

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 4



April 2018

CHECKPOINT

The official voice of the American Volkssport Association AVA: America's Walking Club www.ava.org



David Bonewitz—AVA National President



Information and Technology Update

On March 20, 2018, I had a message sent to all the clubs to provide some important information about our IT issues. This has been a topic of frustration and discussion for some time. When I sent that message, I realized that I needed to provide more clarity into what work has been on-going with our IT and the direction that we are headed. With that in mind, I began to draft this item for the Checkpoint. This is rather long, but I hope you will read it all the way to the end and share the information with your club members.

I again want to state that I do not intend for anything I say to be taken as criticizing anyone or any decision that has been made in the past. What was done was done at the time with the best interests of AVA at heart. However, we must look to the future and make decisions now that at the present time appear in the best interests of AVA. This is true even if our decisions now run counter to the direction that we have been going. A good example of this was the decision to not upgrade or replace the aging servers at AVA Headquarters. We know now that

most, if not all, the problems we have been having would have not happened if we had been on a server with a current, up-to-date operating system. Based on the recommendation of the current IT Committee, we upgraded to a rebuilt server and through the work of the current IT Committee we brought our system up on this server running a current operating system. We are now running on that server and the problems that we were having appear to have been eliminated. The cost to AVA was around \$500 plus the very hard work of the current IT Committee members.

With this server example in mind, let's look at where we have been and where we are going. At least 4 years ago, the IT Committee at the time was tasked with developing and implementing a new IT system. Unfortunately, it does not appear that we ever prepared any form of written requirements documents. In the contracting world, this requirements document is an essential piece of work that tells a contractor (or anyone doing development) exactly what must be accomplished if the end product is to be accepted. From this requirements document, a testing protocol would be developed that would be used to fully test the delivered product before it would be accepted and implemented. Clearly, that is essential so that we do not create problems by implementing buggy software. Having not developed any formal statement of requirements, we unfortunately put that IT Committee in the position of making decisions and doing development work that might or might not be seen as meeting the needs of AVA when complete.

Now fast forward 4+ years. When I stepped into this job, I asked the question as to where we stood with regard to updating our IT systems. I was told by the previous IT Committee that we were "almost there." However, I found that if we finally did get "there," we had nothing documented with which to test the new system. Since I could not imagine rolling a new system into place without extensive testing, I asked the current IT Committee to prepare a testing protocol to be used to ensure that the new system would not fail us once it was implemented.

Development started by the previous IT Committee was allowed to continue, and funding was available where needed. However, given that we were now at least 4 years into system development without anything to test, I asked the new IT Committee to develop options that we might pursue if there were further delays in obtaining a new system that would meet our needs. During subsequent months, a testing scheme was developed, and eventually we began to test what we could of the new system. Initially, the testing process uncovered over 50 shortfalls or bugs which needed to be corrected. At the NEC/Board Meeting in Orlando on January 21, 2018, I was given a demo of a portion of what would be a new system, but it still had not had all the bugs worked out.

To the casual observer, it seems that 4 years in development is a very long time. From my perspective, it appears that the basic problem is that we have a system that combines a front-end



website that serves as the portal for anyone new to Volkssporting and to our current members (clubs and individuals). This website allows clubs to access the ESR which feeds the event database which must in turn be accessed by staff to send out stamps in a timely manner which then feeds the billing system that bills those sanction fees. Get the picture. This isn't a simple system by any means. And we wanted to make it better with such features as the ability to have a log-in system and capture e-mail addresses of folks new to the web site, and on and on. Yet, as mentioned earlier, none of this was put into any kind of requirements document that could be consulted to determine that we were getting what we requested.

