

Please provide YOUR Newsletter Inputs—
 Travel, Comment, Pictures, Topics
 to Dan Barnett at
dnlcssb@aol.com

Upcoming walks this quarter:
 January 1, 3, 17 & 31, February 7 & 21, March 7 & 21
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MID-FLORIDA MILERS NEWSLETTER

Comments from the President

by Cathy Metherell, President

Happy New Year, Thank You, and Part 3 Epic Journey Across the Country

I hope you all had a nice holiday and are ready to start the New Year walking. Is it really 2026?

To those of you who volunteered to make Walk Around Florida 34 a success, I say thank you. To those of you who participated, thank you as well.

Now on to part three of my epic journey across the country. As I pulled out of the parking lot after my last convention walk, I thought about the conversation I had with the receptionist at the hotel when I checked in about how bright the sun was outside when I arrived. She said to me how much she appreciated an overcast day because the brightness of the sun can be intense at times. While I was in Las Cruces, every day was sunny with a few clouds. By the end of the week, I was missing the tropical foliage I was used to in Orlando.

As I was driving through southwest New Mexico, I felt the wind buffeting my car and I was hoping not to encounter a dust storm. This area of New Mexico is flat as a pancake with the ongoing drought it was getting hazy the further west I drove. As I crossed the state line into Arizona the sky started to clear and I began to see Saguaro, a large tree like cactus that can live up to 200 years. The closer to my hotel in Scottsdale the more cacti I saw. After checking in I rested for a while before going to see my cousin and her husband who live nearby. My cousin made a nice dinner, and we talked for several hours catching up on our lives.

The next day was a Sunday, I woke at 4 AM to do laundry before anyone else did. After I finished, I headed to Sedona, AZ to do the walk there. I was amazed at the red rock formations I saw on my way to and from the walk and during the walk. Sedona walk is very hilly with some steep hills on the first 2ks of the walk. Then it flattened out before going back down the hill. It was an overcast day with a few sprinkles near the end of the walk. A few cacti were blooming. One of the rocky formations was called Snoopy rock and yes it looks like Snoopy laying on his doghouse. At the end of the walk, I went through the town and all I can say is one should leave one's credit card in the car. There was a guy with a few reptiles showing them to the public. I was able to hold a Sudan plated lizard native to Sudan. After the walk I had lunch and then went on a Pink Jeep tour along a steep rocky mountain road. One needed 4-wheel drive, otherwise it was walk or bike up the mountain side. This walk and the Jeep tour were one of the highlights of my journey.



Before going to visit my cousin the next day, I did the walk in Scottsdale, AZ. Once again, it was a nice walk with lots of flowers blooming. Some of the flowers were Palo Verde, Oleander, Bougainvilleas, Tacoma, to name a few. There is a



mountain that resembles a camel and it is called Camelback Mountain that I saw during the walk. I could see it from my hotel room too. I lucked out with coolish weather as the week before the greater Phoenix area had its first 100 degree days for the year. After the walk I met up with my cousin again for the afternoon and early evening before going back to my hotel. Scottsdale reminds me somewhat of Central Florida and if it was not so far from the ocean I could live there. The parking lot at the walk start point was covered with solar panels.



The next day was somewhat cool in the morning as I was departing Scottsdale. I headed out of Scottsdale by traveling on Interstate 17 and had driven about two hours, when the traffic came to a complete stop. I could see smoke ahead. Next thing, a firetruck was trying to make its way through the traffic. After a while traffic started moving again and I passed a pickup truck that had burned. The truck had been pulling an RV that they were able to unhook from the truck before it burned. It suddenly felt cold inside the car as I was approaching Flagstaff, and I saw the outside temperature was 34 degrees. I noticed snow on the tops of a few mountains. As I was getting onto Interstate 40, I thought I saw a few snow flurries. I stopped for lunch in Kingman, AZ before heading down the highway to Las Vegas. As I was driving through a mountain pass a bad thunderstorm passed over. It was nice to remember the enjoyable vacation I had with Allen as we drove down that same highway when we visited the southwest in 2006.

I checked into my hotel in Las Vegas and decided I needed a quiet relaxing evening in the room. The next day I went to do the Hoover Dam walk. The first part of the walk I took a winding path up the side of a hill to Interstate 11 pedestrian path



to view the dam. At one point on the bridge, I stood with one foot in Nevada and the other foot in Arizona. Next, I headed down to the dam which was part of the walk. As I walked across the dam I was in awe of all the engineering that went into its construction. There is signage along the route with information about construction of the I-11 bridge and the Hoover dam. I looked out over Lake Mead behind the Dam to see what is called the bathtub ring when the lake was the last time at full pool in 1999. The Lake is at 33 percent capacity as of now, mostly due to the ongoing drought. I could tell the water level was down quite a lot from when Allen and I visited the dam. There was hardly any vegetation around the dam.



Next day after checking out of my hotel I headed to do the Sunset Park walk. I saw Palo Verde trees, orange trumpet vines, weeping willow trees, and cactus to name a few. There were a lot of birds, geese, swans, rabbits and lizards. I saw a replica of an Easter Islands statue in the middle of a lake. The park was a farm at one time, and a landscape crew was planting native plants in one area. Areas had sports facilities like pickle ball, volleyball, and children's playground. The park was just southeast of the airport, and I saw a few airplanes coming in to land.



