

From the President

John McClellan

Welcome to 2023 with the Happy Wanderers, our 32nd year in *AVA: America's Walking Club!* Thanks for joining or renewing your membership and supporting our club. We've got some great events coming up this year, so please check our website and social media for details. Throughout the year, I also hope you'll support events held by our neighboring clubs – the Mid-Florida Milers in Orlando and the First Coast Trailforgers in Jacksonville, or – other clubs throughout the region and the AVA.

In late January we'll be at Blue Spring State Park for the Manatees, there's a group bike ride in February and in March we'll join the First Coast Trailforgers at Washington Oaks. Also, in February – don't forget about the IVV Olympiad and Texas trail Round-up from 19-26 Feb in San Antonio, TX. This is a once-in-lifetime event: a thousand people from 40 states and 25 countries coming together for a week of great walk, bike, and swim events. First time ever in the USA and North America! From early March through May, we'll be supporting the Port Orange "Get Fit" program with a kick-off event at Port Orange for many new walkers.

AVA National Walking Week will be the first week in April and we'll have two events – our regular Sunday and Wednesday scheduled walks. There will be no walk on Easter Sunday, but that Saturday we may visit Hontoon Island State Park – always an adventure! We're also slated to get out there in February- *IF the park is re-opened from the 2022 storms*. We're planning on a Daytona Tortugas game in May, and in June for National Trails Day, you might consider visiting the Crazy Horse monument in South Dakota – where AVA will partner with the CH conservancy to allow walkers to hike up to and out on the arm of the still-in-progress giant sculpture.

Later in 2023 we'll re-visit our spooktacular Halloween walk in Lake Helen / Cassadaga – cancelled due to Hurricane Ian last year. Expect another bike ride in the Fall, and our traditional Veteran's Day evening tribute walk, followed by our Holiday Lights. And of course – *Walk Around Florida (WAF32)* in St. Petersburg!

As we pass the 3rd anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, the club continues to operate with your health and safety in mind. We recommend that all participants be vaccinated and ask that any unvaccinated participants continue to be respectful of others by wearing masks and maintaining social distance during pre-walk registration time.