

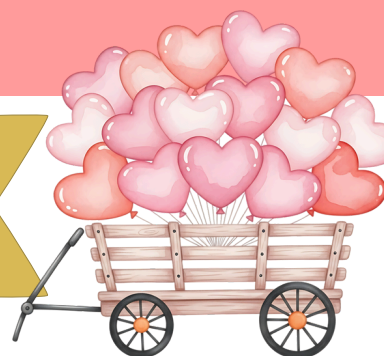


**AMERICA'S
WALKING CLUB**
— ESTABLISHED 1976 —

FEBRUARY
2026
VOLUME 35
NO. 2

CHECKPOINT

WWW.AVA.ORG



Special thanks to Carl Cordes, AVA Board Chairman and the Las Vegas High Rollers and Strollers for hosting the AVA's first 50th Anniversary Signature event in Boulder City, NV. I look forward to visiting with everyone February 20-22, in San Antonio, TX for the AVA's second 50th Anniversary Signature event! For more info on this event click here.

<https://ava.org/50th-anniversary/>



PRESIDENT/CEO - HENRY ROSALES

AVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING NOTICE

The AVA National Board of Directors will meet Thursday, March 12, 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:

February 16, 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.

February 23, 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

March 4, 2026: Board meeting information package emailed to Board Members and Deputy Directors.

AVA NEC Officer's Reports and Committee Reports:

[Click here for Agenda items Form](#)

[Click here for Officer Report Form](#)

[Click here for Committee Report Form](#)

AVA WEDNESDAY WEBINAR – FEBRUARY 18, 2026

The next webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 7:00p.m. - 8:00p.m. Central.

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To register for the webinar, [click here](#) or go to the AVA website homepage. Once you have registered for the Zoom meeting a link will be sent to the email you used to register.

Guest Host: Seth Werner, AVA Finance Chair

Presenters:

Beth Kahny, Business Development Manager, Partnerships

AVA is partnering with SilverSneakers! SilverSneakers has a 30+ year history of keeping seniors active and connected by providing access to gyms, online classes, and community-based events. AVA Clubs who participate will be able to promote their guided walks on the SilverSneakers calendar of events (open to 18 million eligible seniors), and be reimbursed for SilverSneakers members who take part in AVA events. Join us for a full overview of this unique opportunity, including live Q&A.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE - SUSAN FINE, CHAIR

PUBLICITY UPDATE

If you were not able to attend the AVA webinar January 21, you can see/hear it now from the AVA website. [LINK TO THE RECORDING](#): "How to Get New Members and Retain Them" was an excellent source for club members to learn how other clubs have been able to grow their clubs and keep their members energized and passionate to walk. Thanks to Karen Kaufman, Ron Jones, Beth Stenstrom, Kay Shoemaker, Holly Pelking and John McClellan for great ideas.

Carl Cordes had a great idea at the Boulder City 50th anniversary event: a link to gather all photos that walkers took. He had a QR code at registration, and walkers could share photos, and see what others shared, too. It was a great place to see the fun we had at the events. Carl used Photo Circle as his platform, but there are probably several you could have at your events. You can contact Carl with questions: chairman@ava.org.

I would also like to thank Carl for the great organization, and well-mapped walks at the first AVA 50th event in Boulder City. The best part – getting my sticker in my 50th Anniversary Passport. Though I know I can't make all [17 events](#) this year, I plan to get stickers at as many as possible. I hope you can attend a few of the events that the clubs have worked hard to organize. You can [order your passport here](#). Also, check the [50th anniversary page](#) for special hotel rates that most of our 50th events have available. And keep checking the page for updates on events.



As stated in last month's Checkpoint, our new partnership with Rails to Trails Conservancy will give extra publicity for your event or group walk that takes place April 25th, or anytime in April, on a Rail-Trail or multi-use trail. The RT is celebrating their 40th anniversary Saturday April 25th, for “**Celebrate Trails Days**”, and they will list on their website any group events on a rail-trail that occurs in April, and especially on April 25, plus promote on social platforms, **provide giveaways, and more (must send online form by Feb 23)**. They ask that you fill out the event **form here** to be listed on their site.’