I headed out of Las Vegas grateful that today would be the last of a long drive on my cross-country adventure. As I was leaving, I saw snow on top of a mountain. I noticed a very bright light on one side of the road and when I passed it, I saw it was a large field of solar panels. Once again, I saw very little foliage and wondered how a city like Las Vegas can survive this climate. I stopped at a rest stop that had a short walking trail with information signs about wildlife and plants of the Mojave Desert. I had lunch at the Mad Greek in Baker CA. home to the world's tallest

thermometer. It was 91 degrees and a lot cooler than when Allen and I stopped here. At that time, it was 118 degrees. As I drove through the Cajon Mountain pass, I drove over the San Andreas Fault. I was ever so happy to arrive at Allen's brother's and his wife's house where I would be staying for the rest of my journey. They live on a hillside with a view of the Pacific Ocean in Laguna Beach.

After breakfast the next day I headed out to do the Laguna Beach walk. The start point was a very nice high-end market which I browsed through before heading out to the trail. This is a remote start walk. First part of the walk is along Pacific Coast Highway (PCH). Next the walk took me through a neighborhood where I saw flowers

blooming everywhere. Then I walked through the city center of Laguna



Beach. This is another place where one should leave credit cards behind. The sky was clear, however as I walked closer to the ocean it was very foggy and a bit humid. I was back on the PCH for a pit stop before I headed to the beach portion of the walk. I walked along the beach for a while until it became too rocky for my liking. So, I headed to a walking trail above the rocky beach. There were people making their way through the rocks while waves were coming in. I saw lantanas and cactus in bloom and a statue of a whale. Before heading back up to PCH to finish, I took



time to look out over the Pacific Ocean.



I headed back to the house where I had lunch with Allen's brother and wife where we sat out on their deck for some time talking about Allen and their family. Allen and his brother are very much alike. Later in the evening, we had dinner with one of Allen's nieces and her family. Then, I went with her to watch her twin boys play flag football and

their team won. The weather was a bit cool that evening.

The next day was a Saturday and Allen's niece picked me up and we drove to Newport Beach so I could do that walk and the boys could go to Balboa Fun Zone. They all accompanied me on the walk until we reached the fun zone, and I continued on my own. I saw more flowers blooming on this walk and lot of boats in the harbor going back and forth. This walk included a short ferry ride to Newport Beach. I continued walking, making my way to Balboa Pier which was fairly long. To get to the water from the beach, one had to slide down



sandy cliffs. The sand is orange and there was a fair amount of kelp



seaweed in the water. I met up with my family, and we walked back to the start point.

We drove back to the house and had lunch. The place Allen's brother lives has a private beach so we walked down to the beach where I waded in the Pacific Ocean up to my knees. The water was very cold. In the evening, we had another family dinner, and they showed me a video of Allen and his siblings when they were children. I have the video on my phone so I can watch it again.

The next day was Mother's Day, so they took Mom out for lunch. I had plans to meet up with two friends who live north of Los Angeles. We met up at a restaurant that reminded me of Logan's Roadhouse where you throw peanut shells on the floor. My friends and I talked for three hours which was another highlight of my trip.

The next day was my last day for walking, so I to headed to San Juan Capistrano. The weather was cool and humid when I started and warm and humid when I finished. This walk started out across from Mission San Juan Capistrano which was closed on Mondays. First mile was on a multi-use trail that was up hill on a minor incline. Next mile and a half the walk took me down a long street with houses on the left and several equestrian

centers on the right. I saw a couple of horses along the road. Once again there were a lot of cacti and flowers blooming along the way. I passed a couple of eucalyptus trees with rainbow colored bark along the trail. The end of the walk passed through a street with shops and cafes. I had hot green tea at one of the cafes. I made a stop at a small mission church at the end of the walk.



It was time to head back to the house to spend the rest of my time with family. Allen loved sunflowers so I stopped at the nice market and bought some to take to Allen's brother and his wife for letting me stay with them. We spent the afternoon on the deck enjoying the view. I had a nice dinner with everyone. Another highlight of the trip was talking about Allen with his family.

It was hard to believe the last day of my cross-country journey was here. I had the best sleep--hearing the waves at night. After breakfast, I packed up and then walked down to the beach to go for a walk and then sat out on the deck. I said my goodbyes and headed to the airport to drop my rental car off and take a shuttle to my gate. I have always heard how bad LAX airport is, however, I

had a good experience with the checking in. I had dinner before going to the gate for my overnight flight back to Orlando. The plane was at 50% capacity, so I had three seats to myself. It was a smooth flight back across the country and landed 30 minutes early. At one point I looked out toward the coast and thought those mountains looked nice, then I realized they were clouds out over the Atlantic. I was thankful to be home and retirement life was about to begin.

It was an amazing journey across the country. Some things I observed were in no particular order.

1. Every state has crazy lawyer billboards, and I watched some local news where I saw advertising for said lawyers.
2. The worst drivers I encountered, sad to say, are in Florida.
3. I met some really nice people at every stop.
4. It was nice to see walkers I had met at walks in the past.
5. The one thing that I will always remember is the beautiful drive.
6. I will never forget seeing the peaceful blooming flowers.
7. Family time
8. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the clubs for the nice walks.

The story of my journey has come to an end and I hope it has inspired you to write your own walking story for a future newsletter.

Membership Report by Dave Piatt, Membership Chairperson

As of 12/18/25 we have 40 memberships and 59 members. This compares to 51 memberships and 74 members as of 12/18/24.

Membership continues to be down compared to last year. Now is a great time to be walking, so be sure to encourage others to walk with us. It is a great way to start the new year and to burn off some of those holiday calories.

