AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB
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CHECKPOINT

WWW.AVA.ORG

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.

BOARD MEETING DEADLINES:

August 24, 2026: Agenda items due to the Board Chairman, Carl Cordes, at chairman@ava.org. Please copy henry@ava.org.

Note: If you are a Committee Chair and would like time on the agenda, please send an email request to the Board Chairman, Carl Cordes and copy Henry.

September 4, 2026: Officers, Board Members, and Committee reports and all supplemental documents for the board meeting are due at AVA National Office. Email reports and all supporting documents to henry@ava.org.

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

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

At University Plaza Hotel, an unbeatable location in downtown Springfield sets the scene for a place where warm hospitality feels more home-like than ever. From spacious guest rooms and suites that feature a long list of relaxing amenities to 150,000 sq. feet of versatile event space, the University Plaza Hotel offers comfort, convenience, and excitement—all wrapped up in one authentically midwestern package.

The AVA has secured the University Plaza Hotel as the host hotel for the 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!

Registration, convention workshops, the membership meeting, and the awards ceremony will be held at the hotel. The opening reception will take place across the street, within easy walking distance. Two of the three convention walks will also start at the hotel. Details for the third convention walk are still being finalized. If it does not start at the hotel, bus transportation will be provided from the University Plaza Hotel.

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

AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS GOING STRONG! 8 MORE EVENTS TO CELEBRATE!

A heartfelt thank you to Terence Lunghofer, Frank and Sherry Sayers, the Falcon Wanderers, and the many club members and volunteers who made the **Rocky Mountain Rendezvous AVA 50th Anniversary** event in **Colorado Springs, CO**, such a success. The gathering brought together 61 participants from 18 states!

Special thanks to Mary Bond, Priscilla Fife, the San Francisco Bay Bandits, and all the volunteers for their hard work and dedication in hosting the **50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking AVA 50th Anniversary** event in **San Francisco, CA**. Their efforts helped make this milestone celebration a memorable success, drawing 70 participants!

NOTICE ON GROUPER/FORMERLY ELEMENT 3 HEALTH

Some of our clubs have recently received communications from Grouper. We would like to clarify that the AVA is no longer participating in or endorsing Grouper-sponsored club initiatives, and all AVA programs involving Grouper have been discontinued until further notice. The AVA is now working with Silver Sneakers to offer similar opportunities and programs. Should you have any questions contact henry@ava.org

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE - SUSAN FINE, CHAIR

PUBLICITY UPDATE

This will be a very busy Fall for Volkswalkers and clubs, with all the multi-day events that are on the schedule, along with traditional and group walks. Multi-day events are planned coast to coast over the next 5 months, and we encourage you to attend and support the clubs, not just for the 50th anniversary events, but ALL the multi day events. Some of the locations include Boston, Mackinac Bridge, Minnesota, Oregon, Virginia, Philadelphia, Texas, Wash DC, Route 66, Florida, Georgia and more. Share this with your clubs, and get all the info: https://my.ava.org/find-a-fest.php.

A big congratulations to the San Francisco Bay Bandits for their AVA 50th Anniversary event July 24-25. I heard from many, many people that the walk “50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking” was awesome, with people spending time to look and find all the artwork. 70 people participated.

And a big hats off to the five Colorado clubs who sponsored the “Rendezvous in the Rockies” 50th Anniversary festival, especially Terry Lunghofer, Frank Sayers and Sherry Sayers, who worked hard providing 6 spectacular walks over the week July 28 – Aug 2, along with socials and dinner. 282 walks were done over the 6 days, with people from 18 states.

There are 8 Anniversary events to go. Get info: https://ava.org/50th-anniversary/. Next up is two days in Boston, Aug 28-29, with 4 walks over the 2 days, plus several YREs, and socials, sponsored by the Walk ‘n Mass Volkssport Club. Then the once-a-year walk over Mackinac Bridge, September 7, with Volkssport registration sponsored by Mid-America Region. They are offering another walk in the Mackinac Headlands too.

This is the month to send in your photos from the past year, June 30, 2025 through August 31, 2026, for the Starting Point Photo Contest, due by August 31. First place photo will be featured on the front of the 2027 Starting Point Book; second place will be on the back. Get info here.

