



# CHECKPOINT



The official voice of the American Volkssport Association  
*America's premier noncompetitive sports organization*

Volume 24, Number 3

[www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org)

March 2016

## NEC NEWS

### NEC Meeting Updates

The next NEC meeting will be held June 10-12, 2016 in Fredericksburg, Texas.

### Call to Clubs for Agenda Items:

[Click here for Agenda Items Form](#)

Please complete as soon as possible.

**April 11, 2016:** Clubs email Agenda Items to Regional Directors.

**April 26, 2016:** Agenda Items from Regional Directors due to AVA National Headquarters.

**May 11, 2016:** Final list of official Agenda Items sent to AVA Clubs.

**AVA NEC Officer's Reports and Committee Reports:** [Click here for Officer Report Form](#)  
[Click here for Committee Report Form](#)

**May 11, 2016:** Officer's and Committee Reports due at AVA National Headquarters

**May 20, 2016:** NEC meeting packet emailed to NEC members.

## NEC Committees

### Youth Programs Committee – Debbie Kruep, Chair

The American Volkssport Association and Navigators USA Scouts are conducting a national Walk Together Patch Contest for the 2016-2017 season. The AVA youth committee will be pairing those Navigator USA chapters who wish to join an AVA Walk Together with a local club. When called upon we encourage your club to take the opportunity to welcome them. The youth committee will work with your club and Navigators USA to provide an event that will promote AVA and your club and build an ongoing relationship between the local organizations.

Thank you to the Florida State Volkssport Association for allowing me to hold a Youth Program workshop February 20, 2016. What a great group of leaders eager to learn new ways to work with youth!

I will be in Laughlin, Nevada during the three state weekend on April 8-9. I will be free during those two evenings. I would be more than happy to hold a Youth Workshop on one evening. Please be advised the



workshop takes three hours, but the time goes quickly and everyone is engaged. For more information contact Debbie at [avayouth@ava.org](mailto:avayouth@ava.org),

## **Strategic Planning Update – Nancy Wittenberg, Vice-Chair, Strategic Planning Committee**

### ***STRATEGIC PLANNING – Results from the NEC Meeting***

The February Checkpoint told about the presentation to the National Executive Council (NEC) by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). Now you can see information about that presentation on the AVA website.

First, we have placed the results of the Individual and Club Surveys on the website. Information has been summarized and individual comments have been removed to preserve anonymity. Find the summarized survey links on the AVA home page.



Second, the minutes of the January NEC meeting are on the website. The NEC heard the SPC presentation then worked through the details and edited the three Phases (Courses of Action). The NEC was in open session the entire time and had an audience not only from Las Vegas, but from other parts of the country as well.

The NEC assigned tasks to NEC members that could be done immediately. In the attachments you'll find the three phases of the Strategic Plan as edited by the NEC. They are pages 61 – 63 with information from David Bonowitz, SPC Chair just ahead of these. Find the NEC minutes on the AVA website under Administrative/General Admin/Current NEC Minutes.

Strategic Planning is not over. The SPC is taking the three phase documents and making sure the goals and objectives they create from these are consistent, build chronologically and are doable. The final result will be presented to the NEC at its June meeting in Fredericksburg, TX. As with any extensive change, it will take time and money to complete all the action steps. But we must be open to change if we are to grow and keep AVA's future bright.

On an on-going basis, your input continues to be valuable. Send your thoughts and ideas to your RD and/or to the Strategic Planning Committee at [SPC4AVA@gmail.com](mailto:SPC4AVA@gmail.com).

*Remember last year? AVA members and friends contributed over \$58 thousand to AVA through Big Give San Antonio. That money gave us the first year in the black in the past 5 years. We have the opportunity again this year on a single day – May 3, 2016. And it's even more critical. Much of what we describe in the three phases of the strategic plan for AVA's future will hinge on the staffing and money to develop the programs, technology and services our clubs and individuals have requested in our surveys. Let's build a strong future for AVA. Please join with me to contribute what you can on May 3<sup>rd</sup> -- for AVA's future ----  
Nancy Wittenberg*



## **National Special Programs - Susan Medlin, Chair**

### **Celebrating 40 Years of Volksmarching**

We are finalizing our plans for celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Volkssporting in Fredericksburg, June 10 - 12. We have a beautiful medal (A Award) for the Footsteps of the Founders walk on Saturday morning. It is an updated replica of the original medal awarded in 1976. We will be selling the patch and a beautiful

commemorative stein during the weekend. Quantities of both the Medal and the Stein are limited and preregistration information for the Medal, the Stein and the Saturday night dinner at Andy's will be available soon. Color photos of the Medal, the stein, and the patch are in the attached flyer.