Routes and Trails Topics by Dan Barnett, Routes and Trails

Happy New Year! I want to thank all of the Mid-Florida Milers who volunteered their time at our very successful WAF 34!

The quarter of January 1 through March 30 has many exciting volksmarching events planned. Include are three Traditional Events.

The Traditional Events take place in Split Oak Forest, Lake Apopka Loop Trailhead, and Taveres.

I hope to see you at all of our great walks this quarter.

MFM Club Officers/Committees	
President	Cathy Metherell
Vice President	Paul Erickson
Secretary	Sharon Axelrod
Treasurer	Dan Barnett
Newsletter	Dan Barnett
Membership	Dave Piatt
Publicity	Veronica Palacios
Routes and Trails	Dan Barnett
Operations Support	John Hunter/Tom Carter
YRE Coordinator	Jenny Thomas
Volunteer Coordinator	Sharon Axelrod
Website	Dave Piatt

Walk Information

Q1 Mid-Florida Milers Walks		
1 Jan	Universal Drive, Miller's Ale House	8:30-9:15 am
3 Jan	The Villages/Spanish Springs, TownePlace Suites	9:00-9:30 am
17 Jan	Split Oak Forest	8:30-9:15 am
31 Jan	Orlando South	8:30-9:15 am
7 Feb	I Drive, Comfort Inn & Suites	8:30-9:15 am
21 Feb	Lake Apopka Trailhead	8:30-9:15 am
7 Mar	Maitland, Walgreens	8:30-9:15 am
21 Mar	Taveras	8:30-9:15 am

DATE	Q1 Other Florida Upcoming Traditional Events	REGISTER
1 Jan	First Coast Trail Forgers, Jacksonville Beach, 503 1 st N Jacksonville Beach, 5/10K walk.	Register 7:30am, walk at 8:00am
10 Jan	First Coast Trail Forgers, Guana Park, Ponte Vedra Beach, 505 Guana River, Ponte Vedra Beach, 5/10K walk.	Register 8:30am, walk at 9:00am
17 Jan	First Coast Trail Forgers, American Beach, Burney Park, 95570 Burney Blvd, Amelia Island, 7/10K.	Register 8:30am, walk at 9:00am
31 Jan	First Coast Trail Forgers, Cradle Creek Preserve, Jacksonville Beach, 2514 S Beach Pkwy, Jacksonville Beach, 7/10K walk.	Register 7:30am, walk at 8:00am

14 Feb	Happy Wanderers, Edgewater Rotary Park, 902 W Park Ave, Edgewater, 13/25K guided bike ride.	Register 9:00am
21 Feb	First Coast Trail Forgers, Fort George, 11241 Fort George Rd, Jacksonville, 5/10K walk.	Register 8:30am, walk at 9:00am
28 Feb	Happy Wanderers, Palatka, 201 N 1 st St, Palatka, 5/10 guided walk.	Register 10:00am
14 Mar	Happy Wanderers, Lyonia Preserve, 2150 Eustace Ave, Deltona, 5/10 walk.	Register 9:00am
14 Mar	First Coast Trail Forgers, University of North Florida, UNF Parking Lot 18, Section F2, Jacksonville, 5/10 walk.	Register 7:30am, walk at 8:00am
For information on other group walks in Central Florida, please visit (click on) the below club's websites or Facebook pages		
Happy Wanderers Happy Wanderers Walking Club Webpage Happy Wanderers Facebook Page		
First Coast Trail Forgers First Coast Trail Forgers Walking Club Webpage		
Suncoast Sandpipers Suncoast Sandpipers Webpage Suncoast Sandpipers Facebook Page		

MFM Member Milestone Achievements			
Name	City	Events	Distance
Tom Carter	Winter Park	1200	
John Hunter	Orlando	525	
Courtesy The American Wanderer , December 2025			

YRE Walk	YRE Walk Monitor	YRE Walk Sponsor
Celebration #1	Howard Daughtrey	Jenny Thomas
Celebration #2	Howard Daughtrey	Veronica Palacios
Maitland	Tom Carter	Rosemary/Ron Barna
Orlando Downtown	JoAnne Cross	Paul Erickson
Orlando North	John Hunter	John Hunter
Orlando South	JoAnne Cross	Sharon Axelrod
Orlando I-Drive	Paul Erickson	JoAnne Cross
Orlando Disney Springs	Paul Erickson	Letty/Bob Zook
Orlando Universal	Paul Erickson	JoAnne Cross
The Villages - Lake Sumter Lndg	Jan Van Vlack	None
The Villages - Spanish Springs	Jan Van Vlack	None
Winter Park	Michael Kirchner	Howard Daughtrey
Delray Beach	Online	Dan/Nancy Barnett
Ft Lauderdale	Online	None
Key West	Online	Sharon Predham
Miami Beach	Online	Cathy Metherell
West Palm Beach	Online	Dan/Nancy Barnett

AVA Board Chairman Message by Carl Cordes, AVA Board Chairman

Happy Holidays from AVA's St. Nick. LOL

I trust everyone had an enjoyable Thanksgiving and I am especially thankful for the generous donations to the 2025 Big Give campaign. I hope you have opportunities to attend some of the special holiday walks clubs offer each year with family and friends.

As you will see throughout this issue AVA turns 50 next year and we are planning lots of celebrations in every region. As you plan on attending these events that are local to you, please make an extra effort to bring new walkers from your community. Find ways and places to advertise the events such as community centers, senior centers, bulletin boards, etc. Talk up America's Walking Club and introduce them to fun, fitness, and friendship. They will sustain the future of the organization.