Please fill out the **multi-day event** form for your weekend festival that is more than one-day. There are several events that I know about, including some 50th anniversary events, that are not listed on the multi-day page. Your walks do not need to be finalized; walkers just want to know that it's upcoming, so they can plan their travels.

You asked for some new merchandise... and AVA has it: the **Merchandise Store** will soon have long and short sleeve polo shirts, available online by Friday Feb 6. Our AVA members requested polos, and we can't wait to see you wearing them. The store will also add long sleeve cotton crew neck unisex shirts; and women's fit/wicking shirts, both long and short sleeve. So many choices for everyone to showcase our the 50th Anniversary with AVA shirts, sweats and caps. Just order from the **online store**.

FINANCE DIRECTOR - ERIN GROSSO

AVA MERCHANDISE STORE OPENS ONLINE

We are very excited to announce the **AVA Store** is open and ready for shopping. There are various styles of shirts, ballcaps and sweatshirts to choose from, customized by you.

You choose:

- Preferred color
- 50th Anniversary logo or just the AVA logo
- Short sleeve or long sleeve shirt of cotton/poly blend – unisex or female cut
- Dri-fit short or long sleeve in both men's and women's cuts
- Crew neck sweatshirts
- Vintage and trucker ball caps

This is your chance to get the AVA merchandise you want. Your order can be one item or several items. Clubs can order in bulk if they want.

You can also choose to have the logo across the front of the shirt, or over the breast pocket. You can choose to have the back printed with all the 17 featured events for our 50th anniversary celebration, or only have the front logo with no back. **YOU CHOOSE!**

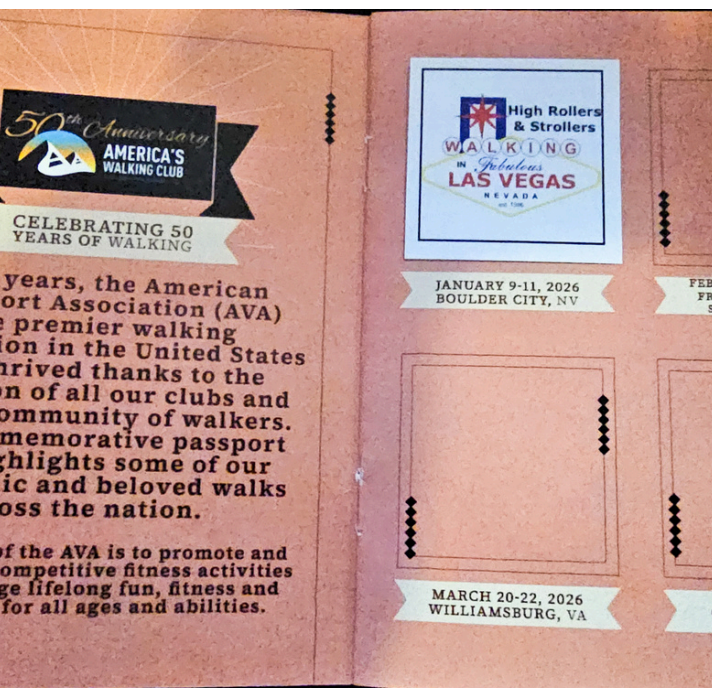
When you order, you will receive an emailed receipt, and shipping information. The price listed does not include tax or shipping/handling costs. Orders will take 7-10 days to be shipped.

Here is a link to the e-store:

https://bigfrognewbraunfels.com/americas_walking_club/shop/home.

Please send the link for the online store to all club members so they can showcase our wonderful organization, especially during our 50th Anniversary in 2026.





AVA FINANCE CHAIR - SETH WERNER

FINANCIAL HEALTH TIPS FOR LOCAL CLUBS

#5 Do You Have Financial Policies?

From the Desk of the National Finance Chair

Even small nonprofits need basic financial policies to avoid misunderstandings and fraud. Start simple—spending limits, approval processes, and reimbursement rules.

