

RAFFLE TIME
PRIZES AWAIT YOU!

50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal: Individuals who contribute \$150 or more will receive our special 50th anniversary commemorative medal.

Free Sanctioned Traditional Event: For every 25 clubs that donate, one free traditional sanctioned event and one 50th anniversary commemorative medal will be raffled off.

GRAND PRIZE: 2027 CONVENTION REGISTRATION

One club and one individual donor will have the chance to win a complimentary registration for the 2027 AVA Convention (please note that travel and hotel expenses are not included).



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

SEPTEMBER
2026
VOLUME 35
NO. 9

CHECKPOINT

WWW.AVA.ORG

The Big Give

PRESIDENT/CEO - HENRY ROSALES

AVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING NOTICE

The AVA National Board of Directors will meet Thursday, September 17, 2026, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Central Time Zone. This will be a virtual meeting on the Office 365 Teams platform. To access the meeting click on the link below. If you have problems accessing the meeting, please contact Hector at 210-659-2112 or email him at hector@ava.org. The meeting link will also be posted on the AVA website with the agenda.

[Click here for the meeting link.](#)

[Meeting Agenda](#)

BOARD MEETING DEADLINES:

September 11, 2026: Board meeting information package emailed to Board Members and Deputy Directors.

2027 AVA CONVENTION HOTEL BOOK TODAY - UNIVERSITY PLAZA HOTEL, SPRINGFIELD, MO



There are still plenty of rooms at the University Plaza Hotel which is the host hotel for the AVA's 2027 Biennial Convention in Springfield, MO. The room rate is \$120/single or double, \$130/for a triple, and \$140 for a quad. The room rate includes breakfast for two people. Additional breakfast passes are available at \$10.00 per person. Parking is free!

Reserve your rooms soon before it is too late because with this great rate rooms will go quickly. Should you have problems booking online, call the hotel at (417) 864-7333 and advise them you are with the American Volkssport Association.

Click on images to Book Your Room!

FIFTY YEARS STRONG AND STILL CELEBRATING! SIX MORE AVA ANNIVERSARY EVENTS TO ENJOY!

Our sincere thanks go to Bea Hait, Robert McDaniel, and the many dedicated club members and volunteers who made the AVA 50th Anniversary Walk in Boston such a remarkable event. Their hard work and generosity helped bring together 194 participants from 24 states in celebration of this important milestone.

Special thanks to Mid America Regional Director, Robert Buzolich, Rob and Roxie Weaver, participating clubs of the Mid- America Region, and all the volunteers for their hard work and dedication in hosting the AVA 50th Anniversary Mackinac Bridge Walk event in Mackinaw City and St. Ignace, MI. Their efforts helped make this milestone celebration a memorable success, drawing 48 participants!

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YOUR BIG GIVE GIFT CAN GO TWICE AS FAR

Every day, AVA members take steps that lead to better health, stronger friendships, and new adventures. Together, we are building vibrant communities grounded in our guiding principles of **Fun, Fitness, and Friendship** through the simple power of walking.

Today, we're asking you to take one more step with us.

On **September 23-24, 2026**, America's Walking Club (AVA) will participate in The Big Give, the one annual fundraising campaign through which we ask our members and supporters to invest in our future. We make this request only once each year because we deeply value your membership, your volunteer service, and your commitment to our organization.

This year's campaign is especially meaningful as we celebrate **AVA's 50th Anniversary**.

To mark this milestone, we are thrilled to announce a **50th Anniversary/\$50,000 Matching Gift Challenge** generously provided by our **AVA Board Chairman Carl Cordes**, whose dedication to America's Walking Club reflects his belief in the power of walking to connect people and strengthen communities.

Carl's **50th Anniversary/\$50,000 challenge** gift will match every donation of **\$50 or more**, dollar for dollar, during The Big Give. This extraordinary opportunity means your gift will have twice the impact, helping us accelerate and exceed our **\$100,000 fundraising goal**.

As an additional thank-you, everyone who contributes **\$75 or more** will receive a commemorative **50th Anniversary coin**.

Thanks to Carl's generosity, there has never been a better time to support America's Walking Club.

As we celebrate our golden anniversary, your gift is more than a donation. It is an investment in the next 50 years of Fun, Fitness, and Friendship. Your support helps us:

- **Expand access to health, wellness, and community engagement opportunities in underserved areas**
- **Create meaningful opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to improve their health and well-being**
- **Support the volunteers who bring Fun, Fitness, and Friendship to communities across the nation**
- **Share the life-changing benefits of volkssporting with more individuals and families**
- **Develop innovative digital tools that connect, motivate, and inspire healthier lifestyles nationwide**

Whether you give \$25, \$50, \$100, or more, every contribution makes a difference. And thanks to Carl's matching gift challenge, donations of \$50 or more can go twice as far in advancing our mission.