SAVE THE DATE: The Big Give, AVA’s annual fundraiser, is September 23 at 6pm through September 24 at 6pm. This annual campaign helps the organization continue to strive toward a healthier future, along with the basics of providing insurance for all clubs’ events, maintaining the website, working on innovative solutions to keep our sport up-to-date with technology, and so much more. You can donate by mail, or on the Big Give dates, you can choose to give online during the “match minutes”, when your donation is matched. We will send more information in the next few weeks about the fundraiser.

We'll have more information in the next month or two, on the 2027 AVA Biennial Convention, June 28-July 1 (with pre- and post-walks, June 26 – July 4), in Springfield, MO. In the meantime, the hotel link is up and running at the special rate of $120/night including breakfast. We'll be updating the webpage continuously, so check back often.

BIG GIVE COMMITTEE - SAMANTA SANCHEZ, CHAIR

YOUR DONATION IS A SMALL STEP WITH A GIANT IMPACT!

Since our first walk in Fredericksburg, TX, in 1976, our club members have made a significant impact on lives by dedicating their passion and energy to promoting and organizing physical fitness events. These activities don't just bring people of all ages and abilities together, but they also encourage them to embrace healthier lifestyles. Without our clubs and without generous supporters like you, the AVA would not be here today, celebrating 50 years of fun, fitness, and friendship.

Last year, your incredible support helped us raise $91,619! Your gift to the Big Give was crucial to continue to support our clubs, programs, and our special 50th Anniversary events. This year's goal is to raise $100,000. Your contribution to this year's campaign will be instrumental in our mission to continue offering preventive health programs and exciting new initiatives, such as our walking app. This year we aim to raise both funds and awareness. Unfortunately, we are gradually losing clubs as participation declines, and with every loss, we lose cherished members of our community. We need new and younger walkers to carry the AVA legacy forward for another 50 years. So we ask you to please take a moment to give during the Big Give and help us spread the word to family and friends about the work we do and why it's important to you. Can we count on you?

To donate to the Big Give 2026, please visit www.ava.org and click the donate button. Online donations will be accepted from 6:00 PM CT on September 23 through 6:00 PM CT on September 24. This year, the Big Give organizers will also be hosting early and late giving. Any donation made from September 16 through September 27 will count towards the 2026 Big Give campaign.

We encourage our donors to give during the main 24 hours of online giving, as the AVA can leverage additional donations through the Big Give's sponsored Match Minutes. However, we understand life can be unpredictable, and any donation made online during this time frame is genuinely appreciated. If you prefer not to donate online, you are welcome to mail a check to the AVA National Office anytime between now and October 31st, 2026. Join us in making a difference. Thank you.

AVA SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR - AMANDA JAUREGUI

CHECKOUT OUR AUGUST WEDNESDAY WEBINAR

We hope you will join us for this month's Wednesday Webinar on August 19th at 7pm CDT! We will have a tour guide from Rick Steve's Europe to talk about going on group tours and how you can best be prepared for your next adventure. We will then hear from the remaining 50th anniversary event hosts about their upcoming events.

A little more about Rick Steve's Europe: Their mission is to inspire, inform, and equip Americans to have European trips that are fun, affordable, and culturally broadening. They value travel as a powerful way to better understand and contribute to the world in which we live.

You can register here if you aren't already: http://bit.ly/4sOQEaK.

AVA FINANCE CHAIR - SETH WERNER

FINANCIAL HEALTH TIPS FOR LOCAL CLUBS

#11 Get a Fresh Set of Eyes on Your Books

From the Desk of the National Finance Chair

When you're focused on your mission, finances can feel like an afterthought. These tips will help you stay on track without adding extra work.

Outside Perspective Matters

You don't need a CFO, but having someone outside your core team review your books can prevent costly mistakes. Internal reviews are helpful, but best practice is to have a professional review your financial records at least annually. This doesn't always mean a full audit—many small nonprofits opt for a financial review or compilation, which is less expensive but still provides an independent check.

Why It Matters:

- Detects errors or irregularities early
- Strengthens donor confidence and credibility
- Helps ensure compliance with nonprofit regulations

Options for Professional Oversight:

- Annual Review by a CPA: A formal review or compilation is often sufficient for small nonprofits.
- Volunteer Accountant: If funds are tight, ask if a member or supporter with accounting experience can help.
- Peer Review: Partner with another local nonprofit to exchange financial reviews.