Policies Prevent Problems

Policies create clarity, protect your organization, and build trust with donors and members. Without them, you risk confusion about who can approve expenses, how reimbursements work, and what happens if funds are misused.

Why It Matters:

- Prevents Fraud: Clear rules reduce opportunities for misuse of funds.
- Ensures Consistency: Everyone follows the same process for spending and approvals.
- Builds Donor Confidence: Donors feel secure knowing your club has strong financial controls.

Examples of Basic Policies:

- Spending Limits: Define how much can be spent without prior approval.
- Approval Process: Specify who must approve expenses over a certain amount.
- Reimbursement Rules: Outline what expenses are reimbursable and what documentation is required.
- Conflict of Interest: Require disclosure if someone approving expenses could benefit personally.

Quick Start Checklist:

- ✓ Draft a one-page policy covering spending limits, approvals, and reimbursements
- ✓ Define who approves expenses and at what thresholds
- ✓ Review and update policies annually or when leadership changes

Pro Tip: Start simple. A one-page document is better than nothing. As your club grows, you can expand policies to include things like credit card use, cash handling, and reserve funds.

Resource: Sample Financial Policies – Propel Nonprofits:
<https://propelnonprofits.org/resources/financial-policy-guidelines-and-example/>

AVA SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR - AMANDA JAUREGUI

2026 TEXAS TRAIL ROUNDUP



It's time for the 2026 **Texas Trail Roundup**! Join us for one, two, or all three days of fun, health, history, culture, and community. Each year, walkers from around the world come together to explore one of America's most historic and culturally rich cities on foot. Whether you are an experienced walker or just starting out, we welcome you to explore with us!

The celebration begins on Friday, February 20th in Fredericksburg, Texas, with a welcoming Opening Ceremony and 50th Anniversary Walk to kick off this unforgettable weekend. The rest of the weekend will take place in the heart of San Antonio, Texas.

You can look on our [website](#) for the schedule, updates, and more information. You can also follow the [Texas Trail Roundup on Facebook](#). We look forward to walking with you!

There is still time to register if you haven't done so already.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST - MARIAN DEVAUL

2026 CENTURION ACHIEVEMENT CHALLENGE:

The 2026 program began on January 1, 2026. You must be an AVA Individual Member (annual or lifetime) to participate in the Challenge. Eligible participants may register for the 2026 Challenge between October 1, 2025 and September 30, 2026 using the official registration form. Please mail forms to AVA, 1032 S. Alamo St, San Antonio, TX 78210, or e-mail to marian@ava.org.

[Centurion Instructions](#)

[Centurion Form](#)

AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE PASSPORT BOOK

Celebrate AVA's 50th Anniversary!

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.

[Order Form](#)

FINANCIALS

If your club is on a calendar year, Annual Financials Reports, e-Postcard filings, and Officer Updates (ESR update) are due by May 15, 2026. Please submit a copy of your filings to marian@ava.org.

May 15th, 2026 – The following items are due:

- E-post card must be filed with the IRS and a copy provided to AVA HQ.
- Club's Annual Financial Report is due to the AVA HQ.
- Update of Officers Information in the ESR must be completed by each club.


Note: Financials for clubs with a fiscal year ending on June 30 are not due until November 15, 2026

IT SPECIALIST - HECTOR HERNANDEZ

SPAM EMAILS

With new technology there are new threats. Spoof emails are becoming more and more sophisticated with how they try and get your information. Emails can be taken by scrapping websites or other hacked systems. Once the attackers have the emails we are vulnerable to their attempts to try and attack our system. Presidents, CEOs, Board Members and Officers are the “Whales” that are the most effected by spoof emails since they are the ones on charge. Please be diligent on spotting these emails as they are a thing that will never go away.

From: Nancy Wittenberg <susan.breen@virginmedia.com>
 To: [REDACTED]
 Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 08:34:54 PM EST
 Subject: Urgent Help Needed For Payment Of Program Expenses

 Henry Rosales <jorge.lopez.g@nube.unadmexico.mx>
 To: You

How to Spot, Deter, and Avoid Spoofed and Spam Emails

Email spoofing and spam remain some of the most common ways attackers attempt to steal credentials, spread malware, or commit fraud. Knowing what to look for—and how to respond—can significantly reduce your risk.

