

## 2016 Annual Report Philadelphia Chapter American Pilgrims On the Camino

**Co-Coordinator:** Lois Evans and Roy Racer

2016 marked our Chapter's Second Year! We have enjoyed continued growth, a steady core of involved members, and a wide range of activities. We maintained our pattern of Quarterly Gatherings, averaged 2 activities/month, took advantage of opportunities to co-sponsor special events, and initiated MeetUp as a workable way to keep members informed, more easily manage RSVPs, and recruit new members through exposure to the broader community. Guided by our 2016 Areas for Development, we can count many accomplishments this year. A brief summary follows, together with our 2017 Goals.

2016 Accomplishments: We...	Goals for 2017: We plan to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than doubled our membership from 130 in January to 270 by Year's end*</li> <li>• Expanded location of our activities to encompass 7+ counties in PA and NJ</li> <li>• Held 4 well-attended Quarterly Gatherings in February (n=60), June (n=25), September (n=35) and December (=30+)</li> <li>• Co-sponsored 3 special events (Day of the Pilgrim with St. Thomas Episcopal, film showing/Annie O'Neil Q&amp;A with Maternity BVM Catholic, film preview of A. O'Neil's <i>Phil's Camino @ Roxy Theatre, Philadelphia</i>)</li> <li>• Organized 14 walks (n= 4 to 9, M=9);</li> <li>• Held 2 <i>About the Camino</i> information sessions (n= 8 &amp; 18)</li> <li>• Supported members in organizing over half of these events (14 of 25)</li> <li>• Formalized our Mentoring system (18 active mentors, 8 of these new; 7 new mentor/mentee matches in 2016)</li> <li>• Refined our communication system to employ both <i>MailChimp</i> (primarily for regular Newsletters and new member self-registration w/ automated Welcome) and <i>MeetUp</i> (for recruiting new members, managing RSVPs and location information, and self-directed communication among members)</li> <li>• Instituted a Monthly Chapter Newsletter with calendar of upcoming events and recap of recently completed ones</li> <li>• Opened a Chapter DropBox for internal use by Co-coordinators</li> <li>• Participated in 2 conference call meetings with national leaders and other chapter coordinators</li> <li>• Continued successfully our planned annual leadership transition process for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase our total activities to 35, including Quarterly Gatherings, Information Sessions, monthly+ hikes and walks, documentary screenings, monthly newsletter.</li> <li>• Broaden offerings to include, e.g., talks on history of Camino, member storytelling, gathering at a restaurant or bar (v. member homes), Spanish food &amp; wine potluck, etc.</li> <li>• Continue to encourage/make it easy for members to organize events</li> <li>• Organize one overnight hike</li> <li>• Operationalize our 'lending library' to enable members to share Camino-related books &amp; videos with one another</li> <li>• Finalize 2017 plans with neighbor Chapters</li> <li>• Initiate Chapter representation at National Gathering</li> <li>• Conduct member survey re: interests, communication preferences, willingness to volunteer, etc.</li> <li>• Evaluate leadership structure for 2018 forward; consider adding more co-coordinators, establishing committees and/or formal member roles, etc. to right size and distribute the leadership and management functions as the Chapter continues to grow.</li> </ul>

<p>one of two chapter coordinators, maintaining former coordinator(s) in advisory role(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged members to join APOC, contribute to <i>LaConcha!</i>, attend Hospitalero training (one member trained &amp; served in summer, 2016)</li> <li>• Initiated planning for 2017 collaborative events between our northern and southern neighbor APOC chapters (NYC and Greater Washington, DC)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Note:</b> This represents 195 (including spouses) in MailChimp and 75 additional non-duplicated members in MeetUp. Of these 270, 111 have attended at least one activity this year.</p>	
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**Here are brief summaries of some of our 2017 offerings**

	<p><b>February 21: Thomas Pilgrim's Day.</b> Some 60 Philly APOC members and parishioners enjoyed a <i>Day of the Pilgrim</i> at historic St. Thomas Episcopal in Flourtown. With yellow shell-and-arrow signage directing us and copies of credentials and other artifacts greeting us when we entered the social hall, we 'joined' the cast of <i>Six Ways to Santiago</i> documentary to remember or anticipate the Camino, and then many strolled up the hill to the Chapel for a Pilgrim's Mass (with censor!). Finally, back to the social hall for a specially prepared Spanish Pilgrim's Supper that provided opportunity for camaraderie and conversation – topping off a well-rounded day that was reminiscent of many of our members' own experiences on the Camino.</p>
	<p><b>March 5: Monroe Bikeway Walk.</b> Lots of fun and great chats abounded on this 12.8 mile NJ walk from Glassboro to Williamstown &amp; back. The temperature was in the low 40s but it was sunny and beautiful. We had 10 walkers, including a few getting ready for an upcoming Camino. Afterwards, we had lunch at a local diner.</p>



**March 16: Film Screening and Q&A With Annie O'Neil.** We co-sponsored with Maternity BVM a viewing of *Six Ways to Santiago* at the parish on Old Bustleton Avenue, Philadelphia. We were fortunate to have Annie O'Neil, one of the producers and featured pilgrims, for the Q&A. Some ~60 Philadelphia APOC members and Maternity parishioners attended the viewing and continued a lively Q&A over refreshments in the lobby.

The next morning, Annie hosted a viewing of her own new documentary, *Phil's Camino*, at the Roxy Theatre in Center City, Philadelphia.