So where do we stand today? Based on testing, the system that has been in development for 4 years is not yet ready for implementation. Given that we cannot keep kicking the can down the road, my tasking to the current IT Committee was to take what we could of what has been in works for 4 years and test it fully before any implementation, but to not sit around waiting for that project to come to a conclusion. Honestly, I did not want to see any development that we had invested time, energy, and money to create not be used, but these are sunk costs. And after 4 years in development, we must consider if what we would be getting is what we really need today. In addition, we can't afford to wait further. We have learned a lot in these intervening years and must use what we have learned. In particular, one of my taskings to the

current IT Committee was to ensure that our IT plans are aligned with the Strategic Plan. In a big part this means that our plans for the future of IT within AVA must be in line with what we heard from the membership through the surveys conducted when we were working on the Strategic Plan.

So, what have we done? We did hire a new IT Consultant and with his help, we have accomplished the following. The office computers have been updated to Windows 10, the Office shared data has been moved to OneDrive for Microsoft TEAMS, the office personal files have been moved to OneDrive Personal, the server memory has been re-allocated to needed services (the rebuilt server is up and running), the server is backed up in the cloud daily (recall the ransomware attack that was foiled by our IT folks), and the servers are now protected by one server using antivirus software with the scripts being run daily. We are currently using Microsoft TEAMS to hold monthly NEC/Board Electronic Information Meetings which means we can attempt to move faster with the changes that must be made if AVA's future is to be a bright one.

At this point, we have been able to take and implement a portion of what has been developed over the last 4 years. What we refer to as the ESR is actually three modules: Awards Management, Membership Management, and Event Management. We have been able to take the Awards Management and Membership Management Systems developed by the previous IT contractor and put them into use. Note that "Membership Management" is used for managing Associate Members. Club membership is still managed using the legacy ESR Event Management System.

Recall that a new class of events (AVA Community Events or ACE) was approved by the NEC/Board to allow clubs to work with schools and community groups and conduct "fun" events while under the umbrella of the AVA liability insurance policy while not being bound by IVV rules as to distances, etc. The software for supporting ACE events has been developed with support for participation with exception that there is no participation support for ACE-Walking Guided Events (ACE-WG) at this time. The deployment of the ACE features to the active website has been delayed since the current IT Committee has been addressing the basic website failures that have certainly been a higher priority issue.

After upgrading the server Operating System to a version currently/actively supported by Microsoft, it appears that all of the website failures have been addressed. It appears that all of the website failures were related to malware issues and not any basic deficiencies of the legacy code employed. Those malware issues and the frustration experienced by all of us would likely not have happened if this upgrade had taken place earlier. However, as stated before, that is just hindsight.

The ESR Event Management legacy code is being placed into a repository that will provide modern version control (something sorely lacking until now) for this code and allow for collaborative improvements in the future. These improvements are mostly to support modifications to ease the transition to use of the new website with new ESR features under development by the current IT Committee.

As a part of placing this code into the repository, a complete code inventory is being created (another essential task for any real IT operation). Only the most recent actively used code will be placed into the repository. A significant portion of the currently used code has been intermixed with old and un-used code that will be separately archived but not placed into the repository. This work will significantly ease future debugging and development.

A side effect of doing the legacy code inventory will result in a high-level ESR feature list. This feature list will be used as a guide to gradually moving ESR features from the legacy system to a new AVA website. This list can also be used to measure to what extent any proposed full ESR replacement is ready for deployment.

Once all of the legacy code has been inventoried and placed in the repository, the code supporting ACE events will be deployed.

Once ACE-WG participation reporting is supported on the new website, RDs will be permitted to designate ACE-WG events. Also, when a club chooses to enter participation for a ACE-WG event, they will be automatically taken to the new website to enter their data. Initially, all other participation entries will use the current legacy system, but as the new website is able to support participation for other event types then club data entry will be appropriately redirected to the new website for these event types. All of this redirection will be totally transparent to the users.

All of this work has been behind the scenes, but will soon be impacting what we do and how we do it. Two other major developments have already impacted us in a very positive way.

The first was the national roll-out of the On-line Start Box (OSB). This is a tremendous move into the future for AVA as one can begin to see how this development can be extended into more features that are certainly expected by the folks of the "electronic age." We have a ways to go, but we are certainly moving into the future.