If America's Walking Club has helped you stay active, discover new places, build lasting friendships, or experience the joy of walking, we hope you'll consider making a gift during The Big Give.

Together, we can maximize this matching opportunity, celebrate 50 remarkable years, and ensure that America's Walking Club continues to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of America's Walking Club and for helping us keep Fun, Fitness, and Friendship moving forward, one step at a time.



BIG GIVE COMMITTEE - SAMANTA SANCHEZ, CHAIR

PAVE THE PATH TO A HEALTHIER TOMORROW

At just 20, the choices seemed small—an extra hour of sleep instead of a jog, a quick burger instead of a home-cooked meal. But these seemingly small choices were quietly paving the path to a heart attack at 50. At 40, the mind felt sharp and invincible, yet the subtle neglect of mental exercises was laying the groundwork for Alzheimer's at 70. And at 30, daily inactivity was silently setting the stage for mobility issues that could threaten independence by 80.

Imagine a future where your heart beats strong, your mind thrives with energy, and your body remains strong. This future begins with the choices you make today. Small, consistent actions lead to significant, lifelong health benefits.

Walking, for example, is a simple yet effective health activity that can significantly improve your well-being. This is why, for the past 50 years, America's Walking Club has dedicated itself to promoting preventative health care for individuals of all ages and abilities through noncompetitive activities such as walking, biking, and swimming. Our fitness programs serve not only as exercise but also as a way to build a supportive community and foster lasting friendships. Whether it's eating healthier, doing a puzzle to stimulate your mind and reduce stress or taking a morning walk with friends, each choice contributes to your well-being. Remember, it's never too late to start these healthy habits.

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, your support is more crucial than ever. With your support, we can ensure that America's Walking Club's mission continues to thrive and transform lives for another 50 years! Donate to our 24-hour online giving campaign, the Big Give, running from September 23 to 24, from 6 PM CT to 6 PM CT, and make a meaningful impact in someone's life. Take the first step today towards a brighter and healthier tomorrow. Give the gift of health!

Please note that when donating through the Big Give website, the option to cover the fees is pre-selected by default, requiring donors to manually uncheck the box if they do not wish to assume these charges. Processing fees are 7% + \$0.30, which are set by the Mighty Cause platform, not by the AVA. You have the option to cover these fees if you'd like. If you want your entire donation to go directly to the AVA, you can mail a check to the AVA National Office now until October 31st.

How You Can Participate during #BigGive2026



1. Mail your donation check to the AVA National Office: 1032 S. Alamo St, San Antonio, TX, 78210. Send checks prior to **October 31st, 2026**.



2. Make an early or late online contribution anytime from **September 16th** through **September 27th, 2026**.

3. Make an online contribution on **September 23-24, 2026**, to help us secure additional matching donations.



4. Fundraise on behalf of the AVA by creating a **Peer-to-Peer** page.

5. Ask your employer to match your donation.



6. Donate during the 6 Match Minutes & double your impact.

7. Share our Big Give social media posts using the hashtags **#BigGive2026** **#StepForward**



TOGETHER, LET'S STRIDE TOWARDS OUR \$100,000 GOAL. EVERY STEP COUNTS!



Step 1: Save these important dates in your calendar.

09 *The Big Give* SEPTEMBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 Early Online Giving Begins	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 Big Give starts at 6:00 PM CT	24 Big Give ends at 6:00 PM CT	25	26	27 Last day to donate through Big Give website
28	29	30				

Can donate by mail through the end of October.
Mail checks to AVA National Office: 1032 S. Alamo St., San Antonio, TX 78210



[AVA's online giving website](#)

Step 2. More Ways to Double Your Impact!

Donate online on September 23- 24, 2026, and the Big Give will match any donation dollar-for-dollar, up to \$100, during their Match Minutes! Remember, gifts will only be matched if they are completed within the one-minute or before the \$10,000 match pools run out, whichever comes first. We recommend having your donor/payment information entered and ready to click submit as soon as the Match Minute hits. Match Minute dollars are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Last year, an additional \$1,575 was raised by donors who gave during these times! Set your alarms, give during the Match Minutes, and double your impact! We encourage all our donors to donate during the match minutes below. You can contribute during any of these time slots. Depending on where you live, the minutes are provided with your specific time zone.