We welcome all of you to join us in Fredericksburg. It should be a wonderful weekend for volkssporters, and there are many other fun things to do in this quaint and historic German town. [Click here for the Flyer for the 40th anniversary weekend](#), which lists all of the weekend events; including the 4 events on Saturday, the YRE walks on Friday night and Sunday morning, the other numerous Year Round Events that are available within an hour's drive, the NEC meetings, and specific Start times and locations for the events.

Please join us in celebrating this joyous event.

### **Buy Your Commemorative Patches While They Last!**

**The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary patch is available for purchase while quantities last! The club price is \$3 per patch which includes shipping. The patch is 4.25" by 3.25" and is 100% embroidered. Please allow three (3) weeks for the patch to arrive. Patches can be ordered through November 1, 2016. If you plan to host an event in November or December where you will use this patch please order in advance of the deadline. Email your order information to Theresa at [Theresa@ava.org](mailto:Theresa@ava.org)**



### **International Marching League (IML) and AVA**

Southwest Regional Director, Susan Medlin, several Club Presidents in the greater San Antonio area and the AVA Headquarters are looking into the creation of an IML event in San Antonio in the Jan/Feb timeframe. Currently there are no IML events anywhere in the world in the months of January and February. As part of a formal request we must provide a multiday walking event that has gone on for at least 3 years, which lasts at least 2 days, and offers a minimum distance of 20 km on each day of the event. The plan would be to have routes start on or very near the famous Riverwalk, and include the San Antonio Missions, which are now a World Heritage Site. If you have IML experience and would be interested in working with us on this project over the next 3-4 years, please contact Susan Medlin at [sueammed@aol.com](mailto:sueammed@aol.com).

### **Adding Medium, Long and Extended Distance Events - by Susan Medlin**

In response to the 2015 Surveys, the AVA President directed the National Programs Chair (SWRD Susan Medlin) to create new National Programs with more challenging events of distance or difficulty. I am currently working with a select small group to create a plan which we will propose to the NEC at the June 2016 meeting in Fredericksburg. I welcome your input. Please send your comments to [sueammed@aol.com](mailto:sueammed@aol.com)

The Policy Manual refers to a Short Distance Walk which must be a minimum of 10 km and less than 20 km. As an opening step, I read through the 2016 *Starting Point* and was amazed to find 42 walks which are short distance walks of between 15 and 19 km. A Medium Distance Walk must be a minimum of 20 km and a maximum of 30 km. The 2016 *Starting Point* currently shows 81 walks which fall in this window. A Long Distance Walk must be more than 30 km and must be approved by the AVA HQ. There is one Long Distance Walk in the 2016 *Starting Point*, the 42 km Olympia Waterfronts walk in Washington. An Extended Distance Walk is a self-guided walk of distances greater than one day's duration, with a minimum distance of 80 km. We currently have sanctioned two Extended Distance Walks. The first is the Coeur d'Alene, a 115 km trail in Idaho. It is on page 192 in the 2016 *Starting Point*. The second walk is the 97 km Centennial Trail, in Washington and Idaho. You can search for it on the AVA website under Washington State. Based on the information above, I believe the issue is not that we lack distance events; rather it is in finding out how to publicize our currently sanctioned events.

We are currently exploring possible ways to publicize them: identified them in our existing online data base, running an ongoing column in the TAW, highlighting them in the *Starting Point*, and identifying them as extended walks on our events page which takes you to a listing sorted by state, event name, and then by distance.

We are also looking at possibly adding a couple of popular marquee events, like the Pacific Crest Trail, the Appalachian Trail, and the Continental Divide Trail. There is guidance in the Policy Manual on these type of events (4.03, II, C 1-2). We would start by talking to the RDs for those regions, and seeing what they think their region could support. Henry thinks it is a good idea and he and I discussed putting them in the Electronic Walk Box as a way to avoid walk box issues. In addition, we could take a couple of other State-specific events - the Katy Trail in Missouri (386 km) and the Buckeye Trail in Ohio (1,400 miles) come to mind - and work with the appropriate RD and the clubs in the state to talk about getting them turned into volksmarches/Special Programs.

