

Please provide YOUR Newsletter Inputs—  
 Travel, Comment, Pictures, Topics  
 to Dan Barnett at  
[dnlcssb@aol.com](mailto:dnlcssb@aol.com)

**Upcoming walks this quarter:**  
 April 4 & 18, May 2, 16 & 30, June 6 & 20  
 See Page 4

# MID-FLORIDA MILERS NEWSLETTER

## Comments from the President

by Cathy Metherell, President

A Meeting, Sponsorship and a Brief History of Notable Walkers and Milestones.

As this colder than normal winter gives way to spring, I am happy to see yellow Tabebuia trees blooming around the area. After driving around Orlando looking at freeze dried trees for a month and a half, I took a Sunday drive to Venice, FL. where I enjoyed seeing tropical trees in all their spring glory. The flowers and trees I saw were Tabebuia, Hibiscus, Bougainvillea and several species of Palms. The weather was perfect for walking, with a nice westerly breeze from the Gulf. Thank you to the Suncoast Sandpipers for this beautiful walk. Here are some pictures I took while on this beautiful walk.



After writing about my wonderful walk in Venice, I would like to address our upcoming annual meeting. The Mid-Florida Milers annual meeting will be held Saturday May 16th at Beardall Senior Center with a potluck lunch and meeting to follow. The walk before our lunch and meeting will be a traditional event with a new route taken in old Orlando neighborhoods, passing several lakes and beautiful trees. Please plan on attending our annual meeting. An attendance Sign Up along with a Potluck Sign Up will be on our website so we can guarantee a quorum will be available for the election. If you are unable to attend the meeting in

person, please submit your proxy to Sharon Axelrod at palmtreesax@gmail.com. The Potluck Sign Up will let us know what you are bringing to the lunch, so we have a variety of foods. Our club will provide drinks for the event.

Offices up for election this year are the President and Secretary positions. If you are interested in running for office, please let myself or another club officer know by May 1<sup>st</sup> of your intentions.

I would like to say thank you again to all those who have signed up to sponsor a walk in the past. Please let one of the club officers know if you would like to continue to be a walk sponsor. Several walks still need a sponsor. The cost to sponsor a walk for a year is \$40.00.

As you have read past newsletters, we like to recognize club members for event and distance achievements. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that it is very important for health, longevity and enjoyment that we keep moving every day. As I like to say, "See you out on the trail."

For those of you who attended Walk Around Florida last year, our theme was Celebrate Walking. Below is an article I wrote about notable walkers from around the world.

### **Celebrate Walking** by Cathy Metherell

The Walk Around Florida weekend was all about celebrating Fun, Fitness and Friendship. Walking is a sport one can do anywhere in the world and that is where I would like to start by highlighting a few famous international walkers.

Virginia Woolf said walking was part of her writing process and said, "To walk alone in London is the greatest rest".

Albert Einstein was a super sleeper (more than 10 hours a night) and a devoted walker. It was said the two contributed to his genius in forming his theories on quantum mechanics.

While he was at Christ Collage Cambridge Charles Darwin came to appreciate the natural world. Most

of his life he took three 45-minute walks every day.

Beethoven took pen and paper on his long walks and found nature a form of therapy.

Aristotle conducted lectures while walking the grounds of the Lyceum.

Friedrich Nietzsche said, "All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking." He would walk up to eight hours a day.

Queen Elizabeth took long walks on any one of her estates. Prince William would also join her sometimes.

Now I would like to highlight a few famous United States walkers.

Henry David Thoreau had a passion for the outdoors. Like most of us in this room who keep records of events and distance, Thoreau kept records of his survey work. Some of us take pictures to document on our walks. Thoreau wrote an essay called "Walking".

John Muir "Father of the National Parks" took on a 1000 mile walk from Kentucky to Florida ending in Cedar Key, FL. Muir made his way to San Francisco and explored places that would become National Parks. Like many of us in this room, Muir embraced nature with unbridled enthusiasm. You can thank John Muir for his part in establishing Yosemite National Park. He was also a founding member of the Sierra Club.

The Bartram Trail in NC, SC and GA is named for William Bartram who explored the forests of Florida. He wrote a book about his travels titled Bartram's Travels.