The Big Give MATCH MINUTES
MAKE A DONATION ON
WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23 @ 6PM
THROUGH
THURSDAY, SEPT. 24 @ 6PM
DURING THE MATCH MINUTES DEPICTED BELOW



Pacific Time	Mountain Time	Central Time	Eastern Time
Sept. 23 4:13 PM	Sept. 23 5:13 PM	Sept. 23 6:13 PM	Sept. 23 7:13 PM
Sept. 23 5:13 PM	Sept. 23 6:13 PM	Sept. 23 7:13 PM	Sept. 23 8:13 PM
Sept. 24 8:13 AM	Sept. 24 9:13 AM	Sept. 24 10:13 AM	Sept. 24 11:13 AM
Sept. 24 11:13 AM	Sept. 24 12:13 PM	Sept. 24 1:13 PM	Sept. 24 2:13 PM
Sept. 24 1:13 PM	Sept. 24 2:13 PM	Sept. 24 3:13 PM	Sept. 24 4:13 PM
Sept. 24 3:13 PM	Sept. 24 4:13 PM	Sept. 24 5:13 PM	Sept. 24 6:13 PM

YOUR DONATION WILL BE MATCHED DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR. UP TO \$100!



Step 3: Get Involved as a Peer-to-Peer Fundraiser for The Big Give 2026

Take an active part in supporting our mission by becoming a Peer-to-Peer fundraiser for the AVA during The Big Give 2026! Creating your own fundraising campaign is as simple as 1, 2, 3, and every dollar your friends contribute will help us reach our \$100,000 goal.

Why Join?

- Each year, most of our new donors come from Peer-to-Peer fundraisers
- One campaign can attract up to four new donors!

How to Start

If you're interested in setting up a Peer-to-Peer page, please follow our [Step-by-Step Guide](#) or watch our brief [Peer-to-Peer How-To Video](#).

PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING

7 STEPS TO RAISE \$500



Make the First Donation

to your own fundraiser to set an example. (\$25)



Ask 3 Best Friends

To donate \$25 each to your campaign. (\$100)



Make 4 Facebook Posts

to encourage support for your fundraiser and get 5 friends to donate \$15 each. (\$175)

Go on a Group Walk

and ask 5 fellow walkers to give \$15 to your campaign. (\$250)



Send an Email

to 5 family members, asking them for \$25 each. (\$375)



See if 5 people

from your neighborhood, church, walking club, or book club will donate \$20. (\$475)



Challenge 5 coworkers

to skip their morning coffee to help support health and wellness and donate \$5 to your campaign instead. (\$500)

Don't Get Discouraged!

Not everyone will give. If someone says no, you can always make up the donation amount in one of the other steps. You'll be surprised at how generous people can be.

The Big Give



AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB
ESTABLISHED 1976

Once your page is ready, make sure to use our Peer-to-Peer Toolkit for social media posts, email templates, and tips on personalizing your page.

- Share your story
- Create a video
- Get creative
- Most importantly, have fun!

If you need further assistance with setting up your page, feel free to reach out to Samanta at samanta2@ava.org.

Step 4. Ask Your Employer to Match Your Donation

Does your employer have a Matching Gifts program? Make the ask. You may be surprised by what you can accomplish just by asking a simple question to your employer. It can go something like this, "Will you consider matching employee donations to the AVA?" If your employer says yes, imagine what you can contribute to this year's Big Give. Even if your employer doesn't match the funds, don't be discouraged. If your employer donates any amount because of your question, consider your fundraising efforts a success.

GET READY FOR THIS YEAR'S BIG GIVE REGIONAL CHALLENGE!

Last year, the Southwest Region claimed victory by raising an impressive \$18,766. Who will snag the Walking Stick of Kindness and become the ultimate giving champion this year? Winning region donors will enjoy special recognition at our 2027 Convention, including a Front of the Line Pass. This Pass includes front-line access to all AVA food and beverage catered events like lunches, socials, and gala dinner during the 2027 Convention for all AVA food and drink events. Plus, they'll be invited to a special reception with our Board Chairman, Carl Cordes.



PUBLICITY COMMITTEE - SUSAN FINE, CHAIR

PUBLICITY UPDATE

The Boston 50th Anniversary celebration for AVA was a huge success with a total of 194 participants at Castle Island and 24 states represented.



There are 7 'signature' events left to celebrate AVA's 50th anniversary. Next up is Astoria, Oregon Sept 24-27, with "[Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark](#)". Pre-registration ends Sept 17 for the socials/dinner, but walkup is available starting Sept 24.

If you are able to attend ALL 17 featured 50th anniversary events, let us know. We want to start keeping track, and have a group photo at the last event in Helen, GA December 5. Email me: publicity@ava.org.

