



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON



ffwis.org

FEBRUARY 2021

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

For much of the past year, I've felt a bit like the weatherman character Phil Connors in the movie "Ground Hog Day." Phil travels to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where he wakes up day after day realizing that it is yet again the same day – February 2nd, Ground Hog Day.

While 2020 brought a great deal of sameness to our daily lives, as well as a multitude of unforeseen challenges to our world, the first few weeks of 2021 brought little relief. Thankfully, with myriad vaccines coming to market, our life in pandemic lockdown should improve faster than the decade that Connors spent in his repetitive plight. The prospect of widespread vaccine distribution in the coming months brings us hope for resumption of our Friendship Force journeys. While travel is not yet imminent, our board will form an Ad Hoc Committee to develop recommendations to help protect the health of our chapter members once outgoing and incoming journeys can safely resume.

My search for bright spots in the world was rewarded when, like many Americans, I was captivated by the lyrical poem presented at the presidential inauguration by Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman. If you missed it, I encourage you to go to: theamandagorman.com

The sun has come out, and the days are getting longer again! On February 2nd, we'll see whether Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow. In the meantime, enjoy the beautiful winter wonderland that is Wisconsin! I hope to see you in one of our many upcoming Friendship Force activities this month!

I'll leave you with a quote from *Ground Hog Day*:

Phil asks the innkeeper: "Do you ever have *deja vu*, Mrs. Lancaster?" Mrs. Lancaster: "I don't think so, but I could check with the kitchen."

In the spirit of friendship,

Kathy Speck Kemeny

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monthly Board Meeting

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

February 3: Global Connections. "Programs"

February 6: Cocktails on the 6th. "Activities"

February 19: Trivia Night. "Programs"

February 22: Book Club. "Activities"

Please check Wisconsin – Madison website (ffwis.org) for any additions, updates or corrections to event schedules during the month, and keep an eye out for email updates as well. We don't want you to miss anything!

Editor's note:

As our President, Kathy Speck Kemeny noted, we continue to face difficult challenges from many directions and unfortunately one of them is what to do when we don't travel. Though our normal FFI focus is on our ambassadorships and hosting, current circumstances have called on us to find creative ways to maintain community. We continue activities such as Book Club and Second Harvest. Thanks to our dedicated members we also have added other activities to keep us connected whatever ways are available to support our community.



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JOURNEYS

Our Board and our Journey Manager continue to monitor developments and track best available information concerning vaccinations, travel protocols, and the changing nature of COVID. That is all we can do for now.

Do we sound like a broken record? Maybe, but every day offers new opportunities so --

We continue to remind members about on-going activities that allow us to reach out to new places and new people from the comfort of our own homes.

Virtual FFI journeys are always available to members by using this link:

<https://blog.friendshipforce.org/virtual-experiences/>

This link is **NOT** on the regular International website. It is a wonderful way to travel and meet people. Once you connect on this link you will find many unique and interesting opportunities to learn about other countries, foods, and on-line activities. At the bottom are also links for tutorials for using WhatsApp and ZOOM.

FFI Pen Pals is a new way to experience different views and discover common ground. Get matched up with another FFI member based on your interests – shared hobbies, common interests, a specific region or city, or a foreign language you'd like to practice. Or simply be surprised and get matched randomly! Then sit down and start writing – all you need is a pen, a piece of paper, an envelope and a stamp.

Here is how to find the link to Pen Pal.

1. On the FFI website homepage click "Virtual Experiences" link at the top of the page.
2. Click on the purple "here" link just below the 3 virtual experiences icons.
3. Scroll down the page and find [Friendship Force Pen Pals](#). Do a single click and a google document link will appear.
4. Information on the Pen Pal program and a registration link are in that document.

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ACTIVITIES

COCKTAILS ON FEBRUARY 6TH

Lise Skofronick, Gabor Kemeny and Peter Kaufman will host Cocktails on the 6th in February. The event will feature wine and chocolate tasting with a special guest. Bring your favorite chocolate and wine to the party. Please RSVP with Peter Kaufman by Feb. 5 @ pkaufman@gmail.com so Peter can send you the ZOOM Link to attend. See you on the 6th!