We've all been on a walk and someone says "what is this all about?" and we give our best elevator speech. But it's even better when you can give them a card that shares our purpose, mission and contact information to find out more about our events. Do you have business cards to hand out? Did you know a template is available on the AVA web site? Go to American Volkssport Graphics and Logos and next to last item is a business card template you can customize with your name and local information.

How do you spread the word about our sport? Submit your stories for a future issue of TAW.

BIG GIVE FUNDRAISER SUCCESS SPARKS JOY AND GRATITUDE - \$91,360 RAISED! by AVA Staff

Thank you again to all our Club Donors, Business Donors, Individual Donors, Family Members and Friends. Your continued support is much appreciated and inspirational to all who love the AVA.

As our small way of thanking Donors who contributed to The Big Give campaign, we are going to mail them a postcard that has two complimentary walk coupons. The AVA National Office requests that all clubs please honor these coupons. The AVA will credit Clubs \$2.00 for each redeemed coupon. Clubs will not pay the AVA the \$2.00 participation fee for these coupons.

These coupons are valid for any YRE, Seasonal, and Traditional walk. The value of each coupon is the equivalent of \$4.00 for walk fees. If your club charges more than \$4 for a walk (some clubs may charge more than \$4.00 for a Traditional Walk), the participant will have to pay the difference after \$4.00 is deducted. The participant must give the coupon to the club during registration or leave it in the walk box. The coupons will expire March 31, 2026.

In order for clubs to receive the \$2.00 credit for each walk coupon they must submit the coupons to the National Office by scanning and emailing a copy of all coupons to marian@ava.org, or by mailing the coupons to the American Volkssport Association, 1032 S. Alamo St., San Antonio, TX 78210. Clubs must submit all coupons by April 31, 2026, and may not be duplicated. Redeemed coupons will be credited on the 2026, 2 quarter club invoices. The Big Give walk coupons are not reported on the quarterly reports. Should you have any questions contact Marian.

CELEBRATING AVA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH WALK THAT STARTED IT ALL – FREDERICKSBURG TX by AVA Staff

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of AVA: America's Walking Club, the annual Texas Trail Roundup (TTR), February 20-22, 2026, will feature the historic first volkswalk in the United States in Fredericksburg, TX. The event will take place the first day of the TTR, Friday, February 20th, with visitors walking through this historic city about 70 miles northwest of San Antonio, TX. Buses will be available to take participants from San Antonio.

The Texas Trail Roundup is celebrating its 6th year as an IML (International Marching League) walking festival in San Antonio, Texas. The three-day event is one of two IML events in the United States, and is one of the 17 signature events commemorating AVA's 50th birthday. Each day will offer a different schedule of walks featuring some of the most beautiful areas of the region. Here's a sample:

- Friday February 20 – the Anniversary Walk will take place in the beautiful city of Fredericksburg, located in the Hill Country of Texas. Participants can either take the bus from the host hotel in San Antonio, or drive yourself. We'll parade down the street to the Adelsverein covered pavilion, where the grand opening ceremony will welcome everyone. The 5K and 10K walks begin afterward, followed by wine samples from Augusta Vin (Fredericksburg is the epicenter of the Texas wine country, with over 75 wineries and vineyards that produce award-winning wines). We'll also have live entertainment, a food truck and refreshments. The buses will return you to San Antonio that afternoon. See the tentative schedule [here](#)
- Saturday February 21 features various walks to choose from, walking south along the River Walk. For IML participants, choose either the 42K (marathon) or the 21K (half-marathon), where you will visit all four Spanish Missions, a UNESCO world heritage area. 10K walkers visit the Mission Concepcion, the Blue Star Art Complex, and the King William District, where there are several good restaurants. 5K walkers will mostly walk in the King William District and the Blue Star Art Complex. Walks start at the Springhill Suites in downtown San Antonio, and end at the AVA national headquarters. Upon returning you'll get free drinks from The Jewel, free mini-churros at Churrostar, and more.
- Sunday February 22 begins with three walks to choose from along the San Antonio River Walk: 21K visits the Pearl, a historic mid-town community of shops and restaurants (where Pearl Beer was once brewed) and their weekend outdoor market; Japanese Tea Garden – 5 acres of lush year-round floral displays with stone bridges, 60-foot waterfall and ponds filled with koi; and parts of downtown and King William. The 12K will take you along the river to the Pearl; and the 5K visits the river downtown. The walk starts at the Springhill Suites downtown, and ends at the Beethoven Maennerchor, where the closing ceremony will finish the festival

Registration is available now for the Texas Trail Roundup. There is also a special hotel rate at the SpringHill Suites San Antonio Downtown/Riverwalk Area of \$125 per night. Must book by January 30, 2026.

We also have a special Golden Boot Award, which is given to the military unit, active reserve guard, ROTC, or Veteran group with the most members who complete the 42K Missions Marathon Walk on Saturday. The winning unit gets their unit name on an engraved golden boot trophy. Contact Amanda Jauregui at amanda@ava.org for details, and to register for this special award.

There is so much to discover in San Antonio, the 7th largest city in the United States, with the largest concentration of Spanish colonial architecture in North America. Come early or stay late to enjoy its history, culinary cuisine, arts, museums and more.

We hope you can join us February 20-22, 2026 for the annual IML Texas Trail Roundup in San Antonio.