Planning is coming along for the [2027 AVA Biennial Walking Festival and Convention](#) is June 29-July 2 (with pre- and post-walks, June 26 – July 4), in Springfield, MO.

The host hotel is the [University Plaza Hotel](#) in downtown Springfield, a beautiful hotel that will accommodate registration, convention workshops, membership meetings, and awards ceremony. AVA has a special room rate of \$120 single/double, or \$130 for a triple, and \$140 for a quad. The prices include breakfast for two people, with additional breakfast passes of \$10 per person. Parking is free. We encourage you to book your rooms now using the [hotel link](#), or call 417-864-7333 and ask for the special rate for American Volkssport Association. NOTE: if you are told there are no rooms available, call AVA office – Henry will ask for more rooms with the special rate.

Walks in beautiful downtown Springfield, the Springfield Botanical Gardens, campus of Missouri State, and more are almost completed, and we will have details in the December TAW. Swimming and biking events are also planned, with more details to come.

We also hope you'll attend the pre-walks, too, in Bentonville, Arkansas June 26-28. Bentonville is best known as the birthplace and global headquarters of Walmart. It's also known as the "Mountain Biking Capital of the World." The featured walk Saturday June 26 is the beautiful downtown square, where Sam Walton opened his first five and dime. Sunday June 27, the featured walk is the world-renowned Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and its many acres of outdoor trails and sculptures, all founded by Alice Walton. Monday June 28, you have the option to walk the WalMart world-headquarters with its blend of natural landscapes and mass-timber architecture. Or you can head north to Branson, Missouri, where you can walk downtown Branson and/or choose Table Rock State Park (some people may do both walks Monday). Springfield is about 45 miles away from Branson. We know you will enjoy these pre-walks, blending beautiful small town charm with outdoor nature. There are several hotels in Bentonville and Rogers, AR, or you can stay in Springfield, and drive each day. More info to come on all the walks. Keep up-to-date at <https://ava.org/2027-convention/>.

There are [14 multi-day events](#) listed for the rest of 2026, from September through December. This is fantastic! Please support these clubs who have the energy and time into creating great walks for all of us. If you're having a multi-event, don't forget to input your information into the multi event page so we can help promote them.

CONVENTION COMMITTEE - JERRY WILSON, CHAIR

SILENT AUCTION COORDINATOR

We are looking for a Silent Auction Room Coordinator for the 2027 Walking Festival and Biennial Convention.

Coordinator: To be in charge of the room, including silent auction item drop-offs, staffing of the room when the room is open, being on-site when available. The coordinator doesn't need to be in the room all the time. When not there, another volunteer can be asked to be in charge.

The Volunteer Coordinator will solicit volunteers to staff the room to assist the Silent Auction Coordinator.

National Office staff will be available to tabulate winning bids, and collect payment,

* Hours tentatively planned to be open are as follows:

Monday, June 28.	2:00 - 4:00pm Item Drop-off 6:00 - 8:00pm Item Drop-off
Tuesday, June 29.	8:00am - 12:00pm Item Drop-off and Setting-up the Room 1:00 - 5:00pm Silent Auction Room Open
Wednesday, June 30	1:30 - 5:00pm Silent Auction Room Open
Thursday, July 1	12:00 - 6:30pm Silent Auction Room Open Bids Close at 6:30pm
Friday, July 2	7:30am Winning Bids Announced and Posted 8:00am - 12:00pm Item Payment and Pickup - Mostly handled by Registration staff. 1:30 - 3:30pm Item Payment and Pickup - Mostly handled by Registration staff.

* These times are planned, but tentative for now. The room coordinator may have schedule conflicts with meetings, walks, etc. Assigned volunteers can fill in.

EVENT START/FINISH AND STAMPING ROOMING COORDINATOR

We are looking for a Coordinator of the room that hands out walk directions, and stamps event books during the 2027 Walking Festival and Biennial Convention.

Coordinator: To be in-charge of the room to supply event directions and stamp books for all events, walking, biking, swimming in Springfield and other locations. The coordinator doesn't need to be in the room all open times. Other volunteers, or Jerry Wilson, can be present when the Coordinator has other time commitments.

The Volunteer Coordinator will solicit volunteers to staff the room as necessary.

