



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON



www.ffwis.org

May 2020

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

This is our first COVID-19 newsletter – a milestone we would have liked to avoid. While there is really not much going on in terms of travel activities behind the scenes there is a lot of discussion about where we go from here and how we remain physically distanced and socially connected.

We will continue to offer local outdoor activities such as hiking that can continue with masks and proper social distancing. Other group activities are being removed from the calendar. It is unclear when larger groups will be allowed to gather and whether our members and board will feel safe and comfortable proceeding with in-person gatherings. We are taking it one step at a time.

At the same time, we need to maintain our social connections. Our board and the FFI board have had discussions about using virtual technologies to help us connect. Our board is meeting on ZOOM. The FFI Midwestern Presidents are meeting monthly on ZOOM. It definitely is not a replacement for face to face connections but it allows us to see friends, maintain discussions and share a joke. It is definitely better than a phone call.

FFIWIS-Madison has purchased a ZOOM subscription so that we can connect with you virtually. Initially, we will offer social events such as book club and social hours. We could consider developing other interest groups such as reunions of previous ambassadors or exploring cultural issues here and around the world. We are open to your ideas so if you have something you would like to try, let me know. I really look forward to seeing your smiling faces - if only virtually.

When this passes, Friendship Force may be changed but I think we will value our connections here and around the world even more.

In Friendship,

Sandi Wysock
President
sandrawysock@msn.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monthly Board Meeting

The FFI Madison Board meets VIRTUALLY the second Wednesday of the month @ 12:30 pm

Other Activities

May 6: Cocktails on the 6th. See "Activities"

May 16: Let's Walk, Let's Hike. See "Activities"

June 15: Book Club. See "Activities"

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In order to stay connected during these strange times we are going to offer you the Newsletter on a monthly basis until we are back to our regular lives.

Even though we won't be talking about journeys, we invite all members to send your stories of past journeys, about how you are getting through this pandemic, good books you are reading, projects undertaken, insights gained, etc.

Please send any stories and articles to Agnes Rona at: whereowhere5@gmail.com. In order to earn my keep as editor I may edit what you send but will always keep the heart of it intact.

Stay safe and healthy,

Agnes Rona
Editor

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ZOOM

Peter Kaufman has set up a ZOOM account for FFIWIS and here is his description of how FFIWIS organized meeting would occur on ZOOM.

The telephone is so 1960s, isn't it? There are many newer ways to connect with others with the added bonus of using video. The effect is that you feel like you're in the room with people with because you can hear and see them in real time.

During this pandemic, many organizations including universities and local churches are using this particular ZOOM video technology. The requirements are a smart phone or tablet, or any Windows or Apple Macintosh computer/laptop that has a microphone and a video camera. (These may be external to the device but are commonly built into them).

In order to connect FFI Madison members with each other, we've purchased a ZOOM license. Using this application, we will be able to set up member events that allow members to get together via video connections.

How will it work? When an event is scheduled, the following will happen:

1. Friendship Force will announce an event (e.g. a cocktail hour) in an email or in the Newsletter.
2. Members will RSVP stating the number of people attending and each person's email address (this is to ensure only those invited will attend). If members live in the same home, they can attend with a single email address as long as they are able to share the screen.
3. Members will receive an email with a link to the ZOOM meeting.
4. At the meeting time, members will simply click the link to join the meeting.
5. When a member clicks the link to join the meeting, he or she will be placed in a virtual "waiting room" – the screen will tell you that you are in a waiting room and that the host will admit you. You don't have to do anything else.
6. At the meeting time, the meeting host will "admit" you.
7. To be seen and heard, members will activate their microphone and video. Instructions and icons are pretty clear on the screen. If you have a problem, the host will walk you through it.

We know that ZOOM has recently suffered some bad press about their lack of security controls. At this time, they've addressed a number of these concerns and we are comfortable inviting you to use it with FFIWIS under the conditions we have described.

One of those condition is the "waiting room," which gives the host control over who is allowed into the meeting.

A new ZOOM 5.0 update, rolling out the end of April, is designed to address some of the many issues that Zoom has faced in recent weeks.

If members want help with this ZOOM process, feel free to send us an email to: FriendshipForceWI@gmail.com. and someone will get back to you via the old-fashioned telephone.