A LITTLE BIT OF AVA HISTORY – CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF AMERICA'S WALKING CLUB by AVA Staff

In 1975, the Reverend Kenn Knopp, a Fredericksburg, Texas native, attended a church meeting in Rome and detoured on his way home to visit his aunt and uncle in Germany. They were avid walkers and walked with him around town. Although Kenn was in his early 40's, he was overweight and out of shape. His walking tour drove him to his bed. His uncle and aunt told him he should do something about his condition and that walking was the best all-around way to achieve it. They also told him that there was a walking club in town and showed him a poster promoting the IVV. Kenn contacted the club, who referred him to the IVV President, Herr Gunther Hartmetz.

Upon his return to Fredericksburg, Kenn wrote Herr Hartmetz about having a walk in Fredericksburg as part of the American Bicentennial (Kenn was on the town's bicentennial committee). Without having participated in a volksmarch, Kenn and a small group organized a walk fest on June 12-13, 1976. The walks (6 and 12 miles, not Kilometers) started at the Vereins Kirche in the Marketplatz, the first public building in Fredericksburg, built in 1847. About 230-235 walkers participated.

They formed the first volksmarch club in the U.S., Volkssportverein Friedrichsburg, #001. The club is still in existence, with 9 YREs and several traditional events annually.

After this first volksmarch in the US, Kenn returned to Germany and participated in one in Europe. Known as "The Founding Father of Volkssporting in the U.S.", Kenn died in 2013 and is buried in Fredericksburg, TX. His gravesite is on the Cemetery YRE route.

For further information on the early days of volkssporting in the US, Charlene Agne-Traub's "History of Volkssporting in the U.S.A. 1976-1989" is recommended.

AVA SPECIAL PROGRAMS USA/AVA ANNIVERSARY HURRAH by Terry Lunghofer

The USA-AVA Anniversary Hurrah is a new Special Program starting in 2026 – The 250th Anniversary of the USA and the 50th of the AVA. Due to the uniqueness of the anniversary years, this program will only run from January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026, with completed books redeemed by December 31, 2027. This program is designed to emphasize the entire history of both the USA and the AVA, not just the events around 1776 or 1976. Each of us has our own sense of the history that we wish to celebrate: It could be the men elected to office, the conflicts we've had, the geography we celebrate, the evolution of transportation, the trails and waterways followed, the arts we preserve, the culture we wish to know better, the schools and the museums which preserve history, the events of the 23 remaining AVA clubs from the original 100, the 181 still sanctioned YRE/Sea events of the original 250, the sites of our first 22 national biennial conventions, or all of the expired special programs which you missed. The sub-program you wish to accomplish within this Special Program is your choice. Space has been provided within the record book for recording your personal selected sub-program(s) or you

may devise your own. Complete twenty-five (25) events to receive an embroidered patch reflecting the national geography highlighted in the Song “America the Beautiful”. Every AVA sanctioned event: Traditional, YRE, SEA, or guided walk, is a qualifying event. You may complete 25 different events or you can complete a single event 25 times if your geography is isolated. Each stamp impression must be paid for and completed at a separate time. Since many locations may not have a sanctioned event which goes by a site you wish to see or visit, complete the closest event which is available and visit the true site before or after.

You will find descriptions of all AVA sanctioned events, both traditional and YRE/SEA, at the website ava.org under the Find an Event tab. Revisiting this site often is recommended as new events may be sanctioned which celebrate an individual club’s version of history. Please visit the website: falconwanderers.org, to find links giving some ideas for a sub-category for emphasis; for a list of all AVA Special Programs since 1991; for the remaining clubs of the first 100 sorted by club number and by state; and for the remaining walks of the first 250 YRE/SEAs.

This Special Program is hosted by Falcon Wanderers Volkssport Association in Colorado Springs. The books have been available since November 1, 2025. Mail your book request, and a check for \$14 payable to Falcon Wanderers, to the Falcon Wanderers, c/o Terry Lunghofer, P.O. Box 17162, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-7162. Please include your mailing address and email address with your request. For more information, contact Terry Lunghofer at tlunghofer0031@gmail.com or 719-597-4307 (H). We built something special: award-winning publicity for consecutive years - thank you to the talents of our late son-in-law, Martin Britton. We grew to 200+ members, and our walk events were filled with laughter, community, and purpose. I had the honor of serving as Deputy Regional Director for six years under John McClellan, Kathryn King, and meeting many wonderful walkers throughout the Southeast.

WALK AROUND FLORIDA by Jeannie Stokes, AVA SE Regional Director

The 34th Walk Around Florida was November 8-10, 2025. Walks were held in Kissimmee, St. Cloud, and Celebration, Florida, plus a swim event. The theme this year was “Celebrating Walking and Walkers.”

Between 90-100 people attended from 10 states across six AVA Regions, and as far away as Alaska. Special guests were AVA Board Chair, Southeast RD Jeanne Stokes, and DRD Mike Lanpher. A Award was a stemless wine glass.