* Hours tentatively planned to be open are as follows:

Monday, June 28	2:00 - 4:00pm Event Room Open (Jerry W. will be in Springfield) 6:00 - 8:00pm Event Room Open (Jerry W. will be in Springfield)
Tuesday, June 29	8:00 - 10:00am Event Room Open (Jerry W. will Start the events and could be in room.) - Stamping and Start/Finish for Springfield MO State Campus Walk, Bike & Swim 1:00 - 5:00pm Event Room Open
Wednesday, June 30	8:00am - 12:00pm Event Room Open Walk Start 8:00 - 10:00am 1:00 - 5:00pm Event Room Open

Thursday, July 1.	8:00 - 10:00am Event Room Open - Bus loading for Walk and Book Stamping 12:00 - 6:30pm Event Room Open
Friday, July 2	8:00 - 10:00am Event Room Open Walk Start 8:00 - 10:00am 8:00am - 12:00pm Event Room Open 1:30 - 3:30pm Event Room Open 4:00 - 5:15pm Start Community Walk and Final Book Stamping

* These times are planned, but tentative for now. The room coordinator may have schedule conflicts with meetings, walks, etc. Assigned volunteers can fill in.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE - JOHN MCCLELLAN, MEMBER



With the 24th Biennial Convention in Springfield, MO from 28 June – 1 July 2027 comes the bi-annual election of officers for America's Walking Club. That process starts not less than 9 months before the regular membership meeting at the Biennial, with the formation of a Nominating Committee. I hope that all national AVA members in good-standing will consider serving on a nominating committee, or - running for one of the offices available.

We are seeking at least 3 and not more than 10 volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee for the next AVA Board. I'd like to include broad geographic representation from across AVA's 10 regions, if possible. SE Region and AT Region are already represented, but committee members from any of the 8 remaining regions would be welcome. This is light duty – with some emails and likely only a couple of meetings that we'll conduct online between now and April 2027. No member of the Nominating Committee may accept nomination for a National Office. If a committee member does choose to run for National Office, such candidate's membership on the Nominating Committee shall terminate, and the Board of Directors shall immediately elect a replacement. (4.06) b.

Any member of AVA in good-standing may submit names for nomination to national offices to the Nominating Committee. The Committee's task is to follow the path laid out by our Bylaws to find candidates for the offices of Board Chair, Vice-Chair, Finance Chair and Board Secretary. National Officers serve up to two terms (consecutively) of two years each term. Of the 4 people currently holding those positions, three incumbents may choose to run for a second term and only one position (our Board Secretary) is "termed-out" and will need a new officer.

Current AVA Board members, including Regional Directors (RD) and Deputies (DRD), are not eligible for service on the Nominating Committee. Per Bylaws - 6.06 a., each RD will appoint their own Committee to nominate candidates for Regional Director in that Region – also starting 9 months prior to the regular membership meeting. Likewise, no member of the region's Nominating Committee may accept nomination for Regional Director.

Per paragraph 4.04 of the AVA Bylaws, the qualifications for National Board Officers are:

- (a) Elected National Officers must reside within the geographic jurisdiction of the AVA, excluding overseas military or diplomatic addresses.
- (b) If an elected National Officer establishes a permanent residence outside the geographic jurisdiction of the Corporation during the term of office, the Executive Committee shall immediately declare the office vacant and the Board of Directors will fill the position by following Section 4.07 of this Article.
- (c) A person who is considered "not in good standing" with the Corporation shall not be eligible to be an elected National Officer. A person "not in good standing" is defined as an individual with a debt, obligation or liability to the Corporation that has been delinquent for five months. A debt, obligation or liability shall be considered delinquent if it has not been settled within thirty days of the date it was due.
- (d) No person may hold more than one National Office at the same time.
- (e) No person may hold a National Office and serve as a Regional Director at the same time.
- (f) No person may serve more than two consecutive two-year terms in the same position as a National Officer.

The formal process described will begin at the AVA Board Meeting on Thursday, 17 September with announcement of the Committee formation and any special guidance from the Board for this election cycle. Going forward you will see articles here and in The American Wanderer (TAW) with announcements on the duties of each office, how to submit a candidate for consideration a photo and short bio of each of the approved nominees.

Once again, please consider serving – either on one of these important committees, or nationally as an AVA elected leader. 🦶🦶🦶

IVV AMERICAS & OCEANIA - JOHN MCCLELLAN, US DELEGATE TO IVV A&O

DID YOU KNOW?? IVV AMERICAS & OCEANIA



Since 2013, IVV-Americas & Oceania (IVV A&O) has been one of three hemispheric associations within the International Federation of Popular Sports (IVV) – governing volkssporting with national associations and clubs in over 40 countries around the world. The other two continental bodies are IVV-Asia and IVV Europe. Member Countries of IVV A&O currently include Australia, Brazil, Canada and the United States.

America's Walking Club joined IVV A&O in (2021), and discussions about New Zealand joining IVV A&O are ongoing. Diana Marshall of Australia is the IVV A&O President, with Tim Minor & Nancy Wittenberg (both AVA) as 2 of the 3 Vice Presidents along with Manfred Koestlmaier of Canada. Treasurer Michelle Demers and Secretary Mary Wright are also from Canada.