The second major development was an outgrowth of the OSB, and that is the new event stamp system. This was a development driven by desires of our membership to have a better way to record their participation with the ability to capture memories rather than random stamp numbers. Thousands of lines of software were written to take the database information and create nearly 3000 stamps a year with an efficient production flow. If these stamps were being done one-by-one as with the old system, we would need 1 ½ full-time employees. Instead,



with this new software, this task takes only about 20% of one person's time. We expect in time that clubs will be able to specify what they want in this city/state section as they submit their sanction request, and be able to see what it will look like to ensure they will be happy with the results. Lots more potential for new features tied to the OSB.

Another new feature that ties into our IT plans is our new Virtual On-Line Program (VOP). We have seen how something like the 401K: Invest in Your Health can operate. I can see tremendous potential for new programs like this which may finally lead us into a world with an AVA app for your smart phone. The future is out there; we just have to have a vision, develop a plan, and then make it happen. This is exactly what our current IT Committee is now doing.

The current IT Committee has accomplished a tremendous amount during their first year of activity. In the second year, we will see a new website with an enhanced member portal. The OSB will be there as well as club management features. There will be a much improved event search capability and full support of the new ACE events. I can tell you that I have seen a demo of the new participation reporting module that will come with the new website, and I was truly blown away. That feature alone will make everyone or whoever has to enter the quarterly data sit up and take notice. If you want to see where things are heading, go to my.ava.org. Once active, this new site will give you access to the operations side of the AVA. New features will be rolled out as they are developed. The ava.org site will continue to be used, but in time will likely migrate to be the focus for people new to AVA and Volkssporting. In other words, we will separate the business side of AVA for those who are already active from the "invitation" to come out, walk with us, join a club, and join AVA.

I hope this has given you a better sense of where we have been and where we are going in the world of IT. Recognizing that the target has moved and shifting the focus to meet the changing needs of the organization is never easy. However, continuing down a path that doesn't end where you want to be is worse. I am confident that the current IT Committee and the NEC/Board are prepared to make those tough decisions and help ensure that AVA will have a very bright future.

I invite you to send questions or comments to me (president@ava.org). I will certainly share them with our IT Committee.

Mark Your Calendars

Important NEC Meeting Deadlines for the June 2019 Convention

Call to Clubs for Agenda Items

April 09, 2018 (60 days before meeting): Clubs email Agenda Items to Regional Directors.

April 19, 2018 (50 days before meeting): Agenda Items from Regional Directors due to AVA National Headquarters

April 24, 2018 (45 days before meeting): Final list of official Agenda Items sent to AVA Clubs and Regional Directors

May 9, 2018 (30 days before meeting): Officer's, Regional Director's and Committee written reports are due at AVA National Headquarters

May 18, 2018 (21 days before meeting): Meeting information package emailed to NEC members.

AVA NEC Officer's Reports and Committee Reports:

Click here for Agenda Items Form
Click here for Officer Report Form
Click here for Committee Report Form

June 2018 NEC Meeting

The next NEC meeting will be June 8-10, 2018 in Albany, NY. The meeting will start at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 8th and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The meeting will be held in the *Stonehenge A* room. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

All meetings will be at the:

Red Lion Hotel Albany 205 Wolf Road Albany, NY 12205 (518) 458-7264

NEC 2018-2019 Meeting Calendar (In Person Meetings)

June 8—10, 2018—Albany, NY January 11—13, 2019—Tucson, Arizona

Club Development & Support Committee—John McClellan, Chair

Club Development & Support Committee Still Seeking Members!

The AVA's new Committee for Club Development & Support is still looking for motivated, experienced club members - specifically, from clubs in the Northeast, and west of the Mississippi. Our charter is to "assist the Board in implementing Strategic Objective 1.c. (Establish a Club Development Program) by examining issues that frustrate club leadership and make recommendations on acceptable solutions." The AVA President has stated that the theme of this NEC term is "Helping Clubs Grow and Growing New Clubs." This committee will therefore focus our efforts at the club level.

