

History:

**National African-American RV'ers Association Inc.
Written: November 28, 2018**

The idea for the first National African-American RV'ers Association (NAARVA), originated while the Ohio Buckeye Road Runners of Cincinnati, OH were camping at the Rose Garden Campground in Crittenden, KY in August 1992. The goal was to provide an environment for networking and fellowship with other minority campers – because it was not common to see other minority campers when traveling. The OBRR of Cincinnati held fundraisers to help finance the first Camp Rally which was held in August 1993, at Winton Woods Campgrounds in Cincinnati. There were 52 campers, with more than 150 people in attendance. The idea of a camping event for minorities caught on, with campers from Detroit, MI serving as hosts of the next event. In August 1994, the Free Rollers and Northwest Sun Seekers of Detroit hosted the Second Annual Camp Rally at the Wayne County Fairgrounds in Bellville, MI.

In 1994, the “Camp Rally” concept expanded, and the campers joined together to officially create a national minority organization, NAARVA. Interim officers were elected and NAARVA was chartered in August 1994. It is now an independent 501(c)(7) organization.

First National Officers

Interim President and Organizer	Norman L. Ellis	1992-1994
President	Norman L. Ellis	1994-1999

Vice President	Joseph Washington	1994-1999
Recording Secretary	Stella Webster	1994-1999
Assistant Recording Secretary	Gloria Shelton	1994-1999
Financial Secretary	Carrie Evans	1994-1999
Treasurer	Rosie Smith	1994-1999
Chaplains	Owen Moore and Wilton Blake	
Quarterly Newspaper Editor	Edis Hampton	
Photographer	James Wilson	

In August 1995, the Derby City Campers of Kentucky hosted the third Camp Rally at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY. The constitution was adopted, officers elected, operating committees were formed and the NAARVA logo was voted on. The Buckeye Explorers, Dayton, OH were announced as the 1996 Camp Rally host, at Caesar Creek State Park in Waynesville, OH.

Camp Rally Events

The Cincinnati Chapter initiated the idea of Ice Cream Socials, Saturday Night Dinners, Saturday jazz sessions, and Sunday Church Services with the collection donated to a charity (of the host city's choice). Events also included tours of points-of-interest, children's activities, continental breakfast and a recreational vehicle dealers' display.

Detroit Chapters – The Sun Seekers and Free Rollers initiated the Fish Fry. The Derby City Campers in Louisville, KY initiated the Cake Walk, later named in memory of Robert Reese, a long-time member.

In 1994, NAARVA T-shirts and hats became a reality. The concept of a NAARVA King and Queen, a scholarship committee and Memorial Service added to the Sunday service all became a reality. In 1996, NAARVA was chartered with the National Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. The group was certified to use a special logo in 1997.

Louis Henderson of Seattle, WA was pivotal in the creation of geographical regions joining five regions together under the NAARVA umbrella. Those regions were northern, southern, central, eastern and western.

“There was fellowship among fellow campers and it was a family affair. The children learned to enjoy others because camping was very diverse. It was not just camping – it was RV camping and taught them other ways to enjoy life in the outdoors,” said Lyna Ellis, founding member.

“Membership grew from 52 campers in 1993 to more than 1,000 in 1999. There were no computers. Registration was a big job,” added Gloria Shelton, founding member.

Requirements for membership were simple; members had to have a self-contained RV, and have a desire to come together as one big happy family.

Rod McGavock, African-American owner of Premier RV Inc. in Clarksville, IN - was very instrumental in making contributions to the group and would often display his RVs at the Camp Rallies.

Future goals include NAARVA membership expansion, as we strive to share the benefits of travel and RV'ing with future generations. NAARVA also strives to provide new locations and exciting innovations for members. The friendships and diversity of experiences for families continues to serve as the greatest benefit of the organization.

Orators:
Norman L. Ellis
Gloria J. Shelton
Lyna J. Ellis
Clarence Johnson

Written By Gina Ruffin Moore, Writer, November 28, 2018