ZOOMING

JOURNEYS



OPEN WORLD WELCOMED WOMEN IN STEM - RUSSIA

At the very beginning of the COVID-19 shutdown of Wisconsin, FFI Madison/Open World hosted five delegates from Russia **March 6 – 14, 2020** with a program that looked at U.S. programs and organizations focused on creating opportunities and encouraging girls/women to participate in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and careers.



ARRIVAL IN MADISON: Photo courtesy of travelingwithtom.com



ORIENTATION AT THE WYSOCKS : Photo courtesy of travelingwithtom.com

We got off to a great start with five wonderful young women educators from all over Russia and their facilitator. But as realization of the seriousness of the pandemic really hit home, many UW and other local events were cancelled starting mid-week.

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JOURNEYS

Luckily one of the programs that was not cancelled was a series of presentations and discussions with women working in STEM fields at the UW Biotechnology Center:



Photo courtesy of travelingwithtom.com

By Wednesday March 11, plans were beginning to be cancelled, Open World informed us on March 12 that they had scrambled and were able to change travel arrangements to fly our guests back to their homes, departing Madison on the morning of March 13.

Many thanks to Sandi Wysock for keeping track of all the unexpected changes and adjustments and holding our program together with grace and humor.

We had some tearful goodbyes -- our hosts had quickly grown close to their guests and our guests felt very welcome and happy with their hosts. It was a short and intense week and we are proud to have been able to take such good care of our guests at a time of uncertainty and unease.

John and Mary Witte, one of our host families, said it just right:

I love hosting Open World. The delegates are young and for the most part have not traveled much and certainly not to the United States. They are anxious to know EVERYTHING. The young women we have hosted have been so kind, caring and intelligent. [Even though] we don't speak the same language ... GOOGLE TRANSLATE to the rescue! I cherish the hours we spent in the evening discussing politics, education, art, and cooking with our phones as aids. I showed my last guest how to make a pie and she left me a recipe for borscht. It doesn't get any better than that. We are still in touch on What's App discussing COVID-19. It might be an Open World but it is still a small world.

OTHER JOURNEYS

We are sad to report that due to the COVID pandemic we are cancelling all of our journeys. We will keep members informed of developments.

WHAT WE ARE DOING AND THINKING

SANDI WYSOCK:

George and I are keeping busy for the most part. We are taking our dally walks in the neighborhood with Rocky, enjoying the quiet streets, the sounds of the birds and connecting at an acceptable distance with fellow dog walkers.

I have always wanted to try sourdough so I made a starter. Of course he (I named him Oliver) needs to be fed at least weekly if in the fridge and daily if on the counter. Yeast sales are up over 400% I am told so it is nearly impossible to find yeast, which is limiting my baking productivity. If anyone knows the secrets of the world of sourdough starter, please share them!!

I enjoy working outside without the hum of traffic on the beltline in the background. Not sure I am ready to let George cut my hair yet. I have learned that the gym equipment downstairs isn't used even when I have time.

I fret about my parents who are isolated in a nursing home in Iowa and a brother who has ongoing health issues. We are celebrating my parents 75th wedding anniversary with them this coming week on ZOOM.

All in all we are doing fine physically but like all of you we are missing our friends, our social life, visiting family and traveling. How are you doing? Are you tackling the old to do list? Reading? Working? Volunteering? Drop our editor Agnes Rona a note at whereowhere5@gmail.com.

KATHY SPECK KEMENY:

This past week's schedule shows my husband and me traveling from our New Caledonia Friendship Force Journey to our homestay in Christchurch, New Zealand, another of our bucket list destinations. Instead, we are on all fours on the floor of our living room with our newly crawling seven-month old granddaughter, Jane.

Jane's first-time parents are "escapees" from the ravages of the pandemic in densely populated NYC, who accepted our offer last month to ride out the storm with us in our home in Wisconsin.

Are we disappointed that we are missing our Friendship Force journey? You bet! But there will be opportunities for that later. Now, what we have instead is the richness of daily life with our son and daughter-in-law and the unexpected pleasure of witnessing the enthusiastic curiosity and joyful firsts of the new generation! Jane's squeals of delight when we play together, her inadvertent avocado puree and applesauce "facials" at mealtimes, her smiles of recognition – such a joy!

