

Footsteps

Fun, Fitness, Friendship

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For the latest on events and news visit our website:

nebraskatrailblazers.com



The Prez Sez...



Next year will be a year of anniversaries: AVA 50th, U.S. 250th and Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC)

40th. So I am going to write about the last one. The RTC may be celebrating next year but this year, 2025, The Cowboy Trail in Nebraska (a section of the RTC that generally runs along Hwys 275 and 20) celebrated its 30th anniversary.

So what is a Rail to Trail? Going back 45 years, there was a steady decline of active railway mileage in the U.S. In 1980, Congress deregulated the railroad industry which made it easier for railways to discontinue unprofitable routes. This National Trails System Act was amended three years later into a law with the concept of **railbanking**. The law signed by President Reagan in 1983 allowed railways to voluntarily give up a disused rail corridor to be reworked into an active transportation pathway for human powered travel with the stipulation that it may be converted back to rail use should the need ever arise. Trail usage includes walking, biking (including E-bikes), horseback riding and mountain biking. And boy, did that get hikers pumped!

More than 4,800 miles of railbanked corridor have been repurposed into 273 rail-trails and counting. This includes our very own Cowboy Trail here in Nebraska, which once

completed will become the longest path along the cross-country Great American Rail-Trail. In Nebraska it will connect 30 rural communities and all 4 of the state's distinct ecoregions. Counties include Antelope, Brown, Cherry, Holt, Madison, Rock and Sheridan in which currently 203 of the 317 miles are completed. The endpoints are Rushville in the west and Norfolk in the east.

NE Game and Parks Commission, which maintains the trail, agrees that the slower speed (walk, bike, horse) enables you to really see and experience nature. Trail users will look for fauna and flora in respective regions; burrowing owls and swift foxes in the short grass; pronghorn and sand milkweed in the Sandhills, etc. It's often double-digit mileage from one town to the next; self-sufficiency is part of the deal. The money visitors spend at rural cafes, grocery stores and gas stations can help keep those establishments in business.

Our walks have occasionally used these RTC paths. Sounds like a fun bike ride to me!

~Lori





Sandy peaks

As we finish what has been an outstanding year of walks, especially our special events such as Walking Week, the joint Iowa weekend and the Tater Tours, we can look back with pride in a job well done. And now, what an exciting year we have ahead of us!

We start with our annual soup walk. This will be in a brand-new start on a brand-new trail. Starting at Candlewood Church, we will walk the South Omaha Trail. At least I will say that this is a trail I have never walked.

April will bring a very special event as we are doing a Signature Event for AVA's 50th anniversary. We will start with an easy walk on the First Avenue Trail in Council Bluffs, checking out its newest murals. The newest and longest mural in Council Bluffs depicts 21 rail cars along this Rails to Trails walk, celebrating 40 years of Rails to Trails. That evening, join us for a banquet, getting to know all of our out-of-town guests. Saturday is the signature event. Starting at the Rivers Edge Pavilion in Council Bluffs, we will check out the new pier and tree top trails (if they are open) on the Council Bluffs side of the river before we cross the Bob Kerrey Bridge to The RiverFront Parks. The afternoon has us visiting the Squirrel Cage Jail and U.P. Museum for guided tours. We will finish out the weekend with a Sunday walk in Nebraska City, where the apple trees should be in bloom. So definitely save this weekend!

May brings us to Walking Week with seven days of walking lined up. This is a tentative schedule and may change by the time this newsletter gets to print.



Mar 7 Sat		Soup Walk, Candlewood Church
Apr 17 Fri	2:00 pm 5:00 pm	First Avenue Trail Quaker Steak & Lube Buffet
Apr 18 Sat	9-11 2:00	Rivers Edge Pavillion UP & Squirrel Cage Museums
Apr 19	10:00	Nebraska City Group Walk
May 18 Mon		TBA
May 19 Tues	5:30 pm	Wabash Trace
May 20 Wed	10 am	Chalco
May 21 Thurs	5:30 pm	Flanagan Lake
May 22 Fri		Possible Tour of Holland Center with donations for Hungry for Music for Instrument Day
May 23 Sat		Standing Bear Traditional event
May 24 Sun		Shelby, Iowa Traveling Stamp
June 6 Sat		Crazy Horse car pool event to Crazy Horse to support the AVA anniversary.
June 14 Sun	10-12	College World Series-Gifting table to celebrate AVA's 50 th Work by the Arch at the Gene Leahy Mall.
July 4 Sat		Seward

That is as far as we have gotten with planning, so if you have any great ideas for a walk, let us know. We will especially need an indoor start point for the pie walk, so if you know of any good places to start a walk, let us know as soon as possible.

~Sandy

Walker of the Year Nominees

"I nominate **Jill Champley** as Walker of the Year 2025. Jill is a tireless walker who does not say no to any walking opportunity, either those scheduled by the club or otherwise offered by members in a spontaneous manner, including walks outside our geographical area. In addition to being a great walker, 5k or 10k makes no difference for Jill, she has become the 'to-go person' when it comes to activities other than walking. Frequently, she volunteers to prepare and provide decorations and supplies, as well as desserts for various club's events; to represent the club and cover the club booth at events organized by other organizations, specifically The River Front. As a treasurer, she plays a key role in keeping track of participants at walks, registering people, and accurately keeping records and reporting the club's state of finances. Jill is very deserving of the Walker of the Year 2025." (2021 WoTY)

"I nominate **Lori Anderson** as the 2025 Walker of the Year. Our club president travels from Seward, over 75 miles away, to conduct club meetings, take part in club walks and events. She leads group walks and performs other volunteer duties at walks and events. She represents our club by attending AVA conventions and regional round-ups. Her upbeat personality and engaging manner attract new members and retain current members. She is very deserving of this honor."