WAF 34 (KISSIMMEE AREA) by D J Moore

What an enjoyable weekend in central Florida! The Suncoast Sandpipers, Mid-Florida Milers, and Happy Wanderers hosted a set of 4 walks and a swim in delightful, possibly a bit humid weather. The first event was hosted at the American Legion Post 10 directly on Lake Tohopekaliga. What a delightful setting. I started late having done a local YRE in the morning. Several others had not started either for various reasons. I saw many walkers that I knew throughout the walk, walked awhile with a few, and thoroughly enjoyed the historic buildings and colorful murals. There were several Walk with America's Veteran memorials and an amazing, one-of-a-kind Monument of States memorial within a block of the finish. Walk #2 was hosted in a parking lot, which worked out fine, despite annoyance to our hosts. I walked the 10K with Lou Albrecht, whom I met numerous years ago at an event in the Jacksonville area. The St Cloud Walk was enjoyable--2 areas exceptionally noteworthy were the nicely landscaped sidewalks safely laid out within the road medians. We walked out to Dan Tarrell Memorial Point, seeing only one alligator. I found a very large Apple Snail shell.... HAPPY! The walk continued along Lake George and soon we were encountering hordes of runners and walkers participating in some kind of endurance event; possibly the reason our walk start was relocated. The final stretch of the walk was thru the historic downtown area of St Cloud, full of brightly colored murals, some depicting history as well.

I walked the Celebration 6K with my roommate and another friend. We were totally excited about its location to our hotel. This provided time to return from the walk and get cleaned up for the dinner at Ford's Garage. Celebration is a planned community with gorgeous newer homes. It is centered between a few lakes and a golf course but not far off Hwy 192. We walked trails and boardwalks around the lake and streets passing nice parks. We also saw a bit of the golf course, but unfortunately; no alligators. We ran into and walked with 3 walkers from TN, one being our SE Regional Director, a very enthusiastic individual. I almost forgot to mention the swim which could be done at our hotel or a local pool that charged. OK, it WAS cold! But we managed to get done and truthfully, once you completed a lap, the cold did not bother you. I guess you just get used to it, or maybe the \$7 at the local pool helped.

We culminated the weekend with a 5K at Shingle Creek and Pioneer Village. We were the first ones out of the gate, literally. We faced a 7+ hour drive home. Gosh was this a nice area with walking paths throughout the entire walk along with a few wooden bridges. We saw birds, squirrels, and other walkers. We circled the entire Pioneer Village, which was not open this early on a Sunday, but you could still get pictures of most of the buildings. The backside of the village was considered a wildlife walk. We finished, despite my partner's issues with the humidity and hit the road for a safe, but long ride home.

This is an annual event hosted the end of October or beginning of November every year. It will be in Bradenton in 2026.

SNUG - A FREE DAILY CHECK-IN APP CREATED BY A VOLKSWALKER! by Jan Van Vlack

Hi, Fellow Volkswalkers. I know many of you from Volkswalking over the years, mostly in and around Indiana, Ohio, and Florida. And several years ago, we did the AVA 401K Invest in Your Health Program together.

Today, I want to tell you about Snug, a simple FREE daily check-in app for people living by themselves. Nine years ago I was hit in the head by a pickleball, slammed at me by an aggressive player. Being a retired Registered Nurse, I knew when I awoke the next morning I'd had a seizure. Luckily, I had awakened... but I might not have. Living alone, this really bothered me. What if I don't wake up one morning? There are products that want you to call or push a button for help. What if I cannot call or

push a button for help? What if I lie there for days before being found? And what would happen to my beloved dog?

I began thinking of a solution that would help people who live alone and wouldn't be able to call for help if something happened—heart attack, stroke, seizure, fall, or any other reason. I imagined a simple app: press one button every morning, and if you don't, your Emergency Contacts get a notification to check on you. It seemed perfect for people who live alone, caregivers supporting someone with disabilities, single parents with young children, or those traveling without their partners.

I contacted a software company building emergency software. I told the CEO my idea for a daily check-in app... press a button, and if you don't, a message goes out. So easy. He listened! He saw the simplicity and peace of mind it could provide. Within a week, the Snug app was developed and tested by friends and other Volkswalkers. It is now nationwide, used by tens of thousands of people every day. It still amazes me that the company listened and turned the idea into something now helping so many people.

We've also added a Dispatch Plan for people who want more peace of mind than a text message, offering phone call notifications and the ability to coordinate a wellness check with local authorities, if needed.

In 2015, a year before Snug, I drove from Central Florida to the AVA Convention in Salem, OR and finished the Continental US and How it works: Capitals along the way. I drove over 12,000 miles, walked over 770 miles, day-after-day, by myself, with no back-up plan other than a nightly text to my children. What comfort and safety Snug's Dispatch Plan would have been... my phone's location signal would have alerted Snug's dispatch service where to find me if I hadn't checked in one morning. In an emergency, Snug could have saved my life. Snug is a natural partner for Volkswalkers and for anyone who needs a reliable daily check-in. Our customers consistently tell us how much peace of mind it gives them, and many lives (and pets') have been saved because of this simple check-in app. Here's how it works:

Free Plan (absolutely free)

1. Download app and set up account with your name, phone number, and email address
2. Choose your check-in time
3. Add Emergency Contacts
4. Check-in every day

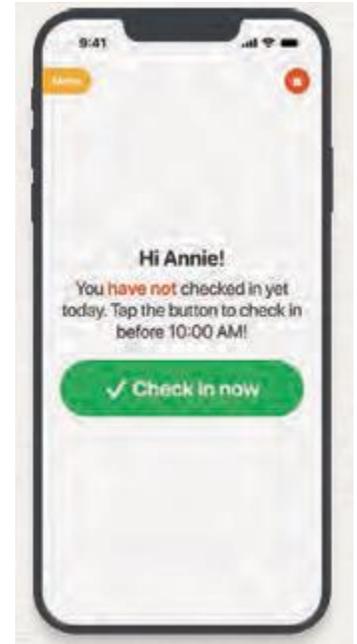
5. If you miss a check-in, Snug will send your emergency contacts a text message with your last known location

Dispatch Plan (\$19.99/month or \$199.99/year)

1. Download app and set up account with your name, phone number, and email address
2. Choose your check-in time
3. Add Emergency Contacts
4. Check-in every day
5. If you miss a check-in and can't be reached, a phone call from a Snug Dispatcher to notify your emergency contacts
6. If no one is reached who can check on you, Snug Dispatcher can request a wellness check on your behalf

You can learn more about Snug at www.snugsafety.com, and you can reach me at jan@snugsafety.com if you have questions, would like to order Snug Postcards, or would like to use this article to tell your Volksmarching Club about Snug.