How to Spot Spoofed or Spam Emails

Spoofed and spam emails often share common red flags:

- **Suspicious sender information:** The display name may look legitimate, but the actual email address may be misspelled or come from an unusual domain.
- **Urgent or threatening language:** Messages that demand immediate action (“Act now” or “Your account will be locked”) are designed to bypass careful thinking.
- **Unexpected attachments or links:** Files you weren't expecting or links that don't match the organization's real website are common attack methods.
- **Generic greetings and errors:** Messages beginning with “Dear User” or containing spelling and grammar mistakes are often automated scams.
- **Requests for sensitive information:** Legitimate organizations rarely ask for passwords, payment details, or verification codes via email.

How to Deter Email-Based Attacks

While users play an important role, technical and behavioral defenses help reduce exposure:

- **Use strong email filters and security tools:** Modern spam filters and phishing detection systems drastically reduce malicious emails before they reach inboxes.
- **Keep your computers and phones updated:** Security updates patch vulnerabilities that attackers commonly exploit.

- **Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA):** Even if a password is compromised, MFA can prevent unauthorized access.
- **Learn and report:** Most organizations have a “Report Phishing” option. Reporting helps security teams block similar messages in the future.

How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Prevention ultimately comes down to habits:

- **Pause before clicking:** Take a few seconds to verify links by hovering over them or visiting official websites directly.
- **Verify requests out-of-band:** If an email asks for money or sensitive action, confirm via phone or a trusted internal contact.
- **Never share credentials by email:** No legitimate company will ask for your password or MFA codes via email.
- **Delete or report suspicious messages:** Don't interact with suspicious emails—report them and remove them from your inbox.

Spoofed and spam emails rely on urgency, trust, and inattention. By recognizing warning signs, leveraging available security controls, and practicing cautious habits, you can greatly reduce the risk of falling victim to email-based attacks. Staying alert is one of the simplest and most effective cybersecurity defenses.

50TH ANNIVERSARY PLANNING COMMITTEE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY SIGNATURE EVENTS

It is time to celebrate AVA's 50th! Seventeen events are happening across the U.S., and some are hosted by very small Volkssport clubs who answered National's call to celebrate AVA's 50th, showcase their region and promote our organization both locally, state-wide and nationally. These clubs are going to need assistance with everything from registration to checkpoints to walking with new participants to trail sweeping and maybe even more depending on the location. If you are attending any of the seventeen events and would like to help, please let me know by e-mailing me your full name, event you are planning to attend, and both phone and e-mail information to: Programs@ava.org.

You don't need to specify a position, date, or time right now as we are currently collecting information from the host clubs on the dates, type of positions and shifts needed. Once we have all the information about a club's event, we will be using SignUpGenius to list the event and volunteer positions needed. Once the club event information is entered and confirmed in the system, we will send out a link for SignUpGenius so you can sign up for both a position and time that fits your schedule.



Celebrating 50
Years of Walking



Come Walk WITH US!



Since these events occur over the next 12 months, clubs are still in the planning stages of their anniversary event scheduled for later in the year so look for the monthly Checkpoints, quarterly TAW issues or e-mail blasts from National or the Programs Committee to indicate new events needing volunteers.

Volunteers are the blood of our organization and make any event a success. With volunteers demonstrating the fun, fitness and friendship of our sport at our celebratory events our new first-time walkers will be motivated to join us for future activities, and the 3F's!

If you have any questions, please contact Diane Howell Evans at: programs@ava.org.

AVA 50TH ANNIVERSARY SIGNATURE EVENT – VOLUNTEER WORKER REQUEST

TO: Club President, Event Trailmaster/POC
FROM: Diane Howell Evans, Chair, AVA Programs Committee
SUBJECT: Non-Club Member Assistance Needed at your AVA 50th Signature Event

If you require non-club member volunteer workers for your upcoming AVA 50th Anniversary Signature Event, please contact Diane Howell Evans with the event name, date of event, location of event, volunteer position name (i.e. greeter, start table, finish table, etc.), shift hours (8-10 am, 10-Noon, Noon-2pm, etc.), and any other information you would like to provide.