The mission of IVV-Americas & Oceania is to promote non-competitive popular sports such as walking, cycling, swimming, and other leisure activities that encourage lifelong participation, health, and community engagement. IVV A&O fosters and celebrates popular sports across its region, supporting member organizations in organizing international events, sharing best practices, and inspiring participation from people of all ages and backgrounds. It emphasizes lifelong activity, cultural exchange, and community building through these sports.

Walk IVV Americas is a permanent Special Program sponsored by IVV-Americas & Oceania to promote volkssports in the Americas and Oceania. Collect 20 IVV stamps from any sanctioned IVV Event held in Canada, USA, Central or South America, the Caribbean or Oceania (South Pacific – Australia) Contact: info@ivv-ao.org



After the success of the first Oceaniapiad international walking festival (con-current with the IML Aussie Peace Walks) in Australia earlier this year, America's Walking Club will be hosting the first Americaspiad festival from 9-11 June 2028 in Rapid City, SD (including the Crazy Horse spring volksmarch.) We'll also be hosting the bi-annual meeting of the IVV Congress just prior to the festival. Stay tuned for updates on the 2028 Americaspiad!!



AVA SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR - AMANDA JAUREGUI



TUNE IN TO OUR SEPTEMBER WEDNESDAY WEBINAR

You won't want to miss this month's Wednesday Webinar on September 16th at 7pm CDT! We will have a representative from Venustas Heated Apparel to talk about our new partnership, more about their apparel and what sets them apart, and we'll be doing a giveaway for everyone that is on the webinar. We will then hear from the remaining 50th anniversary event hosts about their upcoming events. You can register here if you aren't already: <https://ava.org/monthly-webinar/>



DON'T FORGET TO GRAB YOUR HEATING (& COOLING) WALKING GEAR WITH VENUSTAS

Venustas is an online merchandise store that sells heated (and now some cooling) apparel. Venustas has been featured by leading media outlets worldwide, earning recognition for continuous innovation, trusted performance, and a strong commitment to bringing warmth and comfort to everyday life. AVA Members can now purchase apparel from Venustas and enjoy \$30 off on their first purchase plus a \$10 gift card.

Use our affiliate link here:

https://venustas.com/collections/partner-community-exclusive/?ref=AVA&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_source=goaff and use code AVA07 at checkout.

AVA FINANCE CHAIR - SETH WERNER

FINANCIAL HEALTH TIPS FOR LOCAL CLUBS

#12 Stay Compliant with State Requirements

From the Desk of the National Finance Chair

Small clubs often face big financial challenges. This series offers practical advice to make managing money easier and less stressful.

Don't Risk Penalties

Every state has its own rules for nonprofit registration and reporting. Failing to comply can lead to fines or loss of status. Check your state's requirements annually.

Quick Start Checklist:

- ✓ Verify your nonprofit registration status
- ✓ File annual reports on time
- ✓ Keep your registered agent info current

Resource: State Nonprofit Compliance Guide – Harbor Compliance: <https://www.harborcompliance.com/nonprofit-compliance-guide>

ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST - MARIAN DEVAUL

CELEBRATE AVA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY!

[Order Form](#)

In honor of this milestone, participating clubs will host 2026 Signature Events across the country. Join the celebration with the 50th Anniversary Passport Book Challenge—featuring 17 special event signature walks.

- Collect a unique sticker at each walk for your passport book.
- Complete at least 8 signature events of the passport book to earn a commemorative t-shirt.
- Complete 100% of the passport book to receive a commemorative t-shirt and an AVA tote bag!
- Program runs from 1-1-26 to 12-31-26
- Submit completed books for redemption to same address, or scan to marian@ava.org by June 31, 2027
- For more information on the walks, please visit ava.org



The cost of the books are \$15.00 each plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling. Mail form along with payment to AVA, 1032 S. Alamo St., San Antonio, TX, 78210 or email form to Marian@ava.org and call with credit card information.

FINANCIAL

If your club's fiscal year ends on 6-30-26, it is time to file your 990 E-Postcard, Annual Financial Report (AFR), and update your club officers. The reports can be filed after July 1, 2026, but before the November 15, 2026 deadline. An IRS user guide, and the AVA Retention policy for financial and event records have been posted on the AVA website under "Clubs Only". Please submit a copy of your filings to Marian@ava.org.