Happy Trails, and stay safe!



WALKING A FEW THOUSAND STEPS A DAY MAY REDUCE ALZHEIMER'S RISK A new study suggests that exercise can be particularly beneficial for older people at a higher risk for the disease. **Reprinted from the New York Times** by Dana G Smith

Walking a few thousand steps a day can slow cognitive decline in older adults who are at increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, according to research published Monday. Getting about 3,000 to 5,000 daily steps was advantageous compared with doing less physical activity; the benefit peaked around 5,000 to 7,500 steps.

The link between exercise and dementia is well established, and many neurologists say physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce the odds of developing the condition. The new study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, sheds light on what might be playing out in the brain and who could benefit most from exercise.

"We've known for several decades that physical activity is associated with a reduced risk of developing dementia," said Kirk Erickson, the chair of neuroscience at the AdventHealth Research Institute, who was not involved with the research. What the new study has done that is "really quite important and quite unique," he said, is identify how exercise might be influencing some of the proteins implicated in Alzheimer's disease.

The study followed nearly 300 older adults between the ages of 50 and 90 for an average of nine years. None of the participants had cognitive impairment at the start of the study, but about 30 percent had considerable buildup of the protein amyloid-beta in their brains.

This amyloid buildup, often referred to as plaques, is a hallmark of Alzheimer's. But prior research has shown that roughly 10 percent of 50-year-olds, and 44 percent of 90-year-olds, have amyloid plaques without signs of cognitive impairment.

“What differentiates those people from people that do develop cognitive decline over time?” said Dr. Jasmeer Chhatwal, a neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, who led the research. We want to find “base-line characteristics that predict that.”

When the participants enrolled in the study, they received a pedometer that they wore for a week, to establish their average daily step count. They underwent cognitive testing annually and PET scans every few years to look for amyloid plaques and the accumulation of another protein related to Alzheimer’s, called tau.

Researchers think that, in Alzheimer’s disease, amyloid builds up first, and that triggers so-called “tangles” of tau to form inside neurons and spread through the brain. It is primarily those tangles, not the amyloid plaques, that cause brain cells to malfunction, resulting in cognitive impairment.

The number of steps someone took each day didn’t appear to affect their amyloid levels, but it did correlate with the amount of tau tangles they developed and if they experienced cognitive decline. Among the participants with more amyloid in their brains, those who got little to no physical activity developed more tangles and had worse cognition after nine years. Walking 3,001 to 5,000 steps a day corresponded to less tau accumulation and slower cognitive decline. People who took more than 5,000 steps a day fared even better, but getting more than 7,500 steps did not confer an additional benefit.

People with minimal amounts of amyloid in their brains did not see any changes in either tau or cognition related to their step count. Dr. Chhatwal said that may be because those individuals were unlikely to experience significant tau buildup, or cognitive decline, since they didn’t have high levels of amyloid to begin with.

Dr. Erickson cautioned that these results are observational, so it’s possible that another factor explains the connection between physical activity, cognition and tau.

What’s more, because the participants only wore a pedometer for one week at the beginning of the study, their daily step counts could have increased or decreased over the years.

Judy Pa, a professor of neurosciences at the University of California, San Diego, called the new research “fascinating.” But she pointed out that the study included a relatively small number of participants, most of whom were white and well-educated. “Can we replicate it in a multiethnic cohort?” she said.

The number of steps needed to see a benefit is consistent with other research on physical activity in older adults, said Amanda Paluch, an associate professor of kinesiology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who was not involved in the new study. In research she conducted, older adults had a lower risk of dying from multiple different causes if they got roughly 6,000 steps per day.

One way physical activity may protect against cognitive decline is by increasing blood flow to the brain. That keeps neurons oxygenated and nourished so they can function optimally. Improved vascular health can also help the brain rid itself of the toxic proteins that start to accumulate. Exercise reduces inflammation in the brain, too, and inflammation is closely linked to Alzheimer’s.

Virtually everyone who exercises will experience these brain benefits to some degree. But the new research suggests that people who are at the greatest risk of cognitive decline may stand to gain the most.

People with pre-existing amyloid plaques can see an acceleration of disease progression if they're sedentary, Dr. Chhatwal said. "But the good news is that even kind of moderate levels of activity" are protective.

Dana G. Smith is a Times reporter covering personal health, particularly aging and brain health

Pictures Q1 2026

These are from the Q4 events that I took or were provided to me. I urge those that carry cameras (i.e., smartphones) to take and submit pictures of our events and email them to me at dnlcssb@aol.com. Thank You!