Earl Shaffer was first man to walk the entire Appalachian Trail all in one go in 1948.

Emma Gatewood also known as Grandma Gatewood became the first woman to hike the Appalachian Trail in 1955 and again in 1960 with very little gear. Grandma Gatewood led a campaign to improve the conditions of the trail. I

have read her book Grandma Gatewood's Walk twice.

Peter Jenkins wrote the book A Walk Across America, about his journey from Maine to the Gulf Coast. Jenkins walked within a mile of where my family lived in south Mobile County in Alabama.

William Shuttlewoth walked from his hometown Newburyport Mass. to San Diego to bring awareness for veterans' issues. Walk-in-Mass has a YRE walk in Newburyport Mass.

Matt Green walked every block of all five boroughs of New York City. That was a total of 8000 miles in one place.

Now, I would like to talk about famous Florida walkers.

Former Gov. Lawton Chiles was known as walking Lawton for his 1,003 mile walk from Pensacola to Key West to see what he could do to better the lives of Floridians.

Pat Northey nickname "Trail Queen", former Volusia county councilwoman, is the reason you have nice trails to walk on.

One of the nice things about Celebration are the walking trails throughout the town. Enjoy the two year round events we have there.

Carlton Ward, Mallory Dimmitt, and Joe Guthrie did two walks. One from the Everglades to the Okefenokee Swamp and the second one from Glades county to the Alabama/Florida state line to encourage conservation and the importance of wildlife corridors. There is an underpass for wildlife along I 4 west of US 27 exit. I heard an overpass for wildlife is in the works over I 4 too.

I want to encourage you to continue celebrating walking in your own way. Share your walking experiences with others so they may be encouraged to go walking and find Fun, Fitness and Friendship.

**Membership Report** by Dave Piatt, Membership Chairperson

As of 3/15/26 we have 41 memberships and 60 members. This compares to 50 memberships and 75 members as of 3/15/25.

Membership continues to be down compared to last year. Please come out and join us on some of our upcoming walks where we explore parts of Central Florida.

**Routes and Trails Topics** by Dan Barnett, Routes and Trails

The quarter of April 1 through June 30 has many exciting volksmarching events planned. Include are two Traditional Events.

The Traditional Events take place in Orlando as part of our Annual Membership Meeting, and Eastwood Publix.

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

**NOTE: Beginning with our May walks through September, the registration times changes from 8:30 – 9:15am to**

**8:00 – 8:45am. The exception to this is for the walk at Disney Springs as it does not open until**

<b>MFM Club Officers/Committees</b>	
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

**9:00am and the walks in The Villages. Please visit [midfloridamilers.org](http://midfloridamilers.org) for the registration time for those particular walks.**

## Walk Information

Q2 Mid-Florida Milers Walks		
4 Apr	The Villages/Lake Sumter, The Waterfront Inn	9:00-9:30 am
18 Apr	Celebration #1, Starbucks	8:30-9:15 am
2 May	Disney Springs Orange Parking Garage	8:45-9:30 am
16 May	A Meander through Old Orlando Neighborhoods, Beardall Senior Center	8:00-8:45 am
30 May	Orlando North, Marks Street Senior Center <b>(Note: Club Annual Meeting and Potluck)</b>	8:00-8:45 am
6 Jun	Celebration #1, Starbucks	8:00-8:45 am
20 Jun	Eastwood Publix	8:00-8:45 am

DATE	Q2 Other Florida Upcoming Traditional Events	REGISTER
11 Apr	Happy Wanderers, DeLeon Springs State Park, 601 Ponce DeLeon Blvd, DeLeon Springs, 5/10K walk.	Register 8:30am, walk at 9:00am
11 Apr	First Coast Trail Forgers, Green Cove Springs, 106 St Johns Ave, Green Cove Springs, 5/10K walk.	Register 8:30am, walk at 9:00am
25 Apr	Happy Wanderers, Enterprise, Green Springs Park, 994 Lakeshore Dr, Deltona, 13/20K.Guided Bike	Register 9:30am
25 Apr	First Coast Trail Forgers, Palencia, 154 South End St, Palencia, St Augustine, 7/10K 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 <a href="#">Happy Wanderers Walking Club Webpage</a> <a href="#">Happy Wanderers Facebook Page</a>	
	First Coast Trail Forgers <a href="#">First Coast Trail Forgers Walking Club Webpage</a>	
	Suncoast Sandpipers <a href="#">Suncoast Sandpipers Webpage</a> <a href="#">Suncoast Sandpipers Facebook Page</a>	

