

From the President

John McClellan

Happy New Year to all our Happy Wanderers out there! I hope that your holiday season was both enjoyable and renewing of body, mind and spirit.

Speaking of renewal, about half of our active membership have already renewed for 2024. I want to thank everyone who supports our club and hope that you like what we are doing and will decide to stay with us! Our Wednesday night “fun walks” will continue to remain free of charge to the participants. Our weekend/special events are going from \$3 to >> \$4 this year – the first price increase in AVA in 20+ years (2003). Even so, volkssporting remains a very affordable activity and I hope that the value-added our Happy Wanderers team brings everyone is worth the change in price.

2024 is going to be a busy and exiting year – with a fast start, too. Tomorrow we’ll be in St. Augustine for a post-holiday light walk starting at 3 pm, then a meal at *The Columbia* and then anyone who wants to stick around and see some of the +1 million lights in the Ancient City can enjoy their last bit of holiday merriment. Before January is out, we’ll be making our annual visit to Blue Spring State Park for the Manatees – SAT 1/27 from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM start time. Our group walks will start at 9:00 AM. A note – we will not be just sitting at the picnic table this year - look for our blue HW “pop-up” tent among the other festival vendors along the sidewalk next to the Springs.

Then in February, we’re bringing you a brand-new event in the City of Titusville – SAT 2/10 from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM start times from the Titusville Welcome Center. The 5k and 10k routes feature both downtown and numerous green spaces to include Veteran’s Memorial Park, Space View Park and Sand Point Park. The 10k will also visit the Titusville Marina and Marina Park, Draa Park, and return across the pedestrian on the bike trail. The first Saturday in March 3/2 is our biennial visit to Palatka, FL and *Ravine Gardens State Park* for the Azalea Festival. Again, our start times will be 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM and if you haven’t ever seen the Ravine Gardens and its thousands of azaleas in various stages of bloom, then it’s well past time.

And that’s just the start. We’ll have a night of BBQ & baseball with the Daytona Tortugas on April 25th, and later this year we’re once again the host club for *Walk Around Florida* – the 33rd edition - this year from 1–3 Nov in the Palm Coast / Flagler Beach area. We think we have found our hotel (deal pending) and we’re already working on a dinner venue and the events. You can expect a bike event at WAF33, along with some familiar terrain but also a couple of new walks, too!

You’ll find the details of all these upcoming events on our published first quarter schedule, or on our website and our social media platforms. I hope everyone is ready for another year of *Fun, Fitness and Friendship...* and food! 😊