



Hello NW Volkssporters!

1. **Seabreeze Success.** Congratulations Capitol Volkssport Club on another exceptional Seabreeze event! Great walks, an entertaining dinner and wonderful camaraderie all weekend. Well done to all who worked so hard to put on the event and many thanks to all the participants who make it so worthwhile.
2. **What's next?** Next up on the multi-day event list is the Seattle Link Anniversary walks 13-14 April, closely followed by the Four Plus club 27-28 April walks in the Grand Coulee area. Right after that is the Phoenix Festival on Vancouver Island on 3-5 May, with more group walks moving up the island the following week. Check the Pathfinder or event listing on the AVA website for details.
3. **Proposed Bylaws Changes.** As we approach the biennial convention the board is compiling motions for the membership to consider. There is still time for you to propose new motions; please give it some thought. Among the items reviewed recently are the following:
  - Motion to increase club votes based on AVA Associate Member totals. Purpose is to give more voice to larger clubs with more members and give added incentive to become AVA Associate Members.
  - Proposal to move AVA accounting year to calendar year versus current Jul-Jun accounting year.
  - Proposal to allow the board to add up to three At-Large Members to the board, bringing in critical skills and contacts for the benefit of our program.
  - Move of operational committees under the supervision of the Executive Director, while the Board will continue to oversee committees related to Board business.
4. **Convention Delegates.** Delegate packets have been mailed to clubs for designation of your delegate or proxy. Be sure to complete them immediately and return. Contact the national office if your club hasn't received your packet.
5. **Texas Trail Roundup.** We had a good turnout of NW walkers at the San Antonio TX walks in support of the bid for an International Marching League (IML) event. Some great walks through the historic city. I understand the final decision will be made by the IML board in a month or so and I'll pass along the news.
6. **Fall Extravaganza.** If you haven't gotten the word yet, the northwest has an amazing lineup of events over 11 days in September. Starting in Bend OR, from 12-15 September, the Columbia River Volkssport Club will host a wide variety of walking, biking and swimming events, plus a dinner, meet and greet and much more. The following weekend (20-22 Sep) the Evergreen State Volkssport Association has a Round-up in Winthrop WA, featuring some great walking and bike events, a dinner and more. As we move from Bend to Winthrop there will be guided walks in Madras OR (16<sup>th</sup>), The Dalles OR (17<sup>th</sup>), Yakima WA (18<sup>th</sup>) and Leavenworth WA (19<sup>th</sup>), with lots more opportunities to enjoy numerous year round/seasonal events along the way. What a walker's dream event; come join us!!
7. **Online Challenge Status.** We now have 51 regional members on our Regional challenge team! We have double the participants of any other region and are in first place! At least one member, Joe Kelly, has already completed the 2 million steps in the Walk Across Canada and several are right behind him. Congrats to all and keep up the fun.
8. **Quarterly closeout.** Treasurers and walkbox owners, we're fast approaching the end of the first quarter and I'd like to encourage you to complete your reporting to AVA in the first two weeks of April. Why? We've been asking our national office to cut costs and improve service, which they are diligently doing.

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One way for us to help them be more efficient is to be more timely and accurate with our reporting of quarterly and annual reports. Thanks for your assistance.

7. **Big Give Push.** We're in the window to begin making donations to the Big Give, culminating with the 24-hour drive on 28 March. Last year our region had 68 donors contributing \$18,414, thanks especially to Nancy Wittenberg and your other national officers from the region who made substantial donations. To help earn some bonus money this year I'm asking clubs to consider increasing donations to a level equal to \$1 times the number of free walkers reported in 2018. Also, if you can split your club and family donations between spouses or on different credit cards it will also help toward increasing the number of recorded donors, which can help earn more bonus money. Finally, reach out to family and friends to ask for their support as well; every small donation will boost us toward our goal. I'll forward a "peer-to-peer" donor appeal process that our Funds Development Committee has recommended.

8. **Free Walker Reduction.** I've begun an appeal through our state associations to reduce the number of free walkers reported from our traditional and year round events. Data from 2017 and 2018 show that the northwest region reported more than half the free walkers recorded by AVA in each of those years. Our national program can no longer survive on only credit walkers paying to participate. We are now consuming well over \$100,000 annually from the reserves to cover expenses while the board and national office work diligently to grow our membership and find new funding sources. As our AVA president wrote in the latest TAW, we only have 3-4 years at this pace to achieve a turnaround or face having to drastically reduce staff and support from the national office. At the January Board meeting we agreed to allow all regions a chance to reduce free walking through our own processes, but we need to make a quick, consistent change across our region. What's needed is to have all walkers pay the participation fee, while limiting free walking to its intended use as a recruiting tool. Steps that I'm advocating through the state association meetings to your clubs include educating everyone on the need for the fees, discontinuing advertising that our program is available for free other than on a trial basis, and changing event registration logs to reflect categories of "Participant", "Guest" (in lieu of free) and "Donation". Looking at our early 2019 traditional event data, I see that 271 of 679 or 40 percent of participants so far this year were reported to AVA as free walkers. We need to at least get below 10 percent. Please ensure your clubs are represented at the next OR and WA state meetings and begin having club conversations about how we can tackle this issue.

9. **Officer & Club Member Update.** Many clubs have held or will hold elections soon and are finishing membership renewals. Be sure to update your officers in the AVA sanction system and update your membership number. This data is useful to me and the national office to keep in touch with you.

Happy Trails!

Tom Baltes, NW Regional Director, 505-298-1256, [TLBaltes@aol.com](mailto:TLBaltes@aol.com)