MFM Member Milestone Achievements			
Name	City	Events	Distance
Paul Erickson	Orlando	950	
John Hunter	Orlando	500	
Cathy Metherell	Orlando		7000
Fred Sheets	Palm Bay	1600	
Leslie Stone	Ormand Beach	1700/1800	
Bill Stokes	Leesburg	100	
Jeanne Stokes	Leesburg	100	

Courtesy The American Wanderer, March 2026

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

**COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE NEW CLUB MODEL** by Carl Cordes, AVA Board Chairman

The AVA Board of Directors passed a motion proposed by Holly Pelking, Pacific Region, unanimously at our last meeting to form an ad hoc committee to study and make recommendations to the Board for a possible new ‘club’ model. I have appointed Holly as Chair of this committee. There is no intention to eliminate the existing 501c3 club model we have had since our inception. But we are losing clubs aging out and requirements exceeding the capacity of remaining members. Also, we amended our bylaws extending voting and other rights to National Members, but not the right to sanction events. Can that change with a new model that could open events in areas currently underserved?

This new model should be simple, focused on event retention and maintenance of its directions. Possibly an OSB only model that eliminates typical club operation expenses. Can a declining club ‘fold’ into this new model and how? This ad hoc committee will explore new ideas, get feedback from the membership and report to the Board on progress at each meeting. There are questions and details that will need to be addressed such as bylaws, legal standing, financial impact, and any potential unintended consequence. We are accepting additional committee members who are willing to actively work on this study and recommendations; exploring and writing up ideas, talking to those impacted and reporting back; no

passive involvement. The committee chair will also accept and review position papers presented by anyone concerned enough to make the effort.

Are you passionate about moving AVA forward and willing to put in the time, research and effort? Then contact me at [chairman@ava.org](mailto:chairman@ava.org) or Holly at [pa\\_rd@ava.org](mailto:pa_rd@ava.org) and tell us why you want to be on this ad hoc committee. As with all AVA Committees, members will be required to sign NDA, Confidentiality and Work Product Agreements to participate.

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE AMERICAN VOLKSSPORT ASSOCIATION ON YOUR 50 ANNIVERSARY!** by Henry Rosales, President/CEO

As we celebrate 50 remarkable years of this walking organization, I want to take a moment to honor the people who have truly carried us every step of the way — our members, volunteers and supporters.

For five decades, you've been the heartbeat of this organization. You're the ones who map out the routes, organize the walks, greet newcomers, and make every event feel welcoming. You're the planners, the problem-solvers, the early-morning-setup crews, and the friendly faces that turn a simple walk into a lifetime experience.

Your dedication has created more than just events — you've built a community of Fun, Fitness and Friendships. You've helped neighbors meet, helped families explore their cities, and helped countless people discover the joy of our walking movement. Through every walk you design, every event you manage, and every social gathering you host, you've strengthened the communities around you.

Our celebration cannot be whole without recognition of the leadership that guides and supports this great organization. To our current Board Chair, Carl Cordes, and all former Chairs, thank you for the vision and steady direction. To all Board Members, current and former, your commitment and guidance ensure that our mission stays strong and our future stays bright. To our Deputy Directors, your hands-on leadership keeps our programs running smoothly and our volunteers supported. To our Club Officers, Committee Members, Club Members and Volunteers, thank you for the countless hours you invest behind the scenes — planning, coordinating, and making sure every detail is handled with care.

And of course, to our supporters — the partners, sponsors, community leaders, and longtime members who stand with us — your encouragement and belief in our mission has sustained this organization and strengthened our work.

Fifty years is an extraordinary milestone, and it belongs to all of you. Your passion, your time, and your unwavering support have made this organization what it is today.

Thank you for your commitment, your energy, and your generosity. Special thanks to all our clubs who will host an event in celebration of our 50 Anniversary! Cheers to the next fifty years, one step at a time.