2027 STARTING POINT BOOKS - PRE-ORDER NOW!:

[Order Form](#)

It's time to pre-order your 2027 Starting Point Book. The deadline is no later than midnight, September 30, 2026. The price of the books are \$35.00 each, plus a shipping and handling charge. Form may be mailed to AVA, 1032 S. Alamo St, San Antonio, TX 78210, or place your order by emailing the form to Marian@ava.org.



AVA FINANCE DIRECTOR - ERIN GROSSO COMMEMORATIVE CHALLENGE COIN FOR SALE

Join us as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary and 40 years of partnership and walking with the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation.



We have been given a unique opportunity to offer a special Commemorative Challenge Coin featuring both milestones. This double-sided coin is available for \$10 and can be purchased by contacting Marian at marian@ava.org.

[Commemorative Coin Order Form](#)

PROGRAMS COMMITTEE - DIANE HOWELL EVANS, CHAIR



EXTENSION OF LIGHTHOUSES II SPECIAL PROGRAM END DATE

The AVA "Lighthouses II" Special Program's redemption date has been extended to 12/31/2027 to take advantage of several lighthouses across the U.S. celebrating historic 200-year anniversaries as well as plan walking activities and publicity around the National Lighthouse Day celebrated every year on August 7th. There are 101 YRE/SE events that qualify for the Lighthouses II Special Program (LHII SP) in 2026. This is a great marketing opportunity during this historic anniversary in 2027 to highlight these AVA walking events and publicize our organization to many of the National Lighthouse Society Chapters and local communities.

Now that the LHII SP has been approved and is valid for 2027 (note: the decision to extend the redemption date was made after the beginning of the renewal period [6/1/26-8/31/26] for YRE/SEs), AVA IT has taken the additional action to “restore” the LHII SP to the list of qualifying SPs for a 2027 YRE/SE when the “corresponding” 2026 YRE/SE lists the LHII SP as a qualifying SP. A “corresponding” 2027 YRE/SE is determined by matching Y#s with a 2026 YRE/SE that also qualifies for the LHII SP. The LHII SP was added to the list of qualifying SPs for each corresponding YRE/SE that has been renewed or is pending renewal for 2027.

If for some reason a 2027 YRE/SE does NOT qualify for the LHII SP, but the 2026 YRE/SE did, the club will need to edit the SP list for the 2027 YRE/SE to remove the LHII SP. Any YRE/SEs that are new for 2027 (not renewed based on a 2026 event) the club may want to add the LHII SP to their qualifying SP list, if applicable.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION COMMITTEE – KEN JOHNSON, MEMBER

This is the third in a series of articles about the Awards Committee and its administration of the AVA Recognition Awards Program. Previous articles highlighted the Hall of Fame Award and Distinguished Achievement Awards.

The AVA distinguishes between two types of awards: regional awards and national awards. The Hall of Fame and Distinguished Achievement Awards are two of the four national awards. The other two are the Trailblazer Award and the Ted Ballman Youth Award. We’ll learn more about regional awards in a future Checkpoint.

THE FOUR NATIONAL AWARDS

HALL OF FAME AWARD

The AVA Hall of Fame Award is given to individuals who have given at least ten years of service to the AVA at the national, state, and local level and have made exceptional contributions to volkssporting that have affected several AVA regions. This is the AVA’s highest award typically given to recognize a lifetime of service and might not be given at each convention. An individual should have previously received the Distinguished Achievement Award. An individual can only be named to the Hall of Fame once. The award will be recognized by plaque, certificate, pin and patch.

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Distinguished Achievement Award is bestowed upon individuals who have given at least eight years of service to the AVA. Personal contributions must have been made at an exemplary level at several stages of service, including national level. Nominated individuals should have previously received the (regional) Meritorious Service Award. An individual is eligible to receive this award more than once for different eight-year service periods. The award is recognized by a framed certificate, pin, and patch.

AVA TRAILBLAZER AWARD

The Trailblazer Award honors AVA Clubs making significant contributions to the development, maintenance, or improvement of walking trails or to the support of trail related issues. The award is recognized by a plaque or other memento.

TED BALLMAN MEMORIAL YOUTH AWARD

The Ted Ballman Memorial Youth Award is presented to an individual or organization inside or outside AVA who has been instrumental in the creation of AVA Youth Programs or who has worked to enhance or promote volkssporting programs for youth around the world. The award is recognized by a plaque or other memento.

The first Ted Ballman Memorial Youth Award was presented to Jack Maxcy at the AVA 2001 Convention in Bellevue, WA. The inscription read “For Outstanding Achievement in the Development and Implementation of Volkssporting Programs Designed to Improve the Lives of the Youth of Our Nation.” Jack was a member of the Over the Hill Gang club in Washington State.

Nominations for the four national awards are submitted using AVA Form 302.