## **AVA Headquarters Team News**

### **HQ Finance & Operations Director – Candace Purcell**

#### **Requirements for Starting a New AVA Club**

There is now a requirement sheet and checklist for starting a new club. [You can find this information by clicking here.](#)

### **HQ Events Coordinator – Marie Bebley**

Please see attached list of clubs that have not submitted their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report for 2015 YRE and Seasonal Events. These events are no longer accessible on the website; please forward your reports to [events@ava.org](mailto:events@ava.org) to be keyed in the system. Please be advised these reports are now past due and a late fee will be assessed. [To view reports click here.](#)

### **HQ Awards and Membership Coordinator – Karen Winkle**

Click to view the [Monthly Comparison Chart for new walkers](#) completing their first 10 Events, and Click to see the [Monthly Comparison Chart for the Total Number of Awards processed.](#)

## **AVA Executive Director's Updates - Henry Rosales**

### **AVA National Volunteer Coordinator –Interim Appointment**

Volunteers have always played a very important role in building the capacity and sustainability of the AVA. They assist everywhere, from club, state association, regional and national levels to the headquarters to achieve our programs' success and support with operations. However the fact remains, we need more volunteers and a strong coordinated effort to support and expand our existing volunteer infrastructure to better maximize our volunteer resources.

There are many initiatives that we as an organization want and need to put into place and those will require volunteers at this time because AVA simply does not have the funds to pay for personnel. Volunteers will support AVA Headquarters build its capacity in areas that are needed for future growth and development like training, research, data analysis, marketing, and resource development. I have asked *Suzanne Wright* to serve as the interim AVA National Volunteer Coordinator to get this effort going while I conduct a search for a permanent volunteer coordinator who will also be a volunteer. Suzanne has extensive volunteer management experience as a former American Red Cross Regional Chairman. She is also a recipient of the Clara Barton award which is the American's Red Cross highest award for volunteers.

Effective immediately I am initiating a nationwide search for a qualified permanent Volunteer Coordinator (unpaid position). Interested candidates should contact Samanta at [intern@ava.org](mailto:intern@ava.org) to obtain the position description and volunteer application form. The deadline to apply is April 10, 2016. Candidates will be interviewed before a decision is made by the end of April.

### **The Need for Diversification of Revenues**

The AVA's main revenue streams on a consistent annual basis have traditionally been sanctioning fees, participation fees, membership dues, and individual donations. The steady decline in club and participant numbers has made a big impact on the amount of revenues AVA receives on an annual basis to run the operation. Therefore it is critical that the AVA look at different ways to bring in new revenues from sources other than those we have traditionally relied on. In addition to grant writing and efforts to cultivate and re-cultivate relationships with corporate and private sponsors, what follows are some of the new attempts by the AVA to diversify our revenue streams. Note that these initiatives are not exclusively for AVA members so feel free to share the information with friends and family!

### **The Big Give – Give BIG!**

On **May 3rd, 2016**, the American Volkssport Association will join San Antonio and surrounding counties in The Big Give S.A. which is a 24-hour day of giving that brings donors and nonprofits together by creating a shared region-wide experience and connecting people to the causes that matter to them the most. In the case of



AVA this is a nation-wide experience and fundraising campaign to support the continued mission of the AVA. Last year individuals, clubs, and state associations came together to raise \$58,641 of which \$30,000 was an individual match from our beloved lifetime Volkssporter Ms. Charlotte Phillips. **The goal this year is to raise \$50,000!**

Your support last year made an immediate impact in the following two key areas that will have a lasting effect on the success of our future:

1. **Strategic Planning** – AVA embarked on a strategic planning process last June. The strategic plan is in the final stages of design and once completed it will be open to all members for input and recommendations. The goal is to have the plan completed by this June. On the average a good plan takes at least 12-18 months for completion and approval and costs anywhere from \$75,000 - \$100,000. To date we have spent \$32,745 and nine months of time on the project. Funds were used to pay for the consultant, planning meetings, to include travel for SPC members excluding the At-Large members who graciously paid for their own expenses, and materials and supplies.
2. **The Bottom Line** – Every year all nonprofits have to fundraise a certain amount of dollars in order to help offset the costs of doing business/operations, AVA is no exception. Back in the day when AVA was doing extremely well because clubs were thriving and everybody was walking with us there was enough revenue coming into the organization to support operations. This is no longer the case and although the AVA Headquarters has streamlined operations there is still not enough revenue coming in to support the current operation and future development of AVA.

As a result, excluding last year, AVA has ended the year with an operational deficit five years in a row. The good news is that last year, thanks to the success of the Big Give and your contributions, AVA managed to finish the year without an operational deficit! This has a huge impact on how funders view us because Foundations typically look for a 3 year positive trend when making a determination whether or not to fund an

organization. We are moving the needle in the right direction and our goal is to continue this trend much longer than 3 years with your support.