## **50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY** by Susan Fine, Chair, Publicity Committee

We've had two celebrations for AVA's 50th Anniversary featured events: Chairman's Anniversary Celebration in Boulder City, NV in January, and Texas Trail Roundup in San Antonio, TX in February. There are 15 more signature events in 2026. These clubs have worked very hard to create walks and socials to highlight the best in their areas; and many coincide with the United States 250th anniversary. We hope you can attend many of these events; or at least a few in your area. As a reminder, here's the list of the remaining anniversary festivals. You can also get more info at: [ava.org/50th-anniversary](http://ava.org/50th-anniversary).

**MARCH 20-22** – Williamsburg, VA (Atlantic Region) – Atlantic Regional Conference

**APRIL 17-19** – Council Bluffs, IA and Nebraska City, NE (North Central Region)– Memories on the Mighty MO

**MAY 16-20** – Upstate New York (Northeast Region) – Walk the Story that Changed the World: A Multi-day Event on Revolutionary War Battle Sites

**JUNE 6-7** – Crazy Horse and Black Hills, SD (North Central Region) – 40th Annual Crazy Horse Memorial Volksmarch

**JUNE 19-21** - Indiana and Illinois – (Mid-America Region) - Mid-America Regional Conference  
**JULY 24-25** – San Francisco, CA – (Pacific Region) - 50 Works of Art for 50 Years of Walking

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**JULY 28 – AUG 1** – Colorado Springs, CO (Rocky Mountain Region)– Rocky Mountain Rendezvous

**AUGUST 28-29** – Boston, MA (Northeast Region)– AVA 50th Anniversary Walk in Boston

**SEPTEMBER 7** – Mackinaw City and St Ignace, MI (Mid-America Region) – Annual Mackinac Bridge Walk

**SEPTEMBER 24-27** – Astoria, OR (Northwest Region) – NW Regional Conference “Walking in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark”

**OCTOBER 16-18** – Arlington, VA (Atlantic Region) – 25th Annual Freedom Walk Festival IML

**OCTOBER 28 – November 1** – MO, KS, OK (South Central Region) - “Halloween Klicks on Route 66”

**NOVEMBER 6-8** – Tampa area, FL (Southeast Region) – 35th Walk Around Florida

**NOVEMBER 14** – Dayton, OH (Mid-America Region) – OWF Honors Veterans

**DECEMBER 5** – Helen, GA (Southeast Region) – Weihnachten Lights Spectacular

But remember, ALL events in 2026 are a celebration. Please look to [ava.org](http://ava.org) and attend as many as you can.

**PUBLICITY UPDATE** by Susan Fine, Chair, Publicity Committee

It was wonderful to see so many friends and walkers from around the country, and the world, at the Texas Trail Roundup (TTR) in San Antonio Feb 20-22. Thank you to those who uploaded your photos to the shared Photo Circle app. There are over 650 photos there. If you were at the TTR, and want to share your photos, Hector can send the QR code. Email him: [hector@ava.org](mailto:hector@ava.org). We would love to see all the photos and use some of them for marketing of AVA.

The next featured event for AVA's 50 anniversary is in Williamsburg, VA for the Atlantic Region Conference March 20-22. There's a pre-walk March 19 in Fredericksburg, VA, then walks in Colonial Williamsburg and along the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail. A post-walk takes place in Alexandria, VA March 23. Plus, there are daily bike and swim events. Pre-registration is available or register for the walks daily. [More information here](#).

Miles of Memories Across the Mighty Missouri is the 4 featured event for AVA's 50 celebration, April 17-19, 2026. You'll walk in Council Bluffs, Iowa, across the Missouri River to Omaha, Nebraska, and Nebraska City, NE. The Nebraska Trailblazers have confirmed that the Mayor of Council Bluffs, Jill Shudak, and the First Lady of Omaha, Viv Ewing, will walk with us on Saturday as we cross the Missouri. Great Job to the club! Pre-registration ends March 26, so [sign up now](#). Registration on site is available, too.

Thank you to Rob McDaniel for creating a 50 anniversary video. [Check it out here](#). Please share it on your social media pages, and your club newsletters.