AVA Programs—Debra Kruep, Chair

Youth

Girl Scout-I The AVA office has ordered more 2017-2018 Girl Scout Walk Together Patches. You can use these for any Girl Scout Walk Together held until August 31. The consignment sheet is on the website under forms.



Navigators USA

The Navigators USA scouts have just completed their scout patch. Navigators has been advertising AVA so Programs Committee may be contacting your club if a Navigator Chapter reaches out for a partnership in your area. The patch and winner for the 2018-2019 Patch competition will be revealed here next month.

Stay tuned next month for an exciting announcement about the Walk Together Patch Program.

Virtual Online Programs

401K: Invest in Your Health has been popular and walkers are strolling across the finish line! Congratulations to those who have completed 401 kilometers! We are in the process of getting those T-shirts ordered. More will come next month.



As promised we are bringing you phase II. This program has been so popular walkers are ready to move to the next level. We couldn't wait until July so we are bringing you the new "Tour of Italy" virtual map program beginning May 1. If you are enrolled in the 401K program you will

receive an invitation to join in the next few weeks. As you move along the trail narrative photo boxes will pop up at points of interest to give you information about that point. One of volksporting's pleasures is travel but not all of us



are able. So let's do the next best thing and travel virtually! "Tour of Italy" will be step based so there is nothing extra to do just log your steps as you do now either by a walking device, smart phone or manually. There is still time to enroll and complete both programs, just go to the AVA website and click on the 401K logo.

"You'll start this journey high in the Italian Alps. Once you've made it through the snow we'll first celebrate your survival in Venice "the Floating City". Take a tour through the canals before hitting the road. We'll stop in places made famous by Shakespeare, we'll dine on fresh and hearty Italian fares, and you'll see the most famous of the Italian stops — The Leaning Tower of Pisa, The Coliseum in Rome, and we'll end our journey in Palermo, where you can swim in the Mediterranean sea and relax after your hard work!" walker tracker

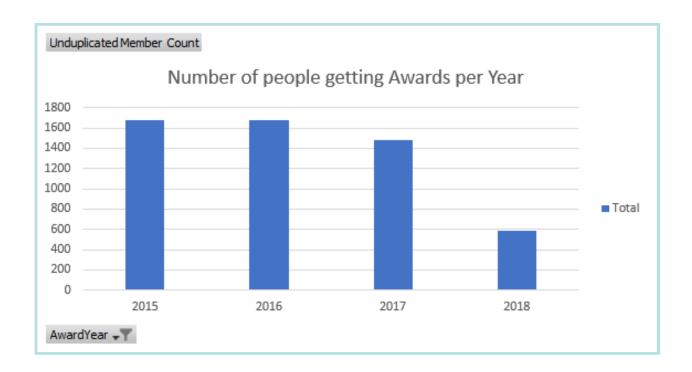
AVA National Office Team

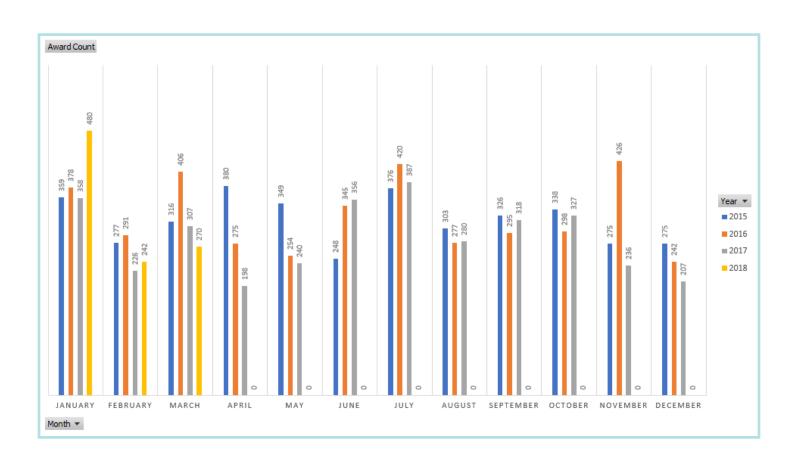
Awards & Membership Coordinator—Karen Winkle

