

Get Walking Into a New Season

- By Courtney H. Diener-Stokes For MediaNews Group March 13, 2020



Members of the Chester County Red Rovers, First State Webfooters and the Liberty Bell Wanderers got together for a walk on the Struble Trail in Downingtown.

- Photo courtesy of Chester County Red Rovers



Jeanne Clancy, right, with fellow Chester County Red Rovers, on a recent walk in West Chester.

- Photo courtesy of Chester County Red Rovers



Jeanne Clancy captured this image during a walk at Nolde Forest State Park in Berks County with the Red Rovers of Chester County, a walking group she founded in 2017.

- Photo courtesy of Chester County Red Rovers

With hints of spring in the air, organized walking groups offer a wonderful opportunity to explore the outdoors and see all that nature has to offer. While one might prefer to head out with the aim to enjoy some peace and solitude, and the hope of hearing and spotting some returning songbirds, there are also opportunities to mix and mingle.

Joining a walking group walk, such as the Chester County Red Rovers is a way to focus on fun, fitness and friendship.

“I started the walking club in the beginning of 2017,” said Jeanne Clancy, who lives in Phoenixville, Chester County.

The Red Rovers are a chapter of the American Volkssport Association, which offers a chance to meet others who are fond of exploring the outdoors in an organized fashion.

“I love having structure for getting outside because sometimes you are in a rut,” Clancy said. “It’s nice to learn and see new things and you are meeting new people and aren’t just walking around your neighborhood all the time.”

It was a book she read, *Grandma Gatewood’s Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail* by Ben Montgomery, that inspired her to start the club in Chester County.

“I had done Volkssport a long time ago and it got lost in the shuffle when I changed jobs,” she said. “I like that it’s very organized walking.”

The self-paced walks and hikes are open to anyone of any fitness level. Their aim is to promote personal physical fitness and good health through fun-filled and safe exercise in a stress-free environment. All ages are welcome.

“It’s mostly adults and we have had a couple of families join,” Clancy said, who added they currently have about 50 household members.

The Red Rovers offer five year-round walks and three seasonal walks in addition to group walks that take place monthly. Year-round walks have themed titles such as ‘Phoenixville: Rising from the Ashes’ where walkers have the chance to discover Phoenixville’s industrial past and enjoy the results of its rebirth along borough streets, in parks and along trails. The 10K and 5K walks in Phoenixville begin at the Steel City Coffeehouse.

The year-round walks are intended to be available at any time. All members have to do is head to the designated starting point.

“You get a friend to go along and go to the starting point where there is a box and that’s where you sign up and get the directions for the walk,” said Clancy, who added that the directions point out things of interest along the way.

Regardless of a walk’s location, Clancy thinks about what people might find interesting when planning and mapping out a walk. She said she loves planning the walks and always aims to make them educational.

“This past Saturday we did our year-round walk in West Chester,” Clancy said. “When I planned the walk, I focused on landmarks that are on the National Register of Historic Places and those that have received West Chester Preservation Awards — we try to get some history in.”

The Club’s group walks typically take place on first and third Saturdays where you can expect anywhere from three to twenty walkers to join in.

Their seasonal walks begin April 1. The ‘Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site & French Creek State Park’ walk is one such example where walkers can explore the history of Hopewell Furnace and scenic French Creek. The 10K and 5K walks begin at the Hopewell Furnace Park Office.

Clancy, who works as a children’s librarian at the Chester County Library, said she would love to see more families get involved with the club.

“I think it’s a great family activity,” she said. “You go outside and take a walk and learn things.”

Did You Know?

Local Walking Groups

Organized walks this time of year offer a great way to soak in the fresh air and sunshine while mingling with others in the great outdoors. To find a walk that’s either convenient to where you live or offers you a mini escape to explore the surrounding counties, here are some active walking groups to consider.

Chester County Red Rovers

Year-round walks and seasonal walks available

*Stay tuned to the Club’s website for a Pottstown walk in the works for late spring, early summer.

For more information: www.redroverswalk.org

Pottstown Hospital Senior Walking Group (open to the public)

Offers weekly walks

For more information: 610-327-7699

Liberty Bell Wanderers

See website for walks offered and membership

For more information: www.libertybellwanderers.net

Warwick Walking Club

Walks take place Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-10 am

For more information: 610-469-1916

Berks Community Hiking Club

For more information: www.berkshiker.blogspot.com

Hikes take place every Saturday