Rob will also create a short video for your club, free of charge, based on photos you send him. To celebrate our various regions, he's wanting to do a club spotlight series for about 4-5 clubs per region. See the one for the Happy Wanderers. If you are interested, contact him at [mcdanielr99@yahoo.com](mailto:mcdanielr99@yahoo.com).

Remember our partnership with Rail to Trails Conservancy, and have an event or group YRE walk in April, especially April 25 – Celebrate Trails Days, marking RTC's 40 anniversary. Fill out the [event form here](#) to be listed on their website.

If you missed the February webinar about our possible partnership with Silver Sneakers, you can [see it here](#).



## **COME TO HELEN AND ENJOY A GREAT HIKE (I.E.VOLKSMARCH) AND OLD-FASHIONED BAVARIAN FEST EVENT AT THE BODENSEE GERMAN RESTAURANT BIERGARTEN...** by Rod Powell, President, Alpine Helen Volksmarch Club



Presented by the Alpine Helen Volksmarch Club (AHVC), focused primarily at promoting “Bavarian-style walking and hiking activities” that help build a healthy lifestyle and German oriented culture in our Helen community.

Our annual marquee event, the Volkswanderung 5k & 10k hike and walk, includes a “Bavarian Biergarten Style Festival”, and huge prize drawing, is held on the fourth Saturday of April every year in beautiful Helen, Georgia.



## **CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF WALKING AT CRAZY HORSE JUNE 6, 2026**

by Susan Fine, Chair, Publicity Committee

The Crazy Horse Volksmarch in the Black Hills of South Dakota is the most popular organized hike in the U.S., with thousands of families and individuals participating each year. This year on June 6th, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of this spectacular hike up the mountain to the arm of Crazy Horse, along with celebrating the 50th anniversary of AVA: America’s Walking Club, and the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

Sponsored by the Black Hills Volkssport Association and Crazy Horse Memorial®, the hike is a woodlands walk to the world’s largest mountain carving in progress. You can choose to walk a 5K or 10K beginning at 8am (registration opens at 7am), when an opening ceremony takes place, along with an official Lakota drum beat to start the walk. Hikers will then follow dirt trails and gravel work roads up the mountain to the Arm of Crazy Horse, directly in front of the nine-story-high face, which was completed June 3, 1998.

The cost is \$4 plus three cans of food. We thank Crazy Horse Memorial® for waiving the regular admission fee if each participant brings three cans of food to donate to the Care and Share Food Drive, part of the Feeding South Dakota Initiative.

America’s Walking Club has secured a block of rooms at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Rapid City, SD, about an hour away from the event. The group rate is \$149++ for 1-4 guests, free parking and a hotel airport shuttle. Breakfast is also included. This is a great rate, but you must book your room before May 1st. The rate is available June 1-11, so you can choose your dates. Use the link or call 605-343-8550 and let them know you are with America’s Walking Club Crazy Horse Volksmarch.

Crazy Horse Memorial® started in 1948 after Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear wanted to honor the culture, tradition and heritage of North American Indians, specifically the Lakota leader Crazy Horse. Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski proudly began the work, on what will be the largest sculpture in the world.

While the creation of the sculpture continues, the work has expanded to include The Indian Museum of North America®, and the Crazy Horse Memorial University®.

In 1981, the Black Hills Volkssport Association (BHVA) worked with the Crazy Horse Memorial® to sponsor a hike to the top of the mountain. Over the next 40 years, the event has become the largest volkswalk in the United States, with 6,000 – 8,000 expected for each event.



The BHVA encourages everyone to stay Sunday June 7th for a second day of walks at Outlaw Ranch in the Black Hills outside Custer. Start table opens from 6:30am – 9:30am; finish by 12noon. Afterward, BHVA is inviting everyone to Way Park in Custer for a party and 50th AVA celebration



To help you with all the logistics for the Crazy Horse event Saturday June 6, here are some guidelines:

### **Driving to the start**

Crazy Horse Memorial is located 5 miles north of Custer, SD on Highway 16/385.

### **Parking**

Free, but due to the popularity of the event, parking can be some distance from the starting point. Shuttle buses between these outlying parking lots and the start/finish.