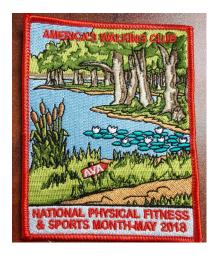
Total Monthly Awards Comparison

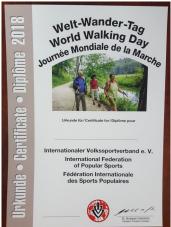
Award Count Year 🔻										
Month 🔻	2015	2016	2017	2018	Grand Total					
January	359	378	358	480	1575					
February	277	291	226	242	1036					
March	316	406	307	270	1299					
April	380	275	198		853					
May	349	254	240		843					
June	248	345	356		949					
July	376	420	387		1183					
August	303	277	280		860					
September	326	295	318		939					
October	338	298	327		963					
November	275	426	236		937					
December	275	242	207		724					
Grand Total	3822	3907	3440	992	12161					

Total Monthly Awards Comparison









May Physical Fitness
Patches and World
Walking Day Certificates are here! Email
karen@ava.org to
place your order

Information and Technology Specialist—Hector Hernandez

Please remember to make all changes within your ESR and then send to Hector. The website will be updated weekly. Email changes to hector@ava.org.

Starting Point Changes

YR #	Sanction	Location and	Correction	Page	Dated
1680	109764	Travelers Rest, SC	"Exit 24" should be "exit 25".	584	3/15/2018

Communications — Samanta Sanchez

There's Still Time to Donate!

THANK YOU! With your support, the AVA has raised \$64,110.66 to date! Thank you to all our 443 donors* who have contributed thus far. Your commitment and support are getting us closer to our \$70,000 goal. Special thanks to the 256 individuals that donated online and helped us win 3rd place under the Health and Wellness Category. Your online donations helped the AVA earn \$750 in prize money. The AVA would also like to thank all our Peer to Peer fundraisers as they managed to raise \$3,235. We are sincerely grateful for supporters like you. Your belief in our mission helps keep this organization strong for generations to come.



The Big Give fundraiser is not over yet, the campaign will run through April 30, 2018. If you have not donated and would like to contribute, mail your check to American Volkspport Association

1001 Pat Booker Road, Suite 101, Universal City, TX 78148. Don't forget, all 2018 Big Give donors are eligible to win AVA Prizes! AVA prizes include free sanctioned traditional events, 2018 or 2019 Starting Point books, and two free 2019 Convention Registrations. Winners will be announced during our Post Big Give Celebration (more information to come). THANK YOU!

^{*}Number includes duplicate donors

Operations Specialist—Blake La Rue



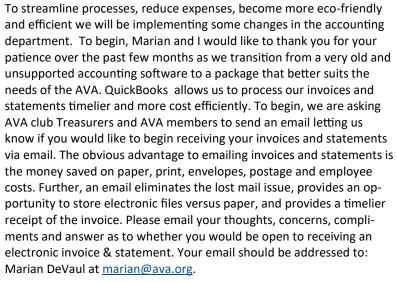
Howdy, my name is Blake La Rue! I am a Texas A&M graduate with a major in Environmental Business and am now interning at AVA Headquarters for the next 10 months. I will also be the National Office liaison to the programs committee giving them a college grads perspective in hopes of creating exciting programs that can promote AVA to potential new members

Financial Department—Erin Grosso & Marian DeVaul

We are implementing a new process regarding the Event Participation Coupons. At the end of each quarter, please continue to mail your coupons to the National Office. After the coupons are processed, they will be forwarded to the RD's to be implemented as a membership recruitment tool and to welcome new walkers to the AVA.

