software company building emergency software. I told the CEO my idea for a daily check-in app... press a button, and if you don't, a message goes out. So easy. He listened! He saw the simplicity and peace of mind it could provide. Within a week, the Snug app was developed and tested by friends and other Volkswalkers. It is now nationwide, used by tens of thousands of people every day. It still amazes me that the company listened and turned the idea into something now helping so many people.

We've also added a Dispatch Plan for people who want more peace of mind than a text message, offering phone call notifications and the ability to coordinate a wellness check with local authorities, if needed.

In 2015, a year before Snug, I drove from Central Florida to the AVA Convention in Salem, OR and finished the Continental US and Capitals along the way. I drove over 12,000 miles, walked over 770 miles, day-after-day, by myself, with no back-up plan other than a nightly text to my children. What comfort and safety Snug's Dispatch Plan would have been... my phone's location signal would have alerted Snug's dispatch service where to find me if I hadn't checked in one morning. In an emergency, Snug could have saved my life. Snug is a natural partner for Volkswalkers and for anyone who needs a reliable daily check-in. Our customers consistently tell us how much peace of mind it gives them, and many lives (and pets') have been saved because of this simple check-in app. How it works:

Free Plan (absolutely free)

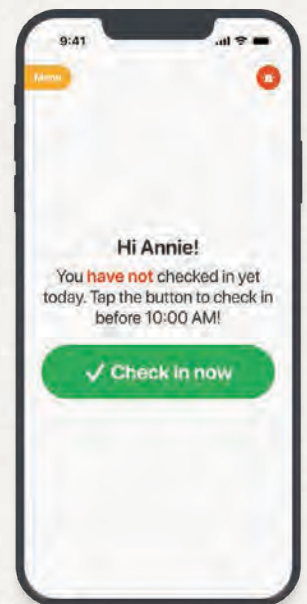
1. Download app and set up account with your name, phone number, and email address
2. Choose your check-in time
3. Add Emergency Contacts
4. Check-in every day
5. If you miss a check-in, Snug will send your emergency contacts a text message with your last known location.

Dispatch Plan (\$19.99/month or \$199.99/year)

1. Download app and set up account with your name, phone number, and email address
2. Choose your check-in time
3. Add Emergency Contacts
4. Check-in every day
5. If you miss a check-in and can't be reached, a phone call from a Snug Dispatcher to notify your emergency contacts
6. If no one is reached who can check on you, Snug Dispatcher can request a wellness check on your behalf

You can learn more about Snug at www.snugsafety.com, and you can reach me at jan@snugsafety.com if you have questions, would like to order Snug Postcards, or would like to use this article to tell your Volksmarching Club about Snug.

Happy Trails, and stay safe!



WALKING A FEW THOUSAND STEPS A DAY MAY REDUCE ALZHEIMER'S RISK

A new study suggests that exercise can be particularly beneficial for older people at a higher risk for the disease

Reprinted from the New York Times

BY DANA G. SMITH

NOV. 3, 2025



Credit...Nicholas Sansone for The New York Times

Walking a few thousand steps a day can slow cognitive decline in older adults who are at increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, according to [research published Monday](#). Getting about 3,000 to 5,000 daily steps was advantageous compared with doing less physical activity; the benefit peaked around 5,000 to 7,500 steps.

The link between exercise and dementia is well established, and many neurologists say physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce the odds of developing the condition. The new study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, sheds light on what might be playing out in the brain and who could benefit most from exercise.

"We've known for several decades that physical activity is associated with a reduced risk of developing dementia," said Kirk Erickson, the chair of neuroscience at the AdventHealth Research Institute, who was not involved with the research. What the new study has done that is "really quite important and quite unique," he said, is identify how exercise might be influencing some of the proteins implicated in Alzheimer's disease.

The study followed nearly 300 older adults between the ages of 50 and 90 for an average of nine years. None of the participants had [cognitive impairment](#) at the start of the study, but about 30 percent had [considerable buildup of the protein amyloid-beta](#) in their brains.