### **Registration**

There is no advance registration. Hikers must check in at starting point, which is the at the Memorial's upper parking lot. Registration begins at 7am. The walk starts at 8am with an opening ceremony. Hikers must register before 1pm, and be off the trail by 4pm. No late starts.

### **Cost**

Admission to the Memorial will be waived with 3 cans of food per hiker. The AVA fee is \$4 per person regardless of age. Regular admission applies to non-hikers or hikers without food.

### **How long does it take?**

The hike averages two to four hours to complete. Hikers should pace themselves due to the terrain and peak elevation (nearly 6,500 feet above sea level).

### **What is the trail like?**

The route is a 5K or 10K (6.2 miles round trip), on a hilly, rough terrain with some steep inclines. The rugged woodlands path is not suitable for infant strollers. From the valley of the Memorial's visitor

center, the trail rises about 500 feet up to the mountain. You will see views of Crazy Horse Memorial® and its 1,000-acre campus not otherwise available to the public.

### What are some hiking tips?

Travel light! Water stations and port-a-potties are available along the trail. Roving trail monitors and medical professionals will be available for those needing assistance. Watch the weather, dress appropriately, and anticipate taking layers of clothes. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

### Are pets allowed?

Pets of all kinds are prohibited on the trail.

### Is camping available?

There is no camping at Crazy Horse Memorial®. However, camping is available at Heritage Village, 1 mile south of the Memorial's entrance. The campground overlooks the mountain carving.

### What else is there on site?

Crazy Horse Memorial Welcome Center has a short introductory movie "What is Crazy Horse", playing in the twin theaters in the Welcome Center. We also encourage you to visit the [Gift Shop](#), [Indian Museum of North America®](#), [Sculptor's Studio/Home Workshop](#), and the [Native American Educational and Cultural Center®](#). Breakfast and lunch is also available at the [Laughing Water Restaurant®](#).

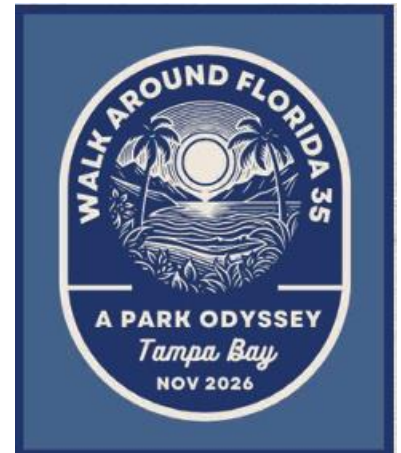
**WALK AROUND FLORIDA 35: A PARK ODYSSEY** by Alice Lawrence, John McClellan, Cathy Metherell

Walk Around Florida (WAF) 35, an AVA 50th Anniversary event, will take place Nov 6-8 in the Bradenton area of Tampa Bay. WAF is an annual multi-event weekend sponsored by the Happy Wanderers, Mid-Florida Milers, and Suncoast Sandpipers.

This year's host club, the Sandpipers, is planning walks with a "Park Odyssey" theme as participants travel from city, county, state and national parks and preserves.

On Friday, there will be a hosted walk of the Bradenton Year Round Event, featuring a vibrant riverwalk, the quaint Village of the Arts, and LECOM Park, spring training home of the Pittsburg Pirates. On Saturday, a walk is planned in the Robinson Preserve, home to coastal grasslands, marshes and mangrove habitats filled with Florida wildlife; then it's on to the De Soto National Memorial, stepping back in time to revisit the 1539 landing of Hernando de Soto and European exploration of the southern United States. On Sunday, the turbulent past will be forgotten with a hike in a serene state park. Under consideration are Lake Manatee State Park with its vast reservoir and Oscar Scherer State park, home to the inquisitive Florida Scrub Jay.

Organizers are coordinating hotel, dinner, and social activities throughout the weekend to ensure plenty of opportunities to rekindle old friendships and to spark new ones. Look for the brochure and registration form on Jul 1. They will be posted on [suncoastsandpipers.org](http://suncoastsandpipers.org) and [facebook.com/walkaroundflorida35](https://facebook.com/walkaroundflorida35). For more information, contact Alice Lawrence at 727-542-9742 or <mailto:pipers@tampabay.rr.com>.



## **AVA MERCHANDISE STORE OPENS ONLINE** by Erin Grosso, Finance Director

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
- 50 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 50 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](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 50 Anniversary in 2026.