REMINDER: We still have 2018 Starting Point Books for sale at a price of \$27.00 plus \$7.00 for Shipping and Handling. Associate Members receive a 10% discount and Lifetime Members receive a 15% discount.

Don't forget to submit your 1st Quarter Participation numbers as they will be considered late as of May 1st. Although you have until April 30th to file your reports, it is always much appreciated when you file as soon as possible.



Marian and I have spent recent weeks evaluating the rising cost of print materials and inventory. We have learned that, in many cases, our retail sales prices for books/covers/start cards/ insert cards and specialty merchandise are not covering the costs of these items. We have been contacting both current and new vendors to try and limit increased costs while maintaining quality of merchandise. Once our research is complete, we will publish a new price list for all inventory items for sale through the AVA National Office. These prices will not go into effect until July 1, 2018.

We are excited about some new AVA merchandise items. These items include outerwear, backpacks, hats, shirts, shorts, lanyards with neck wallet or id holder and much more. WE WOULD LOVE YOUR INPUT! Please send an email with items that you would like to see in an online retail store. As always, thank you for your cooperation, your support and your dedication to the AVA.

AVA's Executive Director's Update—Henry Rosales

FUN



FITNESS



FRIENDSHIP



Clarification on AVA's Photo Disclosure and Release of Liability Form for Minors

The information below was published in the October 2017 Checkpoint. I am republishing it to clarify a few things:

- The AVA Photo Disclosure is a part of the AVA's Privacy Policy that was passed in June 2016. The part of this policy that was specific to photo disclosures was added to Start Cards, Event Registration Log forms and the Youth Waiver Release form.
- 2. In the past Youth Programs used a form called a Youth Waiver Release form. Per recommendation from our legal counsel and insurance company this form has been reconstructed. The new form is now called the Release of Liability Assumption of Risk and Photo Liability Release for Minor Participants. Although it has not been a practice in the past to have this type of form signed by the guardians of minors who participate in our walks it is now a requirement per our insurance company. Minor participants at all AVA events, not just Youth events, must have this form signed by a parent or guardian prior to participating in any Traditional event. A minor participant is any participant under the age of 18 years.
- 3. Information on the Start Cards, Event Registration Logs (form 900 A&B) and Release of Liability Assumption of Risk and Photo Liability Release for Minor Participants cannot be altered because these forms have already been approved by the insurance company and our legal counsel. A rewording or deletion of any information on these forms could potentially alter the outcome in the case of a lawsuit.

Published in the October 2018 Checkpoint-Information in parenthesis has been added for further clarification.

AVA Photo Disclosure

The following photo disclosure has been and added to the Youth Waiver Release form (now called the Release of Liability Assumption of Risk and Photo Liability Release for Minor Participants) and AVA start cards (and Event Registration Log Forms 900 A & B) and posted on the AVA website Facebook page:

Members, please be aware that when you share any photos, via digital image or otherwise, with AVA, such photos or images become the property of AVA and AVA, its legal representatives and assigns, retain the right and permission to publish, any such photo or image in any written or electronic publication, including Checkpoint or TAW, on social media, websites, or in audio-visual presentations, promotional literature, advertising or in other similar ways.

While it is not the intent of the AVA to share or reproduce any photos without consent of the individuals in the photos the disclosure gives the AVA and its club's permission to use photos taken at any AVA public event for promotional purposes.

AVA Release of Liability for Minor Partici-pants

The Youth Waiver Release form (now called the Release of Liability Assumption of Risk and Photo Liability Release for Minor Participants) for minor participants under the age of 18 has been updated

and is on the AVA website under the Events/Youth Programs tab and AVA Club Forms page. This form must be completed and signed by a parent or guardian before a minor participates in any of our Traditional events. The signed form should be kept in the club's file for 7 years.

Although the AVA photo disclosure is included in this liability release form, the AVA will not publish or reproduce any photos of youth without the express written consent of the parent or guardian. Any photos used will be for promotional purposes only. Per guidance from our legal counsel and insurance company, the AVA recommends that clubs do not use photos of youth in any promotional or advertising literature or post pictures of youth on social media.