This amyloid buildup, often referred to as plaques, is a hallmark of Alzheimer's. But [prior research](#) has shown that roughly 10 percent of 50-year-olds, and 44 percent of 90-year-olds, have amyloid plaques without signs of cognitive impairment.

"What differentiates those people from people that do develop cognitive decline over time?" said Dr. Jasmeer Chhatwal, a neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, who led the research. We want to find "base-line characteristics that predict that."

When the participants enrolled in the study, they received a pedometer that they wore for a week, to establish their average daily step count. They underwent cognitive testing annually and PET scans every few years to look for amyloid plaques and the accumulation of another protein related to Alzheimer's, called tau.

Researchers think that, in Alzheimer's disease, amyloid builds up first, and that triggers so-called "tangles" of tau to form inside neurons and spread through the brain. It is primarily those tangles, not the amyloid plaques, that cause brain cells to malfunction, resulting in cognitive impairment.

The number of steps someone took each day didn't appear to affect their amyloid levels, but it did correlate with the amount of tau tangles they developed and if they experienced cognitive decline. Among the participants with more amyloid in their brains, those who got little to no physical activity developed more tangles and had worse cognition after nine years. Walking 3,001 to 5,000 steps a day corresponded to less tau accumulation and slower cognitive decline. People who took more than 5,000 steps a day fared even better, but getting more than 7,500 steps did not confer an additional benefit.

People with minimal amounts of amyloid in their brains did not see any changes in either tau or cognition related to their step count. Dr. Chhatwal said that may be because those individuals were unlikely to experience significant tau buildup, or cognitive decline, since they didn't have high levels of amyloid to begin with.

Dr. Erickson cautioned that these results are observational, so it's possible that another factor explains the connection between physical activity, cognition and tau.

What's more, because the participants only wore a pedometer for one week at the beginning of the study, their daily step counts could have increased or decreased over the years.

Judy Pa, a professor of neurosciences at the University of California, San Diego, called the new research "fascinating." But she pointed out that the study included a relatively small number of participants, most of whom were white and well-educated. "Can we replicate it in a multiethnic cohort?" she said.

The [number of steps needed to see a benefit](#) is consistent with other research on physical activity in older adults, said Amanda Paluch, an associate professor of kinesiology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who was not involved in the new study. In research she conducted, older adults had a [lower risk of dying](#) from multiple different causes if they got roughly 6,000 steps per day.

One way [physical activity may protect against cognitive decline](#) is by increasing blood flow to the brain. That keeps neurons oxygenated and nourished so they can function optimally. Improved vascular health can also help the brain rid itself of the toxic proteins that start to accumulate. Exercise reduces inflammation in the brain, too, and inflammation is closely linked to Alzheimer's.

Virtually everyone who exercises will experience these brain benefits to some degree. But the new research suggests that people who are at the greatest risk of cognitive decline may stand to gain the most.

People with pre-existing amyloid plaques can see an acceleration of disease progression if they're sedentary, Dr. Chhatwal said. "But the good news is that even kind of moderate levels of activity" are protective.

Dana G. Smith is a Times reporter covering personal health, particularly aging and brain health.

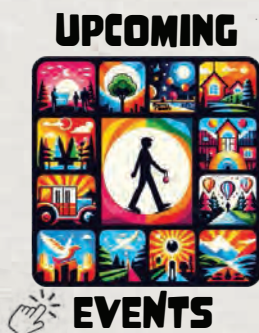


HERE IS A LIST OF UPCOMING MULTI-DAY EVENTS FOR YOUR TRAVEL PLANNING. CLICK ON THE LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THESE CLUBS.

