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TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

St. Helena Striders hope to find community in walking

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The St. Helena Striders hope to form a sense of community through regular walks. From left are Pam Smithers, Richard Seiferheld, David Knudsen and Michelle Deasy, pictured here on the trail next to the library where the first walk is scheduled for this Saturday. Everyone is invited.

Jesse Duarte, Star

Members of St. Helena's newest group aren't raising money, drinking wine or arguing over whose street has the worst potholes.

They're doing another quintessentially St. Helena-ish thing: They're inviting you to go for a walk.

"People tell me they've been meaning to get out walking, but they just haven't done it," said Michelle Deasy, one of the founders of St. Helena Striders. "Here's an opportunity."

The group will walk on the first Saturday of each month, starting with the popular vineyard path from the library to the Napa River on Saturday, Feb. 3.

The flat 2.2-mile walk starts at the corner of Library Lane and Adams Street at 9 a.m., but arrive at 8:45 for complimentary coffee and coffee cake. Leashed dogs are welcome.

"We're hoping this becomes a way to knit together old and young, visitors and residents," David Knudsen said.

Walking promotes good health, helps local businesses that depend on foot traffic, and cuts emissions in a town that produces more greenhouse gases per capita than any other city in Napa County.

Walking is a way of life in many European towns. The St. Helena Striders hope their monthly outings will inspire informal walks throughout the community.

"Just like the Vine Trail is stitching together Napa Valley from a bike perspective, maybe there could be a series of walks could also be a draw to the valley, separate from biking," Knudsen said. "It's great for community, great for health, and great for visitors and residents."

A lot of the service clubs and fraternal organizations that tied St. Helenans together have weakened over the years, Pam Smithers said. Organized walks might create a similar sense of community.

"St. Helena's strength has always been ... its community," Smithers said.

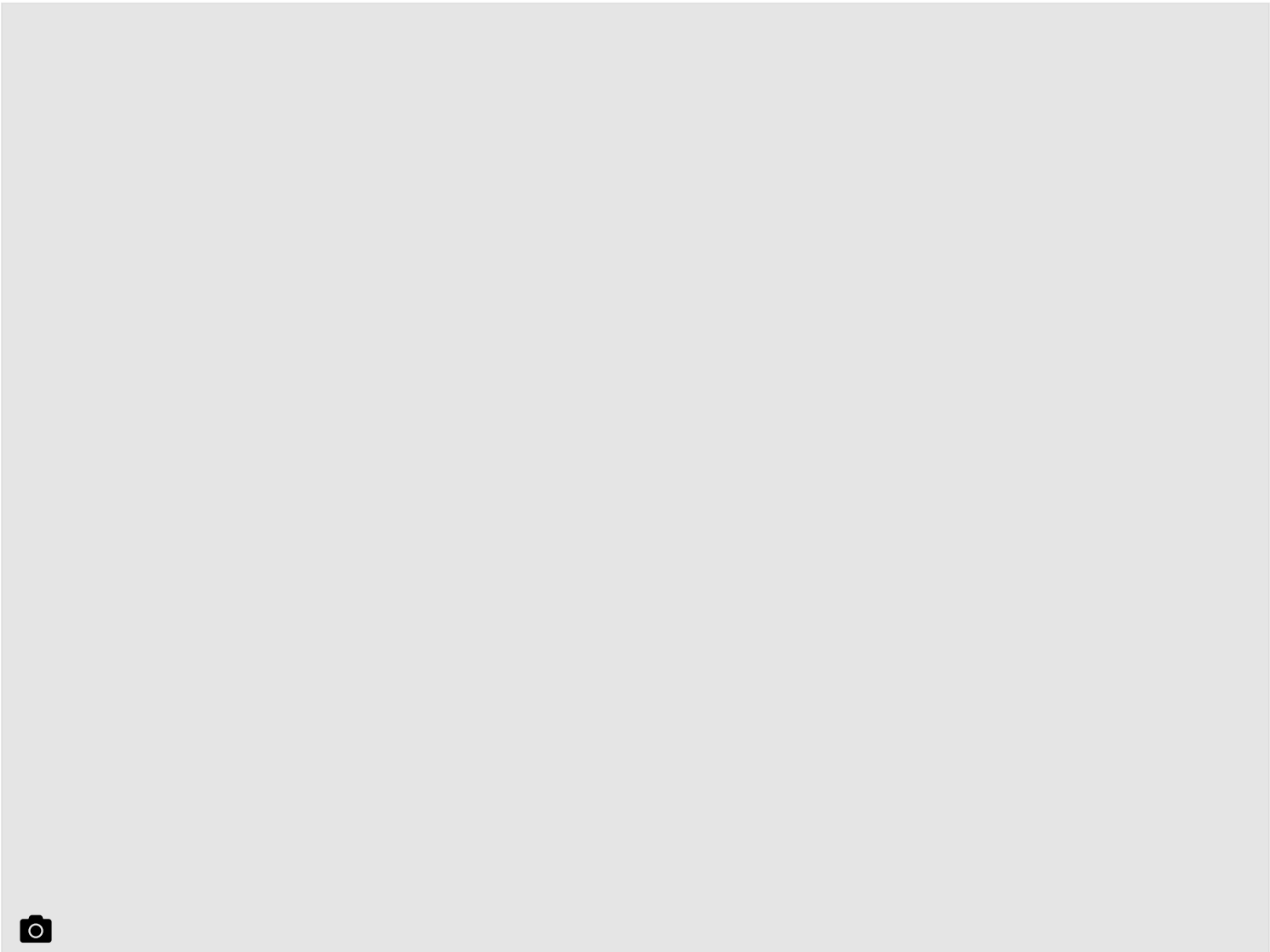
"Bocce has been a big community driver in St. Helena," Knudsen said. "We want this to be like bocce."

Future walks are planned at Bell Canyon Reservoir (2 miles, moderate grade), Main Street (3 miles, flat), the Lower Reservoir (1 mile, flat), Lake Hennessey, Moore Creek Park, and Mount St. Helena.

For more information, go to **sthelenastriders.org**.

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MORE INFORMATION



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⊗ By Jesse Duarte

St. Helena Star Editor