## **HOW TO BOOST YOUR WELLNESS WITH WALKING AND SIMPLE DAILY HABITS** by Patricia Sarmiento

For walking club members and outdoor enthusiasts across the U.S., staying consistent can be harder than the miles themselves. Common wellness challenges, stress that lingers, sleep that slips, and routines that break during busy weeks, often drain fitness motivation even for people who genuinely enjoy getting outside. Organized walking events can add structure and social support, but many groups still struggle to connect those outings to lasting wellness improvement strategies. With the right community health resources, a regular walk can become a steady reset.

### **QUICK SUMMARY OF KEY WELLNESS STEPS**

- Practice stress reduction techniques that support calmer daily routines and overall well-being.
- Start beginner fitness routines with walking to build movement habits safely and steadily.
- Build healthy sleep habits by prioritizing rest as part of a balanced wellness plan.
- Make nutritional changes with simple upgrades that support energy and long term health.
- Create a positive social environment that encourages participation and supports ongoing self-improvement.



## UNDERSTANDING HOLISTIC WELLNESS BASICS

To ground your walking goals, start with the big picture.

Holistic wellness means your health is more than symptoms or step counts. A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being includes how your body moves, how your mind copes, and how supported you feel day to day. Walking fits here as a simple exercise, and rest matters because recovery helps your body adapt.

This matters for walking club members because progress is not just faster pacing. Regular walking can support your body in many ways, including improving heart health, while stress, poor sleep, or overdoing it can stall motivation. When you treat wellness as a system, your habits work together instead of competing.

Picture a week of group walks plus a busy schedule. If you add gentle walks, sleep a bit more, and take one rest day, you often feel steadier and show up more consistently. If you push hard every day, small aches and irritability can build.

With that foundation, practical habit blocks make daily choices easier and more rewarding.

## HABITS THAT MAKE WALKING WELLNESS STICK

Try these small rituals to steady your week.

These habits turn “good intentions” into repeatable choices you can do between organized walks. They help walking enthusiasts and club members build energy, manage stress, and stay consistent long enough to notice real health benefits.

### Bookend Breathing

- What it is: Do a 2-minute five-finger breathing practice before and after your walk.
- How often: Daily or on walk days.
- Why it helps: It downshifts stress so your walk feels restorative, not rushed.

### Default Walk Appointment

- What it is: Put two walks on your calendar like meetings with a clear start time.
- How often: Weekly.
- Why it helps: Scheduled movement reduces decision fatigue and improves follow-through.

### Fuel and Hydrate Check

- What it is: Pack water and a simple snack before longer routes or hotter days.
- How often: Per walk over 45 minutes.
- Why it helps: Steadier energy supports pace, mood, and safer recovery.

### Friendly Boundary Plan

- What it is: Use the boundary definition to set a pace limit you can say out loud.
- How often: Before each group walks.
- Why it helps: Clear limits prevent overdoing it and protect motivation.

### Replace One Drain

- What it is: Swap one negative habit after dinner for a 10-minute easy stroll.
- How often: 3 times weekly.

- Why it helps: Small wins build confidence and make routines easier to repeat.

Pick one habit this week and adapt it to your family's schedule.

## COMMON QUESTIONS FROM WALKERS STAYING CONSISTENT

A few quick answers to common sticking points.

### **Q: What are effective strategies to reduce stress and enhance overall wellness through self-improvement?**

A: First, identify your main trigger, such as time pressure, social stress, or mental overload. Then adjust your plan with a small, repeatable reset like a 10-minute easy walk plus a short breathing pause. Confidence helps consistency, and walking for mental health can be a steady anchor while you build other habits.

### **Q: How can I stay motivated to maintain a regular fitness routine that supports my health goals?**

A: Identify what makes you skip walks, such as weather, boredom, or a packed calendar. Then adjust by using a backup option like an indoor loop, a shorter route, or a set meet-up time with your walking club for accountability. Tracking one simple win, like the number of walks per week, often keeps motivation realistic.