**March 19: Chestnut Hill.** Twelve members journeyed on this 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of winter strolls in the NW section of Philadelphia. This time, some sensible walkers went to Valley Green or the Wissahickon bridge at Kitchen's Lane and 7 others plowed on to lunch at the Philadelphia Art Museum and then to Suburban Station for a 12+ mile adventure with a train ride back to the starting location. It was a delightful day for strolling - a tad overcast, cool, not too windy on the East River Drive. It was good camaraderie for all and enjoyable schmoozing - reliving previous walks and planning new ones.



**April 2: Delaware Canal Towpath, Lambertville, NJ walk.** We started with a little rain but finished with sunshine and an eagle sighting! The walk took us along the Delaware River on both the NJ and PA sides. We had a nice mix of regulars and some new faces-- those who will be walking an upcoming Camino.



**April 17: Schuylkill Banks/Gray's Crescent/Cira Green Walk.** Twelve of us joined member John Randolph (founder and former Director of the Schuylkill River Development Corporation) for a guided walk along the Schuylkill River Trail to Grays Crescent and back to a fabulous view of Center City from Cira (South) Green. Along the way we learned some of the River's history (industrial origins, current reclamation & development, future plans), saw familiar scenes from an entirely different viewpoint, and discovered interesting things like a skateboard park and a junk pile used to train contraband-sniffing dogs.



**May 7: Pennypack Park & Bryn Athen Cathedral.** We had a great time walking the Trail which took us along Fox Chase Farm (a working farm within Philadelphia city limits), and on to the Bryn Athen Cathedral where we explored the grounds and cathedral.





**May 28: Green Lane Park Walk.** Five APOC members and wannabe pilgrims enjoyed an afternoon hike at Green Lane Park, Montgomery County, PA. The group walked 6.5 miles on the Blue Trail along Deep Creek Lake and Green Lane Reservoir. Our leader, with her intimate knowledge of the park and its flora and fauna, made the hike a very educational experience. The hikers stopped for a lake side lunch and shared stories of recent Camino adventures. It was an enjoyable day of fun and fellowship.



**June 6: Center City Spring Gathering.** Boisterous weather couldn't keep everyone away for the Spring Gathering in Philadelphia. We even got to enjoy the gorgeous Center City view from the rooftop deck along with plentiful tapas, wine and tales. We heard from recently returned peregrinos, those preparing an upcoming journey, and others in the group.



**June 11: John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge** On a sunny and gorgeous but also hot and humid Saturday, fourteen peregrines enjoyed a beautiful hike. We didn't get to see the bald eagle nest but we did get to enjoy the beautiful scenery, other wildlife, and each other's company.



**June 12: Member Publication.** Rick Weiss published 'The Camino de Santiago: A journey of gratitude' in the Philadelphia Inquirer, p. N-04.



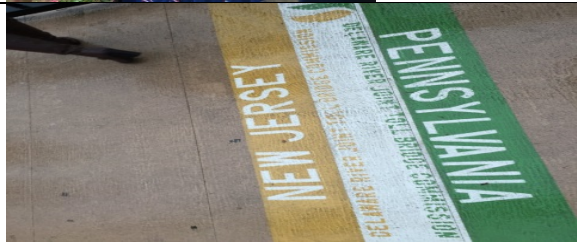
**July 16: Hike at Valley Forge.** On another absurdly hot and humid day, we enjoyed a 10 mile hike at Valley Forge. We hiked both Mt. Joy and Mt. Misery and loved hearing about the recent Camino journeys of several members.



**August 7: Cobbs Creek & Bartram's Garden.** A small group braved the sweltering heat on a Sunday and got to explore various parts of West Philadelphia. We walked along Cobbs Creek, delighted in the lovely urban walk that is the 58th Street Greenway, and strolled through Bartram's Garden. On our way back, we visited Mt. Moriah Cemetery and returned along Cobbs Creek.



**September 18. Late Summer Gathering.** Some 35 of us gathered in a members' NJ backyard. At the edge of late summer, it was a perfect afternoon for sharing stories of recent, upcoming and planned Caminos as well as an abundance of good food that included the last of the New Jersey corn-on-the-cob, home-made wine and grilled German 'hot dogs' and hamburgers. Even a late evening downpour did not quench the energy exuded by this group as it came together to hear a member describe her training and service as a Hospitalero, learn of opportunities to contribute at the national and local levels, and contemplate upcoming walks.



**October 8: Washington's Crossing walk.** We had another rainy day but enjoyed a ~15 mile hike along both sides of the Delaware River...even crashed a Community Craft Fair! We had interesting conversations, enjoyed each other's company, and made plans for upcoming walks and gatherings...



**October 22: Wissahickon walk.** A little rain didn't keep our small group away as we enjoyed the charming Wissahickon area with the fall colors in full bloom. It was very picturesque and the trees were full enough to keep the rain away. A lovely day with lovely people!



**November 5: Wharton State Forest Hike.** On a gorgeous sunny Saturday, nine hikers met at Batso Village for a 12 mile hike through NJ's Wharton State Forest. We walked along the Batso and Mullica Rivers and enjoyed the fall foliage, stopping to enjoy lunch along the way.



**December 3: Fall Gathering.** Our December gathering was a great success! The energy was terrific as usual. We had a packed house with both old and new faces. Everyone enjoyed catching up and making new friends. A lot of volunteers came forward to plan and/or host some fun upcoming hikes and activities. Our gracious host's vegetarian chili and lentil soup were both fantastic!