Staying at home certainly has its challenges, but we are trying our best to make this unique time count!

ACTIVITIES

BOOK CLUB



The next Book Club meeting has been rescheduled from May 12 to June 15 at 7pm at the home of Helen Ann Rugowski to discuss "The Bone People" by Keri Hulme. The book deals with family relationships between Maoris and Pakehas (New Zealanders of European descent). It's a long book, but hard to put down!

This change in schedule is based on our hope that by June 15 it will be considered safe to get together according to the experts AND that book club readers will be comfortable with getting together.

Helen Ann is willing to host the face-to-face book club at her condo providing people wear a mask and there are 8 or less people.

This date is with the condition that it is up to Helen Ann if she is still ok with it by June 10 and if anyone is willing and able to attend. We will send a mail chimp to remind people to decide if they will attend no later than June 10 unless Helen Ann lets them know she will not be willing to host. The worst thing that can happen is that everyone reads the book.

Please contact Helen Ann at haharrin@hotmail.com to confirm your attendance.

COCKTAILS ON THE 6TH

Peter Kaufman and Jan Viney are hosting a virtual cocktail hour from 4:30 to 5:30 on May 6. It will be on ZOOM, so any members interested should RSVP their interest via email to: FriendshipForceWI@Gmail.com.

Once you have RSVP'd you will receive an email confirming your invitation and giving you a ZOOM link that you will activate at 4:30. You will be instructed to open ZOOM and will be sent into the waiting room and the hosts will let you in.

Feel free to have a glass in hand and be ready for fun.

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ACTIVITIES

LET'S WALK, LET'S HIKE



Let's Walk, Let's Hike – May 16, 2020, 1:00 p.m. – Cross Plains

In spite of the pandemic, and the Governor's extended "safer-at-home" order, walking outdoors for small groups of people remains possible. Thus, I would like to invite you for a walk in a park near Cross Plains. The park has shared management by the National Park Service, the WI DNR, and the volunteers of the National Ice Age Trail system.

Usually, this park is not as heavily visited and crowded, as many other popular County Parks and City Parks in and around Madison. Hopefully, even on a Saturday afternoon, we would not need to step off the trail all the time in order to avoid other walkers. Most of the trails are wide enough for two people walking 6 feet apart. Where the trail narrows, we would need to form a single line, 6 feet apart. We should still be able to carry on conversations with actual, living people - a rare luxury nowadays!

Besides physical distancing, I also recommend that everybody wears some sort of face-mask, even if it is just improvised from a folded bandana or scarf.

If you are interested in joining us, please RSVP to magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com, so that I can send you parking and meeting point information, and a map about the area. I will also contact you in case we have to cancel the walk due to inclement weather, or for any other unforeseen reason.

Magdi Sebestyen
Phone: (608) 213-5768

BOARD NEWS/ACTIVITIES

FFI UPDATE

As we all know, the COVID pandemic has caused great financial hardship to many businesses, organizations and individuals. FFI has not been immune to these financial hardships.

As members of FFIWIS you already have received messages about the particulars of FFI's financial crisis. While your Madison Board doesn't want to overwhelm you with messages related to these issues, the Board wants you to know its position in relation to our national organization.

On April 13, at their monthly meeting, the Board also met via ZOOM with Jeremi Snook, President and CEO of FFI and Lyn Hargreave, FFI Board member, and Allison Lindsey, FFI staff, to discuss the big picture.

Since April 13 FFI has done more work to develop creative strategies to solve the financial issues of the organization. To set the information and proposals before the entire membership, FFI has produced a video that can be accessed via this link: <https://www.kindest.com/campaign/we-need-help-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-ffi>.

FFI is our link to clubs around the world, and as our facilitator for journeys it provides logistical help, translation support, financial transfers and more. They do all of this with a small staff around the world that work from their homes with administrative staff in Atlanta. More than half of FFI's revenues come from ambassadors that pay fees of \$170 USD when they go on a journey with FFI. With the sudden collapse of international travel FFI's revenues have been severely reduced. Ironically this happened after one of their best financial years in recent memory. Their financial report

can be seen at: <https://blog.friendshipforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FFI-TRANSPARENCY-SHEET.pdf>

FFI has to raise \$340,000 from members and clubs to carry them through 2021. They have applied for Federal stimulus money for nonprofits; expenses have been cut to the bone; some staff is furloughed. As a last resort additional furloughs and staff cuts may have to be considered.