### **Q: What tips can help improve sleep quality as part of a holistic approach to wellness?**

A: Identify your biggest sleep disruptor, such as late screens, heavy meals, or rumination. Then adjust with a consistent wind-down cue like a gentle after-dinner stroll and a set lights-out time. Keep evening walks easy so your body settles rather than ramps up.

### **Q: How do I create and maintain healthy boundaries to reduce overwhelm and improve mental health?**

A: Identify where you tend to overextend, such as pace, distance, or saying yes to every event. Then adjust by choosing one clear boundary you can state ahead of time, like a turnaround time or a maximum effort level. If you need to share limitations or wellness forms with a group organizer, a simple fillable online document you can save and send can reduce stress, including working with PDFs online.

### **Q: How can I find local walking events and trails that support my fitness and wellness journey?**

A: Identify what support you need most, such as beginner-friendly pacing, social connection, or training structure. Then adjust your search by checking community calendars, park and recreation listings, trail associations, and library bulletin boards, plus asking your club leaders for recurring routes. Interest is rising, and searches for local walking groups are up by 300%, so you are unlikely to be the only one looking.

Choose one small adjustment and let your walking community help you keep it going.

## BUILD LASTING WELLNESS BY WALKING AND ONE SIMPLE DAILY HABIT

It's easy for good intentions to fade when weather shifts, schedules fill up, or motivation dips, even for committed walkers with long-term fitness goals. The steadier approach is a personal growth reflection that favors consistent wellness practices, small adjustments, and community health engagement over perfection. With time, the outdoor activity benefits stack up, more reliable energy, better mood, and a routine that supports self-improvement motivation without burning out.

# Pictures Q1 2026

These are from the Q1 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](mailto:dnlcssb@aol.com). Thank You!

## 1 January at Universal



Susan, Kevin, Christie



Michael, Bernadette



Kevin, Susan, Christie, John, Sharon





Cathy, John, Bernadette, Michael

**3 January at Spanish Springs**

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

**17 January at Split Oak Forest**



Cathy, Kevin, Susan, Derek, Debbie



John, Paul, Sharon, Howard, Jenny, Cathy



31 January at Orlando South



7 February at I-Drive



Registration



Tom, Sharon, John



Registration



Sharon, Sharon, John, Howard



Paul, Tom



Sharon, Paul, John, Sharon, Tom

14 February at Lake Apopka Loop Trail



Howard



Veronica, Jorge



Check Point



Snake



Osprey with a Fish



Osprey with a Fish

7 March at Maitland



Registration





Kevin, Susan, Sharon, Leslie



Cathy



Howard

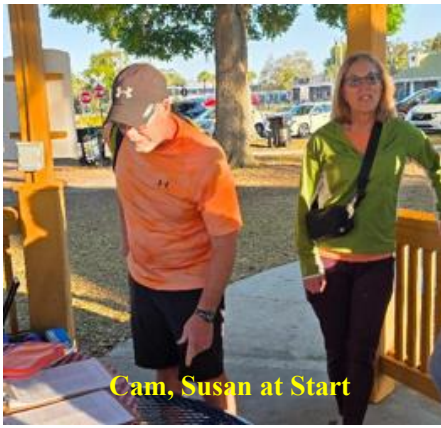




21 March at Tavares







Cam, Susan at Start



Bill, Paul, Tom, Sharon, Christine, Pete at Start



Sharon, Sharon, Cathy, Bernadette at Mural



Tom and Bill



Sharon and Bernadette



John, Bill, Tom



Howard



Pete and Dan



Pete at Unique Mailbox



Checkpoint



Pete at Veteran's Memorial



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
"AT A PRELUDE TO ANY ENGAGEMENT OF MILITARY OR NAVAL FORCES, A CONTEST MUST TAKE PLACE FOR CONTROL OF THE AIR. THE FIRST BATTLES OF ANY FUTURE WAR WILL BE AIR BATTLES: THE NATION WINNING THEM IS PRACTICALLY CERTAIN TO WIN THE WHOLE WAR IN CASES THE VICTORIOUS AIR SERVICE WILL BE ABLE TO OPERATE AND INCREASE WITHOUT HINDRANCE."  
CREATED WILLIAM MITCHELL  
U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS, 1928-29



Sharon, Bernadette, Paul



Tom, JoAnne, Sharon



Dan, Pete, John



Dan



Gator