4 October at I-Drive



18 October at Spanish Springs

(Sorry no pictures were provided. For future walks, request walkers take pictures and email them to me at dnlessb@aol.com or text to 808.342.8584)

7 November at Kissimmee (WAF 34)



Club Banners



Registration



Registration



Registration



Brenda, Carl (AVA Board Chair)



Cathy, Carl, Brenda, Mike (AVA IT Tech)



Cathy, Carl (AVA Board Chair)



Cathy, Dan, Jan, John



Check Point



Check Point



Egret



Dina, John, Howard



Tom, Paul, Cathy, Jeannie, Bill



Cathy presenting Letter of Appreciation to Joseph Marcheggiani, American Legion Commander



Cathy presenting Letter of Appreciation to Jocelyn Leon, Hotel Point of Contact

8 November at St Cloud (WAF 34)



Registration



Registration



Registration



Tom, Paul



Welcome to St Cloud



8 November at WAF 34 BBQ





Carl, Brenda



Fred, John



Charlotte

8 November at Celebration



8 November at WAF 34 Banquet



Bill, Jeannie, John





Jan, Sharon, Joyce



Susan, Kevin



Mid-Florida Milers



Cathy presenting Letter of Appreciation to Ford's Garage Manager



Mike, Joan

9 November at Shingle Creek (WAF 34)



Sharon, Jenny, Cathy



Registration



Registration



Jeannie, Mark, Paul



Sharon, DJ





Cathy, Jeannie, Bill



Joyce, Jan



Joan, Mike

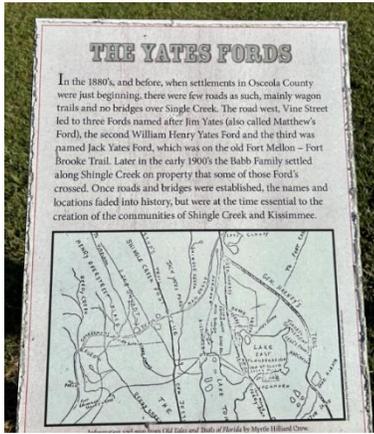


Mark



Mike Green





Check Point



Check Point



John, Jenny



Finish Table



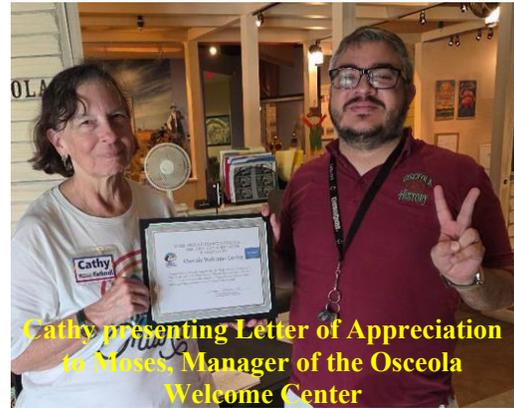
Bill Finished his 100th Walk



Happy Wanderers attending WAF 34



Members of the Mid-Florida Milers
Welcome to
WAF34
A Walking Celebration!



Cathy presenting Letter of Appreciation
to Moses, Manager of the Osceola
Welcome Center

15 November at Lake Sumter



Joyce, Jan



Sharon, Paul, Fred



Paul





Paul, Sharon, Fred

28 November at Celebration



John, Paul, Sharon, Tom



6 December at Disney Springs



Registration



Registration





John, Sharon, Paul at Horse named Saratoga

20 December at Winter Park



Registration



Registration



Cathy, Bernadette



Dave, Paul, Michael



Fred, Sheila



Jackie, Bernadette,
Michael, Donna



Cathy, Tom, Sharon



John, Paul, Pete, Sharon, Jackie



Howard



Sharon, Paul, Jackie, John



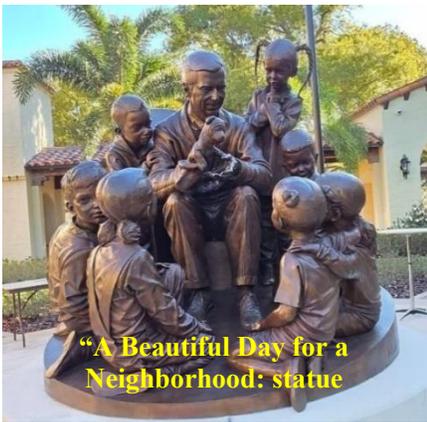
Dan, Pete, Jackie, John, Paul, Sharon



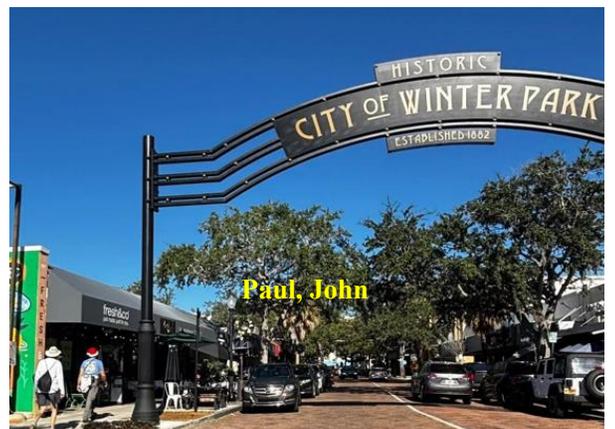
Sharon, Paul, Jackie, John, Dan, Pete



Pete, Jackie, Sharon, John



"A Beautiful Day for a Neighborhood: statue



Sharon, Howard, Cathy, Donna, Bernadette, Michael



Sheila, Paul, John, Jackie

