Annual General Meeting
President's 2023 Report

Respectfully submitted by Jane Fawcett

The year 2023 was a most productive year for the Ottawa Voyageurs Walking Club with more and more people finding the Club through our website, our Facebook page, through Meetup and meeting people at our walks and distributing our business cards. Talking to people about the Club, explaining what we are doing out as a group. That is how Ramya joined; she saw us out walking from the Shoppers Drug Mart on Alta Vista. We piqued her interest and she inquired who were we and immediately join us on the walk. W*ord of mouth* advertising, as well as distribution of our business cards, providing information to those who inquire about our club, has them asking friends to join a walk with us. All these efforts help to promote our joy of walking, and making new friends. You, the members are our best ambassadors. At By the end of December 2023 our membership totaled 124 members. The club hasn't had those kind of numbers in many years and there is no reason that we can't keep growing.

The AGM reports from Executive members show just how busy your Executive has been over the course of this year and the impact various weather events such as poor air quality or torrential rain resulted in cancellations and rescheduled events. This year there were 10 events and 26 permanent trail walks and 5 Wednesday evening walks. Marion highlighted these in her report. Marg and Kathy manage the club Facebook page is managed by Marg and Kathy, while our Meetup page is managed by Karen. Kathy is our webmaster keeping all information up to date.

What I love about our Club members are the comments that we are a friendly and welcoming group of people who love to walk, chat and get to know others. Many of our newer members have been taking on leadership roles on walks by stepping up to offer to lead a group or be sweep. We are a group of volunteers that make up this Club and it is the expectation that all members step up to help in a variety of roles. What roles do you ask? Offer suggestions for new walk start locations or event ideas in different parts of the city or rural areas nearby, offer to pre walk routes, helping at registration by handing out stickers, taking money, and offer to come up with new routes for us to walk at a current start point. Gather a group of friends and become the Social Committee to help out four times a year with larger social events or plan social events out in the community for the Club.

Carole Robichaud has stepped up this winter to help organize and send out the snowshoe emails. Priscilla Corcoran has been helping Karen find new snowshoe trails for us to discover and use. Both have joined the Club in the last year.

What we also need are members to offer their assistance by coming on to the executive to take on roles that many of us have been doing for a long time. Many of us have done multiple roles over the years and we need new members to come on board with new ideas and energy so we can move on. As members on the current executive, Benoît has been involved for 29 years, Kathy for 25 years, Karen 17, Marion for 14, and myself for 9. And we all have been active members for much longer than these years offering to help out whenever we can and enjoying every single year as members. I have been a member for 30 years and when I was working, I frequently helped with registration. Step up and offer to look after registration one day, or offer to take charge of the money or stickers. Every little bit helps.

I would like to acknowledge, and thank every member of our Club executive for their friendship, the many talents they bring to the club and the amount of work that they contribute to making our Club so friendly, and welcoming, with great trails and locations chosen for you to walk from. I would like to recognize and thank our Permanent walk box holders, all members of the Club but not necessarily on the executive, who have reworked routes so that we have a variety of trails to use. I would also like to thank Jim McConkey for continuing to send out weekly emails about our walks to all members, and updating the email list frequently to make sure all new members get the emails in a timely fashion. I would like to thank Marion Boom for her leadership and outstanding job as Trails Coordinator creating quality walks for you to enjoy as she is leaving this job as of July 1st. Marion will be continue to be the Point of Contact for the Club PT's only after this date. We have a group of executive members who will be taking up the job of selecting routes & locations, mapping the routes and sending to the volunteer coordinator for walkers to pre-walk. If you have an idea of a new start location for our Permanent trails, I invite you to contact one of us.

Next Saturday is the Canadian Volkssport Federation's Annual General Meeting and Karen Venema has put her name forward for the position of Vice President. I am hoping that her enthusiasm, initiative and creating the popular Tuesday morning walks along with her role as Secretary will be recognized and she will be successful in getting the votes for this position. Our Club has been very successful with many members taking on leadership roles within the Canadian Volkssport Federation over the years. We have had three CVF Vice Presidents who then went on to became Presidents; Ole Olson, Graham Fawcett and Benoît Pinsonneault, three Treasurers; David Rupar, Carol Harrison and Michelle Demers. Kathy Luten has been the editor of Volkssport Canada for 15 years, and Marion Boom has been Awards Chair for 10 years.

I want to thank Perry Crowder for her years as our Social Convenor and the wonderful job she has done organizing all food and locations for our Club social events for the last 10 years. She i s willing to help but would like to step away from coordinating. I hope that one or more will step up to take over this role to organize the food for the Canada Day, Petrie Island Anniversary, AGM food, and make the reservations for our OVO Christmas dinner. If you are interested please speak to me at the meeting.

I received an email in early July by a liaison with the Military Families Services wondering if our walking club would be a good fit for their families. Considering this is how all Volkssport walking clubs in Canada started when military personnel came back to Canada from serving overseas 40 odd years ago. I was thrilled to make this connection and we organized 3 different walks and extended the invitation to the Military. Despite great communication with them unfortunately families did not show up. I will continue to have our contact follow our Facebook page and perhaps we may get some families out to the walks.

This is Volunteer Appreciation Week and I would like to take a minute to thank all of our member volunteers for the work that they put into helping make our permanent trails and special events such a success.

We are always looking for newer members to step up and share their talents by joining the executive as we are a volunteer driven organization. I urge you to volunteer with the Kingston Walking Festival as our Club offered our support, and have encouraged you, the members, to lend a hand to the Kingston Club as they can't fill all of the volunteer positions themselves. It only takes a few hours out your time to help them out. Thank to those who have already offered to volunteer for the Kingston Walking Festival.