I ask you to join the National Executive Council and myself on May 3, 2016 by going online at [www.TheBigGiveSA.org](http://www.TheBigGiveSA.org) and making a contribution of a minimum of \$20.00 to support the mission of the AVA. Of course if you would like to send a check that is also appreciated and will be applied towards our goal of \$50,000. If donating online you can only do it on May 3, 2016. Everyone who makes an online donation will immediately receive an email receipt from the San Antonio Area Foundation confirming the gift. If you are sending us a check you can send that to us at any time prior to May 3, 2016. Please note "The Big Give" on the memo line.

**I realize that many of you make several contributions throughout the year and I thank you for your continued support.**

### ***New* International Travel Referral Program**

AVA will be sharing information on international travel companies who are currently supporting us with paid advertisements and are further interested in promoting their tours and services to our membership at discounted prices. AVA does not guarantee that these events will be sanctioned so please confirm this with the companies before you book your travel. These companies will either pay a fee for service or make an annual pledge to the AVA in addition to their paid advertisements. By utilizing their services you will also be supporting the AVA and our local members!

This is an expansion of what Mary Ptacek pioneered with Tater Tours and the AVA many years ago! Thank you Mary for your pioneering spirit continued support!

### **2016 International Walking Trip - Swiss Hiking Vacations**

AVA is proud to announce the 2016 International Walking Trip to Switzerland with Swiss Hiking Vacations! They offer 4 amazing trips to choose from starting July 3, 2016 through August 26, 2016. Their trips include the following: hotel accommodations, breakfast and dinner, Swiss Travel Pass, WiFi, luggage transfers, other transportation costs and experienced guides. Whether you want to amble or go for a more challenging walk, they will have a guide to meet your needs. When you sign up for a trip, you will receive a \$100 discount on your trip and a matching \$100 donation will be made to the AVA. If you are ready to sign up for a trip or you would like to view more information, please click on this link <http://www.swisshikingvacations.com/#!ava/j0upx> This link is password protected. Please use the password (lowercase): ava. If you would prefer to talk to someone directly, please contact Jim Mathis (AVA Associate Member) at Toll Free (855) 999-5200 or email at [jim@swisshikingvacations.com](mailto:jim@swisshikingvacations.com)



### **Shop Online and Support AVA!**

# goodshop

**When you're logged in to Goodshop, you're not just saving money for yourself, you're helping others, as these deals raise crucial funds for American Volkssport Association.**

**[Here is how it works:](#)**

1. Invite your supporters to sign up for Goodshop through your unique referral link. You can get yours by going [here](#), or by pasting this link into your browser: [www.goodsearch.com/invite-friends](http://www.goodsearch.com/invite-friends)
2. When your supporters complete a \$25 purchase, we will make a \$5 bonus donation to your cause and your friends, with a total of \$10 going to American Volkssport Association if you select AVA as your cause.

3. If *their* friends sign up for Goodshop and make a \$25 purchase, another \$10 will go to your cause!



Shop at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2164037> and 0.5% of your eligible amazonsmile purchase will be donated to AVA directly from Amazon! It's as simple as that!

**NEW** AVA DBA - Thanks for all the Input!

The DBA mentioned in the February newsletter was misstated. The DBA approved by the NEC in January 2016 includes the “AVA” and reads: “**AVA – America’s Walking Club**”. We welcome your continued comments and recommendations on the DBA through the end of April. All input will be presented to the NEC at the June meeting in Fredericksburg, Texas. At this time the NEC will make a final decision on modifying or changing the DBA. All input will be included in the May Checkpoint. If you would like to read input received to date [click here](#).

Send us your thoughts on what you think about our new DBA. Do you like it, not like it or do you think we should modify it and if so how? Send you comments to [execdir@ava.org](mailto:execdir@ava.org). Please put “**AVA DBA**” on the subject line.

**Help us improve OUR monthly newsletter!**

The AVA Headquarters is still exploring ways to reformat our monthly newsletter, the Checkpoint, in effort to send out information to clubs that is timely, relevant and qualitative. Please send us your ideas regarding the type of information you think is pertinent to your clubs so that we can refine the information in the Checkpoint to better meet your needs. Email your ideas to Executive Director at [execdir@ava.org](mailto:execdir@ava.org) Please note on the subject line “**checkpoint ideas**”.

**NEW** Checkpoint Available Via Email to All Club Members Who Request It

In the past the checkpoint has gone out via email to all Club Officers and POC’s in the AVA database. Effective March 2016 the checkpoint was made available via email to any club member who requested it. Simply send us an email to the attention of Samanta requesting that you be put on our distribution list for the Checkpoint. Please note on the subject line: Request for Checkpoint. Send your request to [intern@ava.org](mailto:intern@ava.org).

**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.**

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