Quick Start Checklist:

- ✓ Ask members if they know someone with a financial background
- ✓ Schedule an annual or semi-annual review by a CPA or qualified volunteer
- ✓ Use the review to improve processes and strengthen internal controls

Pro Tip: If your organization receives grants or significant donations, a professional review may be required by funders—plan ahead to avoid surprises.

Resource: Finding Affordable Accounting Help – CPA Directory https://cpadirectory.com

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 by clicking here and use code AVA07 at checkout!

WALK WITH US AT THE TOUR DE LAS MISIONES

Did you hear? America's Walking Club is part of the Tour de las Misiones once again on September 12th in partnership City of San Antonio World Heritage Office! The Tour de las Misiones offers an immersive experience into the legacy of the historic San Antonio Missions. Participants will enjoy a curated route featuring enlightening activities that bring our local history to life. You can bike, run, or walk the trails.

Register by clicking here today.

If you would like to volunteer, please email amanda@ava.org for more information. We look forward to seeing you there!

ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST - MARIAN DEVAUL

AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY STICKERS

To help celebrate the AVA's 50th Anniversary, we have a limited supply of commemorative 50th Anniversary stickers available to support your event promotion.

These stickers may be used however they work best for your event. A few fun ideas:

- Add them to flyers, postcards, or walk directions
- Include them in registration materials or welcome packets
- Hand them out to walkers as a keepsake
- Display them at your registration table to highlight your event's connection to our 50th Anniversary celebration

They're a simple way to add a little extra sparkle and help spread the word about your event being part of this milestone year. If you are interested in receiving the stickers, please e-mail marian@ava.org.

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

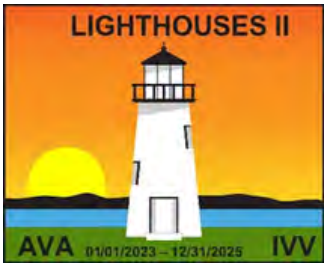
COMMEMORATIVE CHALLENGE COIN FOR SALE

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



SPECIAL PROGRAMS INFORMATION

REDEMPTION - the last date to complete any purchased challenge books and redeem for "Lighthouses II" and "Par for the Course" Special Programs is **12/31/2026**.

PURCHASE - the last date to purchase a challenge book for the following AVA Special Programs "A-MAZE-ing Labyrinths", "Anniversaries Hurrah", "Rails-to-Trails", and "Step to the Beat" is **12/31/2026**.

NEW for 2027 – Three new Special Programs begin on January 1, 2027. Challenge books for each should be available shortly. For more information check out the Special Program articles from each of the Special Program POCs in this issue of The American Wanderer or visit the Future Special Program webpage at: https://cb.ava.org/futureprog.php.

Craft Beer

Historic Places of Worship

Historic Route 66 Celebrating 100 Years

2028 Special Program Proposals - Does your club have an idea for a new AVA Special Program they would like to sponsor beginning in 2028? Do you know of a theme that would generate interest from a historical, cultural, educational, or scenic beauty perspective that has not previously been a Special Program? Are there major or intriguing American anniversaries occurring in 2028? Now would be the time to put your creative ideas and imagination to work. Talk with club members on walks as some have additional interests outside walking (yes, it does happen) and those other activities may generate ideas. Check your community calendars for local celebrations that are applicable across all states. Add "Brain-storming Special Programs" to the club's meeting agenda and solicit ideas at the meetings.

The deadline for new 2028 Special Program proposals is **November 1, 2026**. For a copy of the information required in the new Special Program proposal package, please contact Diane Howell Evans at Programs@ava.org.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION COMMITTEE – KEN JOHNSON, MEMBER

This is the second in a series of articles about the Awards Committee and its administration of the AVA Recognition Awards Program. Last month we featured the prestigious Hall of Fame Award. This month, AVA's second highest honor: The AVA Distinguished Achievement Award.

AVA DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The AVA may bestow the AVA Distinguished Achievement Award 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 Meritorious Service Award. An individual is eligible to receive this award more than once for different 8-year service periods. The award will be recognized by a framed certificate, pin, and patch.

The Distinguished Achievement Award follows the AVA Hall of Fame Award in the awards hierarchy. It may not be presented at each convention depending on the nomination status. However, more than one award may be presented at convention. The first four were given out at the 1985 convention. To date, 198 individuals have been honored. The first were given to four individuals at the 1985 convention.