FFIWIS-Madison UPDATE

To support FFI, the Madison Board has approved a donation of \$3,400 from our club reserves, which is the equivalent of FFI journey fees for 20 members. It has also agreed not to charge members' dues for 2021 and to pay the club affiliation fees of \$20 per person from reserves and also to fund Madison operations for one year using our reserves.

Our club has strong reserves so we can afford to make these contributions without lessening our club's ability to serve its members.

Finally, thanks to the generosity of one of our members we have a wonderful opportunity to step up and give FFI a hand.

We have a MEMBER CHALLENGE to members to give \$170 (the equivalent of one journey fee), which our benefactor will match to 50%. So your \$170 becomes \$256!

If you cannot give \$170, whatever amount you can give still will be matched by 50%. Of course you are welcome to give more than \$170 as well.

To get these matching donations we ask you to send your donation check no later than May 30 to our treasurer Mary Juckem. Checks should be payable to Friendship Force International. Mary will record the donations for matching purposes and forward funds to FFI.

Mary's address is:

Mary Juckem
89 Golf Course Road #E
Madison WI 53704

If you send your check directly to FFI we will not be able to receive the matching contribution since FFI is not tracking donations and sharing the information with individual clubs.

ANNUAL MEETING

Due to the Safe at Home, the FFIWIS Madison Annual Meeting was cancelled and given current circumstances there are no plans to reschedule. However, election of officers was carried out by email votes. Enough votes (more than 50% of membership) were received to successfully elect new Board members. The new Board officers are:

President: Kathy Speck Kemeny
Vice President: Doug Johnson
Treasurer: Mary Juckem
Secretary: Diana Rodum

LOST FRIENDS

Susan Becker passed away on March 28, 2020.

Rad and Susan Becker were charter members since 1978. Rad and Susan ran the FFWM Store where members could purchase various Madison and Wisconsin items to take with you on an Exchange/Journey. Rad passed away in 2013. At the age of 11, Susan was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes, the beginning of a lifelong journey strewn with physical challenges. In 1984, while still a relatively new procedure, Susan accepted a kidney transplant from her sister, Janet. She hoped to live to her 50th year, but she lived well beyond. She lived with gratitude for life and a genuine desire to give back and make the world a better place. She was a strong supporter of Friendship Force. Even when health challenges began to limit her mobility she would often attend meetings and participate in any way that she was able. Susan's spirit will be missed.

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BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: Helen Ann Rugowski 608-841-1087
haharrin@hotmail.com

Journey Manager: Stephanie Sorensen 608-819-1846
stevila@charter.net

Activities: Gail Holmes 608-249-1846 glholmes@wisc.edu

Outreach: Dorothy Baldwin 608-742-6493
janddbaldwin@gmail.com

Communications: Sandi Wysock 608-833-5326
sandrawysock@msn.com

Activities Committee Members:

Gail Holmes (chair) (glholmes@wisc.edu),
Audrey Liimatainen (AMCL822@yahoo.com),
Lois Schulz (loisschulz1942@gmail.com)

Leaders for specific activities are:

Adopt-A-Highway–Stephanie Vanden Bush
(sljacobs2@gmail.com)

Bike rides–Mary Mastaglio (mamastaglio@gmail.com)

Book Club–Reta Haring (retaharring@charter.net) and
Marian Ehrenberg (marianeh2014@gmail.com)

International Institutes–Helen Ann Rugowski
(haharrin@hotmail.com)

Let's Eat Out (LEO)–Bobbie Vrooman
(bobbiesque@gmail.com)

Dining on the 6th – Gail Holmes (glholmes@wisc.edu)

Let's Hike/Let's Walk–Magdi Sebestyen
(magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com)

Second Harvest Food Bank–Lois Schulz
(loisschulz1942@gmail.com)

Travel/Day trips–Donna Hussin (djhussin@yahoo.com)

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