The AVA Form 302 is located online at AVA.org. Click on the Clubs Only drop-down menu and select Club Forms. Along with the form link, there is also a link to a checklist of Specific Activities Deserving Recognition. More award details may be found at AVA.org. Click on the Clubs Only drop-down menu and select Club Policies. You’ll find a link to the AVA Policy Manual index and a link to the Recognition Awards section.

*Hall of Fame, Trailblazer and Ted Ballman Youth award must have a 2-3 minute video made by the nominator (or another individual not the nominee). The video allows for a more personal support of the nominee based on the paragraph given on the 302. Those needing assistance in making a video please contact Amanda Jauregui at Amanda@ava.org. All videos are to be sent to Amanda for editing by December 1st.

When submitting nominations for Distinguished Service Award, do send a picture of the nominee along with the Form 302 by December 1st.

Regional Directors must approve all nominations from their Region prior to submission to the Awards Committee. The deadline for submission is December 1st prior to the Convention year. The Awards committee reviews all awards submitted and makes recommendations to the first Board meeting in 2027. The Board decides who receives an award.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The AVA Awards Committee is responsible for the development, implementation, and management of awards for clubs, individuals and organizations through the Board of Directors and CEO (Henry Rosales). These awards honor individuals and organizations, both within and outside the AVA for service, deeds, and accomplishments that have advanced the ideals and aspirations of folksporting in the United States. Awards for national service are typically presented at the Biennial Convention. Regional recognition awards are presented by the Regional Director at regional, state or club events. Paid employees of the AVA do not qualify for the AVA Recognition Awards Program unless they are being recognized for serving in a volunteer capacity. AVA Board Officers, Directors and Deputy Directors are not eligible for national recognition awards while serving in those positions.

The next AVA Convention will be in Springfield, Missouri June 29 – July 2 so now's the time to nominate your candidate by the December 1st deadline.

If you have any questions regarding national or regional awards, both your Regional Director and members of the Awards Committee can assist you.

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR - JEANNE STOKES

ZINES: A CREATIVE, GRASSROOTS TOOL FOR CLUB PUBLICITY

Zines—short for fanzines or magazines—have long been part of underground art and literary culture. These small, handmade booklets blend creativity, personal expression, and practical information. Low-cost, informal, and easy to customize, zines offer a unique, personal way to share ideas.

Recently, Carolyn Ranieri, Publicity/Social Media - Chair for First Coast Trail Forgers in Jacksonville, FL, discovered zines at a local library. Her find is a reminder that this analog medium still thrives and presents a fresh opportunity for clubs to rethink how they share their identity and events with the public.



Click images to enlarge.

A zine can include short articles, artwork, photos, calendars, club history, maps, or themed content. Their approachable style makes them easy to read and easy to produce in small batches—perfect for distributing at events, libraries, and community spaces.

Clubs often rely on business cards, flyers, and social media. Zines offer a memorable alternative. Even a small zine gives potential members something to hold, flip through, and share, creating a deeper connection than a single card or handout. They're inexpensive, flexible, and ideal for highlighting walks, special events, or club personality.

For clubs looking for a creative, engaging publicity option, zines may be the perfect addition.

IT SPECIALIST - HECTOR HERNANDEZ

YEAR ROUND EVENT RENEWALS

RD's please review and approve all events by September 15, 2026 in order to get them into the 2027 Starting Point book. Any approvals after the 15th do not guarantee a section in the 2027 Starting Point book.

If you have any questions or need any assistance please call (210) 659-2112 or email Hector@ava.org.

***Please note that new events can be submitted year round. If you are planning a new event for 2026 you can submit those events anytime.

2027 STARTING POINT PHOTO CONTEST

Conteset it officially over. THank you to all who submitted. The Publicity Committee will now review and announce the winners soon. More to come in following Checkpoints.



#OptOutside

For those Clubs who wish to participate in OptOutside this year, AVA will gladly post your events on the website and Facebook. Please fill out the form by clicking the image to the left. This year Black Friday will land on November 27th, 2026 so I will need all submissions for participating Clubs and events to be sent in by November 15, 2026. Please email hector@ava.org for any questions or help with events.

NATIONAL EVENTS



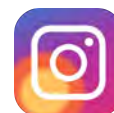
Checkpoint Available Via Email to All Club Members Who Request It

To receive an electronic copy of the Checkpoint send your request to Hector at hector@ava.org. Please note on the subject line: Request for Checkpoint.



The American Volkssport Association

The Mission of AVA is to promote and organize noncompetitive physical fitness activities that encourage lifelong fun, fitness, and friendship for all ages and abilities.



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