"I would like to nominate **Sandy Spaulding** for Walker of the Year 2025. It has been 13 years since she last won it and in that time she has been indispensable to our club in almost every aspect of our activities. Even when she can't walk herself!"



Hotel Information

For those who will stay in Council Bluffs during the AVA's 50th anniversary, a block of rooms has been reserved at:

Holiday Inn and Suites at Ameristar
2202 River Road
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

\$115/night + 12% tax king room
\$125/night + 12% tax two bed room

Includes: breakfast, airport shuttle and shuttle to our walks, Friday dinner and the museum tours on Saturday.

Call: 712-322-5050, option 0
Ask for "50th Anniversary America's Walking Club"

Or use this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/AVA50April26hotel>

****Reservations must be made by 3/26/26 to receive this rate.****

Club Elections

President	Lori Anderson
Vice President	Joyce Sobczyk
Treasurer	Jill Champley
Secretary	Dave Brown

On November 20th our webmaster, Jeanne Miller, will send out a link to vote from the netrailblazers@gmail.com account. We encourage everyone to vote using that link. Club voting for officers at the December meeting will be limited to a voice vote, approving (or not) all officer nominations since all are running unopposed. WoTY voting will allow for the use of paper ballots at the meeting.

Making Memories on the Mighty Mo – an AVA 50th Anniversary Event

(By Jeanne Miller)

You're going to want to mark your calendars for April 17 – 19, 2026 and join the Nebraska Wander Freunde Trailblazers across the Missouri River in the Gateway to the West: Council Bluffs, Iowa. We've planned 3 great walks, a group dinner, local museum tours and, of course, cake, to welcome walkers across the country to celebrate AVA's 50th Anniversary with us.



First Avenue Trail in Council Bluffs, IA

We start the weekend with a Friday Group Walk of the First Avenue Trail in Council Bluffs. The trail is a new addition to the Rails-to-Trails network, featuring beautiful murals, landscaping and a quiet walk in the heart of the city. Following the walk will be the group dinner.

Saturday's Traditional Walk starts in Council Bluffs and crosses over the Mighty Mo to Omaha, NE, exploring the vibrant riverfronts on both sides of the river. That afternoon, we'll explore local history at the Squirrel Cage Jail and Union Pacific Railroad

Museums in Council Bluffs.

The next morning sees the Trailblazers on the move to Nebraska City, NE, the home of Arbor Day. True to its name, the area will be filled with trees in bloom. Steinhart Park in this large apple-producing region is the starting point for this Group Walk.

Hotel rooms in Council Bluffs have been reserved for this event. The hotel will provide free breakfast and Wi-Fi, shuttles to the airport and our local events. The club will be carpooling to Nebraska City.



*Arbor Lodge entry
in Nebraska City, NE*

Once we've finalized a couple of details, you can download the flyer for this memorable weekend at our website, <https://tinyurl.com/AVA50April26> . Be sure to register early to take advantage of special hotel rates and limited spaces at the dinner and museum tours.

Magic City



Magic City



Magic City (South Omaha)



Slattery Vintage Estates



Slattery Vintage Estates



Culture Fair



Tater Tours

Wabash



Tater Tours

Downtown Omaha



Tater Tours Downtown Omaha



Tater Tours Little Italy



Tater Tours

Little Italy



Tater Tours Lincoln



Tater Tours Lincoln



Tater Tours Kearney





Mark your calendars: Upcoming Events!!

Nov

- 2 Pie Walk, Omaha NE.....Nebraska Trailblazers
- 2 Neighborhood Walk, Richmond Heights MO.....Gateway Milers NFP
- 8 Veterans Walk, Madison WI.....Madison Area Volkssport Assn.
- 8 Unique Cemetery, Greenway & Seminary Shrewsbury MO.....Gateway Milers
- 9 Prairie State Park, Mindenmines MO.....Dogwood Trailblazers Assn.
- 9 Veterans Walk, Madison WI.....Madison Area Volkssport Assn.
- 28 Opt Out Friday, New Town MO.....Saint Louis Walkers

Dec

- 6 Holiday Walk, Spearfish SD.....Black Hills Volkssport Assn
- 14 Old Market Holiday Lights Walk, Omaha NE.....Nebraska Trailblazers

Jan

- 4 Northtown Mall Walk, Blaine MN.....Lake Country Wanderers
- 7 Holiday Walk, Spearfish SD.....Black Hills Volkssport Assn.
- 11 East Towne Indoor Mall Walk, Madison WI.....Madison Area Volkssport Assn.

NWFT Officers

President
Lori Sue Anderson

Secretary
Dave Brown
smackdb5@hotmail.com



Vice President
Joyce Sobczyk

Treasurer
Jill Champley

Speaker Schedule

November	3	Food Bank of the Heartland Sarah Kalhorn-Wisecup
December	1	Museo Latino Sylvia Wells
February	2	TBA
March	2	TBA



Meeting News

Our next meetings will be December 1 at Maple Ridge Retirement Community, 3525 N. 167 Circle, Omaha, at 7:00 p.m. There will be a short business meeting, and a short program followed by refreshments. Just a reminder that the club meetings are the 1st Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. with some exceptions: no meetings in January, April, July or August, and it is the 2nd Monday in September. Don't forget that at each meeting, we have a drawing for a \$10 door prize. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be a club member to win this.

Club Dues

Dues are \$10 for a single membership and \$15 for a family membership. Anyone who joins later in 2025 will have their membership pro-rated so that it expires 12/31/25. Renewals for the upcoming year are due December 31st.

Please send to: NWFT
PO Box 8147
Omaha NE 68108

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