Please specify in the subject line of your e-mail the text string "Volunteer Worker Request" and forward to: Programs@ava.org.

Hector Hernandez and I will be creating a SignUpGenius volunteer system with the requested positions and shifts for your event. Once we have your club's information, we will send out a blast e-mail with a link recruiting volunteers for your club's event as well as publicize on the AVA web site and in the Checkpoint and TAW.

If any questions or concerns, please contact Diane at Programs@ava.org.

Empire State Capital Volkssporters (ESCV)

MAY NORTHEAST REGION WEEKEND EVENT - CORRECTIONS

May is for Blooming Flowers, Mother's Day, Memorial Day and the 2026 Northeast Weekend, Walk the Story that Changed the World, from May 16th thru 20th. You won't have to worry about traveling far, just to Johnstown, NY and over to Lake George, NY staying in the Georgian Lakeside Resort, Lake George Quality Inn or multiple other chain, Mom and Pop, campsites, etc in this bustling vacation spot for 3-5 less or more nights to be in the middle of everything.

Our weekend starts Saturday in Johnstown with a new 5k walk & a 10k, parade and reenactment of the Patriots storming Johnson Hall. Next we will move to the Lake George area where you will have several walking choices on Sunday: Crown Point(with a scavenger hunt), Ft. Ticonderoga (includes the fort fee) and Ticonderoga. Concluding walks will be Schuylerville on Monday and Tuesday in Lake George Village. Round Lake will be our post walk on Wednesday. 2 bicycle rides will be available: Lake George and Saratoga National Historical Park any time during the weekend event, OSB ONLY.

Did you know that Ticonderoga is famous for the Ticonderoga Pencil #2 and Trekonderoga-tours of sets from the original "Star Trek" television show? We have group rates \$18 for groups of 20. Ft. Ticonderoga entrance discounted rate, \$20 for groups of 12. Don't need to be together when entering sites. Lastly on Tuesday, we are having an historical and scenic cruise on Lake George late afternoon. Need to pay on registration form so we can give names and money ahead of time to each business.



Our weekend event hotel is the Georgian Lakeside Resort in the heart of Lake George, 518 668-5401. All of our convention needs will be held here: registration, stamping, bike sign up, Meet & Greet and Plated Dinner. Check it out at georgianresort.com We also have overflow rooms at Quality In Lake George, 518 685-6055, check out web site pictures, only 1/2 mile from the Georgian. Just mention WALKNE 26 for special rate. Please call the properties directly and not go through the chain number to register.

As the hosting club, we will need many volunteers at Sign In tables, manning the lobby at the hotel for registration, questions asked and answered, weather, directions to walks, etc. Chris Yost is our Volunteer Coordinator and Louis Remillard is in charge of Registration.

We are hoping some of our clubs retired walkers will attend and volunteer to sit at a table and visit with the attendees, volunteer to help with stamping or one of the many other ways to help out. We'd love to see each and everyone of you. You are thought of often and are missed.

Our registration is OPEN NOW at ESCVWALKS.org. Click on the Northeast Logo. **Registration closes April 30, 2026.**

Committee Members: Lea Darling, Teresa Kennedy, Wayne Knapp, Kathy Mack Louise Remillard and Chis Yost.

NATIONAL EVENTS

You're invited to roundup for our 3-day international walk fest known as the:

Texas Trail Roundup

February 20-22, 2026

A premier three-day international walking festival hosted in the beautiful city of San Antonio, Texas. Each year, walkers from around the world come together to explore one of America's most historic and culturally rich cities on foot.



[Click here to go to 50th Anniversary Page](#)

Come and join us for the 25th US FreedomWalk
16-18 October 2026

An International Walking Experience

40th Annual Spring Volksmarch
June 6, 2026

Logos for Walk Arlington, IML, and America's Walking Club are also present.

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.



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