

Happy Wanderers Club History Report – 2015
by John McClellan, President

Calendar Year 2015 opened with 78 membership renewals after an ending membership of 102 in 2014. (Attrition of -24) These losses are consistent with the club's numbers for the past few years. Most of those not returning gave no specific reason, and follow-ups were made throughout the spring.

Several Happy Wanderers joined the Mid-Florida Milers for their traditional New Year's Day walk in downtown Disney. A few days later we started our normal schedule of Wednesday night "fun walks" and Sunday group walks of club year-round trails with DeLand. On January 8th, the first General Membership meeting of the year was held.

We held our first traditional event at DeLeon Springs on March 28th. The walk had only 17 participants but we discovered a great location for future events with a 4.5 mile nature trail connected to the main area around the Springs, and the locally-renowned "make your pancake breakfast" at the Park restaurant, for which there was 1+ hour wait to be seated!

Around this time the club started a second Facebook page. (The first was initiated in late 2014 by John McClellan at the request of President Ellis.) The new page is formatted as an "organizational" page rather than the "group" format, to more easily link directly to the club's existing website. The club also brought back its written Newsletter. Sheila McClellan volunteered as Editor and the club began publishing the newsletter for all members every-other month, following about a week after the General Membership meetings. The new Newsletter is distributed by e-mail, except for a short list of members without the use of a computer. Additional copies are brought to walks after each edition is published.

By mid-April membership was back to 86. The club held a group walk supporting the Florida Volkssport Association's (FVA) Walk Florida State Park Program (WFSP) at Hontoon Island with a good turn-out of more than 30 walkers. Club members brought side dishes and desserts and enjoyed a lunch of hamburgers and hot dogs. The event ensured this FVA YRE would be "in the black" for the year. In January, the FVA had asked for new YRE POCs for both Hontoon Island and Blue Springs – 2 of the 5 WFSP venues still operating. Bill Ellis took over the box at Blue Springs, and John McClellan assumed duties at Hontoon Island. On May 3rd we celebrated IVV "World Walking Day" (8 May) with a group walk at Ponce Inlet. IVV World Walking Day certificates were available and 10 Happy Wanderers were recognized.

At the General Membership Meeting in May, it was time for election of club officers. Mr. Bill Ellis, a board member for the past 14 consecutive years including the past 10 months as President, stepped down. Mr. Bob Allen also stepped down as a Member at Large.

The following slate was nominated and approved without opposition:

John McClellan - President
Dan Spink – Vice President
Barb Anderson - Treasurer
Marie Priest - Secretary

Robert Priest – Member At Large
Gloria Pratt – Member at Large

Our second Traditional Event of the year on June 6th in Enterprise (near DeBary) commemorated National Trails Day as well as D-Day. The event venue was Green Springs Park and the East-Central and Spring-to-Spring rail trails were utilized. In lieu-of an A-Award, donations to the annual Poppy Drive supporting our Veterans from VFW Post #3282 were accepted. The event garnered the highest participation of the year, with 49 paid participants including members of two neighboring clubs: the Mid-Florida Milers and First Coast Trail Forgers. The event showed a net profit and included specialty item sales and \$40 in VFW donations.

The new board Executive Board began on 1 July and John McClellan submitted the update of club officers to the AVA along with the IRS 990E electronic postcard. Before assuming his new role, Mr. McClellan met with former co-Presidents Marvin Stokes and Lois Shannon, and Elaine and Alan Brayton, all of whom provided years of wisdom and experience.

At the General Membership meeting of 2 July, Bill and Linda Ellis were recognized for their years of dedicated service to the Happy Wanderers. Bill received an AVA Meritorious Service award while Linda was presented a bouquet of flowers and a club Certificate of Appreciation. By August, club membership had reached 95.

The new President convened a planning meeting on August 8th to consider programs and ideas for 2016 – the club’s 25th Anniversary year. Mr. McClellan presented analysis of the club’s 2014 participation and financial performance and then the planning committee (consisting of the Executive Board) reviewed proposals for the coming year and roughed-out a calendar. Recommendations for the club to purchase new T-shirts and to join the Port Orange Chamber of Commerce would be among those forwarded to the general membership for approval in September.