2026 AVA Multiple Event Listing				
Month	Date	Multi-day Event Description	Host Club	Location
Dec	12 - 14	Williamsburg Holiday Event	Williamsburg Holiday Events	VA
Dec/Jan	31 - 1	Fredericksburg, TX News Years Eve/Day	Volkssportverein Friedrichsburg	TX
Dec/Jan	31 - 1	New Year's Eve/Day in Savage, MD	Freestate Happy Wanderers	MD
Jan	9 - 11	AVA 50th Anniversary Chairman's Events	Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers	NV
Feb	20 - 22	IML Texas Trail Roundup	AVA: America's Walking Club	TX
Mar	20 - 22	Atlantic Regional Conference	Virginia Volkssport Association	VA
Apr	17 - 19	Memories on the Mighty Missouri	Nebraska Trailblazers	IA & NE
May	2 - 9	Huffin & Puffin on High Plains of Kansas	Sunflower Sod Stompers	KS
May	16 - 20	NE Weekend: A Revolutionary Event	Empire State Capital Volkssporters	NY
Jun	6 - 7	Crazy Horse Sat. and Black Hills Sun	Black Hills Volkssport Association	SD
Jun	19 - 21	Mid-America Walking Weekend	Mid-America Region	IL & IN
Jul	24 - 25	San Francisco - 50 Years of Art	Bay Bandits Walking Club	CA
Jul/Aug	28 - 1	Rocky Mountain Rendezvous	Falcon Wanderers	CO
Aug	28 - 29	Anniversary Walk in Boston	Walk 'N Mass Volkssport Club	MA
Sep	7	Mackinaw City & St. Ignace	Mid-America Region	MI
Sep	24 - 27	Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis & Clark	Oregon Trails State Volkssport Association	OR
Oct	9- 11	Philadelphia - Where the Nation Was Born	Liberty Bell Wanderers	PA
Oct	16-18	U.S. FreedomWalk Festival IML	U.S. FreedomWalk	VA
Oct/Nov	28 - 1	Halloween Kicks on Route 66	South Central Region	KS, MO, OK
Nov	6 - 8	35th Walk Around Florida	Suncoast Sandpipers, Mid-Florida Milers, and the Happy Wanderers	FL
Nov	14	Honoring Veterans	Ohio Wander Freunde	OH
Dec	5	Weihnachten Lights Spectacular	Alpine Helen Volksmarch Club	GA

PARTICIPANTS CORNER

CLICK ICONS TO VIEW ANNIVERSARIES, EVENTS AND AWARDS.



IVV EVENT



AVA FEATURED EVENTS

Williamsburg Holidays



**December 12-14, 2025
Williamsburg, VA**

**Holiday Night Walk thru Colonial
Williamsburg**

**Day Walk – Colonial, and William
and Mary campus**

[Pre-registration](#) encouraged for discount rate

Sponsored by Peninsula Pathfinders of Virginia

[Click here for more information](#)

New Year's Eve/Day in Texas



**December 31, 2025 -
January 1, 2026**

3 walks – Fredericksburg, TX

Dec 31: 11am – 1pm - Cross Mountain Park YRE

Dec 31: 3pm -6:30pm – Downtown Festival

Dec 31: 6pm – 9pm - Night Walk thru Downtown

Jan 1: 8am – 11am – Historic Cemetery

Hosted by Volkssportverein Friedrichsburg

[Click here for more information](#)

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

New Year's Eve/Day in Maryland



**December 31, 2025 -
January 1, 2026**

Three Walks in Savage, MD

Dec 31: 9am – 12n Two walks in Woods near
Savage Mill Historic District

Jan 1: 9am – 12n Two walks in Historic
Savage, MD

Sponsored by Freestate Happy Wanderers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Chairman's 50th Anniversary



**January 9-11, 2026
Boulder City, NV**

'Signature' AVA 50th Event

**3 Walks in Lake Mead & Historic Boulder
Socials and Dinner**

[Pre-register now](#)

Get Lodging Options [Here](#)

Sponsored by Las Vegas High Rollers & Strollers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

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

Texas Trail Roundup IML



**February 20-21, 2026
San Antonio, TX**

**Anniversary Walk in Fredericksburg, TX
With Opening Ceremony & Music
(Home of the first AVA walk in 1976)**

Walks 5K – 42K Saturday & Sunday

[Pre-register now](#)

Special Hotel Rate at [Springhill Suites](#)

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Texas Volkssport Assoc.