<u>Click here</u> for the Release of Assumption of Risk and Photo Liability Release for Minor Participants form.

AVA Legal Counsel

One of the areas the National Office supports clubs with is legal counsel. The AVA does have an attorney who represents us on an on-call basis as needed. We are very fortunate she does not charge us an annual retainer and she also gives us a discounted nonprofit rate! If a situation arises whereby you think your club might need the guidance of our attorney, please advise your Regional Director and they will make sure it gets addressed by our legal counsel. If it is something urgent, please contact the Executive Director asap at henry@ava.org Please do not ever sign any legal documents on behalf of the AVA or share any club files or other confidential information with a third party even if subpoenaed without consulting our legal counsel first. If you are uncertain, it is always best to advise your Regional Director first before taking any action.

ACE Community Events Update

In January of 2017 a new classification of AVA events was introduced to the NEC by the Programs Committee Chair, Debbie Kruep. These events called "AVA Community Events" (ACE) were approved by the NEC in August 2017. The Community

Events fall into three categories; Youth Community Events, Traditional Community Events, and Guided Community Events. Unfortunately, the start date for these programs has been postponed until the infrastructure has been set up to support this type of new events.

The ACE Events fall into the following three classifications:

ACE Youth Community Events – This type of event will cater to clubs who will be working with youth in the elementary, middle and high school environment. Accessibility will be limited to protect the identity and well-being of minors who will be participating.

ACE Traditional Community Events — This type of event is comparable to the traditional event clubs currently host with the exception that this type of event does not have to be designed according to IVV guidelines. Hopefully this will allow clubs more flexibility to customize community events in their regions where an IVV event is not possible due to constraints of IVV guidelines thus drawing more participation.

AVA Guided Community Events – These events are de-signed to encourage weekly participation on a *regular* ba-sis. Fun walks, guided walks, meet ups, etc., are examples of events that could fall into this category. Individual maps will not be required so long as there is a guide on each walk and all participants follow the guide.

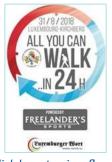
Although non-IVV/AVA Community Events are not required to follow IVV guidelines, the AVA will be out-lining club and insurance criteria for these types of events prior to inception. Also, because these events are not required to adhere to IVV guidelines, participants cannot receive IVV credit for attending any of these events.

Just as a friendly reminder please make sure your Year Round Walk Boxes are in a secure location so information inside of the boxes is secured.

Support Our National and International Friends

International

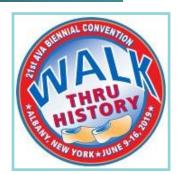
National







Click here for more information.





33rd Annual Spring Volksmarch Crazy Horse Memorial

Click here for more information

When You Stay at the Red Rood You Save and the AVA Gains!



The AVA will receive 5% of all room revenues when you book at a Red Roof Inn using the Volume Plus Number (623002)! Red Roof' Inn's great rates and quality rooms means that you won't be breaking the bank to afford a comfortable room. Through the American Volkssport Association, Red Roof Inn is

also offering additional value. When you book your reservation using Volume Plus Number 623002, you'll save 15% off Red Roof Inn's Best Available rate. Red Roof Inn's Volume Plus Number works just like an online coupon code. Use this link https://www.redroof.com/deals/partner/American Volkssport Association and Red Roof Inn's online discount code will automatically be filled in for you! Or go to www.RedRoof.com to make a reservation. All you have to do to receive a discount at participating inns is enter Volume Plus Number 623002 in the VP+ / ID # slot. You can also make a reservation with an inn directly by calling 1-800-RED-ROOF (800-733-7663). You are required to provide the Volume Plus Number 623002 to the reservationist when you make your reservation, BEFORE arriving at any Red Roof Inn property.

Checkpoint Available Via Email to All Club Members Who Request It

To receive an electronic copy of the Checkpoint 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 Samanta at samanta@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.