Unfortunately, the weather turned ugly for our third Traditional Event of the year, the “Sunset-Moonrise” walk in New Smyrna Beach on August 29th. Despite the event being curtailed to only 5 km by approaching lightning, 32 walkers still enjoyed themselves. At the General Membership meeting on September 3rd, the club webmaster Mr. David McCarthy gave a well-received presentation on the features and use of our re-vamped website including the printable calendar, search and event RSVP functions. The following Saturday (5 Sep), a small but intrepid team rallied at All Aboard Storage in the early morning hours to assist with moving the club out of it’s previous 100 SF room to a downsized 75SF one in the same complex. The move just around the corner to a more easily accessible unit will also save the club money as the cost of storage continues to rise.

In October, the club started a MeetUp.com page. This social media website for local clubs or groups that meet regularly was another of the recommendations from the August planning session. MeetUp is being used successfully by a number of other AVA clubs in the country. The investment showed returns almost immediately and by December had already more than covered the \$60.00 cost for the first 6-months subscription with several new annual memberships and additional income from event fees. Mr. McClellan held a

second meeting with Alan & Elaine Brayton who agreed to head up a committee to put on a 25th Anniversary luncheon next year. The date was set for 28 February 2016.

Walk Around Florida 25 was held between 22-24 October in the Gainesville, FL area. Once again the club teamed up with the Mid-Florida Milers and the Suncoast Sandpipers to stage this multi-event weekend. The Happy Wanderers had overall treasurer responsibilities this year as well as planning and execution of the Saturday morning event at Payne's Prairie Preserve State Park, just south of Gainesville. Club members made multiple trips to the park over the summer to plan the event. The 25th Anniversary event included a "Jubilee Joust" competition challenging walkers to complete 25 km of trails before the Saturday evening banquet. Overall participation in WAF25 was up by 25% from WAF24 due to improved marketing across the AVA and the first-time use of social media such as Facebook to get the word out. Total participants for the 4 events was close to 400.

In November, the club held our traditional Veteran's Day evening guided walk from the City Center in Port Orange and including the member's personal remembrances of friends or veterans in their Families while gathered at the Memorial Grove. This year's event was staged as a *fackelwanderung* – a torch walk, in the German tradition. The torches harkened to the Hal McCrae poem of WWI, "In Flanders Field," which was recited during the brief ceremony. 36 walkers participated that evening, and Veterans were invited to walk without cost, with the club covering their AVA fees. 10 Vets were counted.

For the second year in a row, the club held its annual Christmas Party in the Banquet Room at VFW Post #3282. 35 members and guest attended a enjoyable evening including conversation, dinner and dancing. The club's holiday food drive in association with the Presbyterian Church of Port Orange was featured and members donated generously this year. Club Vice-President Dan Spink surprised the crowd and President with a special presentation to John for his efforts to energize club participation and membership in 2015.

Our fifth and final traditional event of 2015 was once again the New Year's Eve Walk in Port Orange. A new route in downtown combining elements of several fun walk venues was developed and included a long stretch along the beautiful Halifax River. The club revisited the Port Orange Adult Center on US 1 as a start hall location. The event was set-up and run with all the features of a TE, including route directional signs and checkpoints.

We ended the year on a positive note with club membership up to 116 – the first year in some time with positive growth. Total participants for all YRE were 1,315, and TE were 166, for an overall total of 1,481.

The Happy Wanderers are well postured for continued success in 2016.

Attachments:

- 1 - 2015 Walk #s
- 2 - 2014/15 Financial Summary
- 3 - 2015 New Members

2015 Happy Wanderer Event Participant #s:

Traditional Events

- 17 DeLeon Springs State Park, DeLeon Springs, FL; 3/28
- 49 Green Springs Park, Enterprise, FL “National Trails Day”; 6/6
- 32 New Smyrna Beach, FL “Sunset—Moonrise”; 8/29
- 36 Port Orange, FL – Veteran’s Day “Fackelwanderung”; 11/11
- 32 Port Orange, FL – New Years Eve; 12/31

166 participants; ave. 33

Year-Round Events

- 114 Cocoa Beach (YR 634)
- 102 Daytona Beach (YR 1134)
- 83 DeLand (YR 440)
- 107 Flagler Beach (YR 1904)
- 118 Mt. Dora (YR 726)
- 108 New Smyrna Beach (YR 1129)
- 101 Ormond Beach (YR 977)
- 124 Ponce Inlet (YR 725) #2
- 94 Port Orange (YR 1132)
- 146 St. Augustine (YR1128) #1
- 97 Sanford (YR 1510)
- 121 Savannah, GA (YR 1366) #3

1,315 participants; ave. 109