**March 6-8, 2026
Fort Worth, Texas**

Three Walks:

March 6: Airfield Falls

March 7: Fort Worth Nature Center

March 8: Texas Christian University

Texas Volkssport Assoc will have its meeting
Sat March 7 at the FW Nature Center

Hosted by Tarrant County Walkers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

AVA FEATURED EVENTS

Atlantic Regional Conf



**March 20-22, 2026
Williamsburg, VA**

'Signature' AVA 50th Event

Pre-walk Friday March 19-Fredericksburg
3 Walk Events Williamsburg area
Bike and Swim events

Special Hotel Rate at Best Western Historic District
Sponsored by Virginia Volkssport Association

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Memories on the Mighty MO



**Council Bluffs, IA
& Nebraska City, NE**

April 17-19, 2026

'Signature' AVA 50th Event
Walk along the Missouri River
3 Walks, Dinner & Socials, Museum Tour

Special Hotel Rate: [Holiday Inn & Suites](#)
[Pre-Register Here](#)

Sponsored by Nebraska Trailblazers

[Click here for more information](#)

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

Huffin' & Puffin' in Kansas



**High Plains of Kansas
May 2-9, 2026**

Walk the last 10 counties –
12 walks total

Groups meals arranged.
Motel rooms will be blocked in various towns
near walk sites

Sponsored by Sunflower Sod Stompers

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Revolutionary War Battle Sites



**Lake George, NY
May 16-20, 2026**

'Signature' AVA 50th Event

7 Walks Over 5 Days

Walk the Story that Changed the World: A
Multiday Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites
Social Event plus Dinner

Special Hotel Rate: Georgian Lakeside Resort

Sponsored by Empire State Capital Volkssporters

[Click Here for More Information](#)

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

Crazy Horse, SD & More



**June 6, 2026
June 7, 2026**



'Signature' AVA 50th Event

40th Annual Crazy Horse Memorial
Volkssport Event on June 6
(Bring 3 can of food + \$4 to walk monument)

Black Hills Walk on June 7

Sponsored by Black Hills Volkssport Assoc.

[Click Here for More Information](#)

Mid-America Regional Conf



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

'Signature' AVA 50th Event

Walk in Terre Haute, IN
Charleston, IL
Fox Ridge State Park, IL
& more to come

Sponsored by Mid-America Region

[Click Here for More Information](#)

BECOME A AVA MEMBER



AMERICA'S
WALKING CLUB
— ESTABLISHED 1976 —

CLICK HERE TO JOIN



AMERICA'S
WALKING CLUB
— ESTABLISHED 1976 —

40th Annual Spring Volksmarch June 6, 2026



**THE TAW (THE AMERICAN WANDERER)
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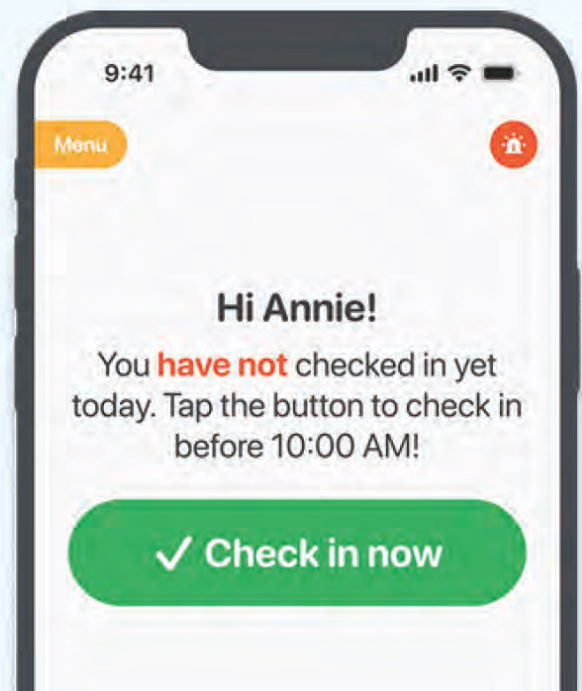
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