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 volkssporting 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.

If you wish to nominate someone for a Distinguished Achievement Award, the Recognition Awards Nomination Form 302 is available on the AVA.org website under Clubs Only->Club Resources->Club Forms. Submit the form to your Regional Director. If you have any questions, both your Regional Director and members of the Awards Committee can assist you.

Below are links to the nomination form and checklist; and the recognition awards policy in the AVA manual: Form 302 and Checklist: https://cb.ava.org/Clubs_Only/2025_Forms/Form_302_rev_01_2025.pdf.

AVA Policy Manual, Recognition Awards, pages 1-4:
https://cb.ava.org/Operations_Policies/Rev_04_25_23/Recognition_Awards_rev_04_25_23.pdf

DEADLINES for NATIONAL AWARD SUBMITTALS and REGIONAL AWARDS RECIPIENT LIST
December 1, 2026 is the deadline for submittal to the committee for national nominations. The committee will review nominations and submit recommendations of nominees who have met the award criteria to the Board at the first meeting in 2027.

Submittal of Regional awards for the 2027 Awards Book should be submitted by or on February 28, 2027 to be included in the publication.

WHERE TO SEND NOMINATIONS: When sending national nominations for consideration and Regional award list of recipients for the 2027 Awards book, please use the awards@ava.org email address.

Next month: Ted Ballman Memorial Youth Award and more about the committee.

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL DIRECTOR - KEN JOHNSON

BISMARCK NORTH DAKOTA CAPITAL WALK CHANGE

I'd like to thank Lacey Dollinger and the Bismark-Mandan Convention and Visitor's Bureau for their many years of hosting the capital walk. Unfortunately, the CVB has determined that they cannot continue doing so. I have transferred the walk to a North Central RD Club OSB. In the short term I've kept the existing 10 km route, but I'm working on new five and ten kilometer trails that will start at a park near the capitol grounds. We won't have to walk the busy section of Tyler Parkway that leads to and from the CVB. I hope you get a chance to enjoy the walk and let me know of any comments or concerns as I will be managing the walk from afar.

IT SPECIALIST – HECTOR HERNANDEZ

YEAR ROUND EVENT RENEWALS

The Year Round Event (YRE) renewal process began June 1, 2026 and will end August 31, 2026. Please get your events renewed soon. There are 1261 events that have not been renewed. Don't forget to update your stamp information if you are changing the name of the event or need to request an extra stamp.

RD's must review and approve all events by September 15, 2023 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

Click here for Photo Contest Rules

There still time to get your photos in for the contest. We look forward to what you send. Good luck!

#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 6th, 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.

US FREEDOMWALK FESTIVAL – DOLORES GRENIER, CHAIR

DEAR US FREEDOMWALK FESTIVAL AND AVA FAMILY,

It is with great sadness that I share the passing of our dear friend and longtime member, Regina Overholt, who passed away on July 28, 2026, while in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Regina had been part of the U.S. FreedomWalk Festival family since its very beginning in 2002 and was one of the dedicated individuals who helped shape our event into what it is today. As our Trailmaster from 2009 through 2023, she devoted countless hours to planning, marking, and improving our trails, ensuring memorable experiences for thousands of walkers over the years.

True to who she was, Regina was doing what she loved most—walking with friends while attending AVA's 50th Anniversary celebrations in Colorado Springs. She was also continuing her remarkable quest to complete walks in all U.S. counties, an achievement that reflected her passion, determination, and love of adventure.

Regina was much more than a volunteer. She was a friend, mentor, and familiar face in the walking community. Whether you walked with her, volunteered alongside her, or simply shared stories at events, chances are Regina left a lasting impression. Her kindness, dedication, and willingness to help others will not be forgotten.
I have attached a few photos that capture just a small glimpse of the many memories we were fortunate to share with her.

Please keep Regina's family and friends, especially those who were with her in Colorado, in your thoughts during this difficult time.

Regina's footprints will remain on our trails—and in our hearts—for many years to come.

With deepest sympathy,
Dolores

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.

AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB
ESTABLISHED 1976

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.

1032 S Alamo St · San Antonio, TX 78210, ava.org, Phone 210.659.2112 · Fax 210.659.1212 Message US.