COCKTAILS REPORT

Nine members attended the gathering on January 6th. Members were asked to share experiences or aspirations that may be their foundations for renewal and healing in 2021. The lively discussion focused on what has kept each of us "afloat" - -

Allegiances and relationships
Adaptability and resilience
Focus on what we have, not on what we don't have
FFI activities
Laughter
Medical Miracles
Music
Technology enabled connections
Virtue and goodness

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK



Because of organizations like the Friendship Force of Wisconsin, donations for 6,343,264 meals were raised during the 2020 NBC15 Share Your Holidays campaign. The goal was to raise 5 million meals in honor of it being the 25th anniversary of the campaign. This year was the campaign's largest goal EVER!

ACTIVITIES

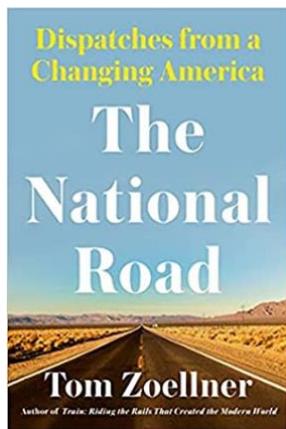
SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

The 2020 Friendship Force Grand Finale volunteers in December were Karl Hillie, Gail Holmes, Jan Hornback, Cheryl Koerwitz, Sarah Rankin, Helen Ann Rugowski, and Lise Skofronick. Lois Schulz is the leader of this activity. We had a very special role exceeding the goal. 93 Friendship Force volunteers gave a total of 177.5 hours to sort more than 16,000 pounds of food. 81 other volunteers gave 191.5 hours to answer over 1,800 phone calls from donors wanting to use their gift to help our community. Helen Ann Rugowski was one of the phone volunteers.

Our club's choice of Second Harvest as a service project has helped them exceed their goal and meet the challenges to continue to provide for our neighbors in need--countless children, seniors, and families struggling with hunger. We were recognized on behalf of everyone at Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin for our contributions.

BOOK CLUB

The next meeting will be Feb. 22nd at 7:00 via ZOOM and the book will be "The National Road" by Tom Zoellner. Zoellner is a teacher, editor and writer. This book documents his "zig-zagging" around America to discover the great variety of people and places and try to understand what connects and divides us in these complex times. Please Email Reta Harring at retaharring@charter.net if you plan to attend the meeting. The book was published in 2020 and there are not many copies available at the library It is available from Amazon books and on Kindle Good Reading!



The Book Club meeting on January 25th was a big success. Ten members had a lively discussion about the fascinating lives of the divers. Members also agreed that they had learned a great deal about Korean history from the 30's to the 70's.

ACTIVITIES

LET'S WALK/LET'S HIKE

MMoCA Mosaic 5K walk

On January 21, 2021, at least 5 of our FF Club members were walking 5K to support the fundraising efforts of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Arts.

<https://www.mmoca.org/activities/mm5k>



Lise Skofronick was walking on her own near her cabin in Northern Wisconsin. Marjie and Pete Marion were walking somewhere in Madison with their friends. Maureen Kind and Magdi Sebestyen were walking on the Pheasant Branch Trail in Middleton. It was a cold and windy day, but the sun was out, and the valley of the creek protected us from the winds. Actually, our walk was so enjoyable, that we ended up walking 5 Miles instead of 5 Km! Tamas Gaal also joined us just for the fun of it.

Ad Hoc Walks/Hikes

During the winter we do not have pre-scheduled walks, due to the unpredictability of weather and road/trail conditions. Walks will be organized on an ad hoc basis, when the short-term weather forecast looks favorable. Events will be announced by email to interested members. If you would like to join these walks, please sign up to the "Ad hoc walkers" email list by sending a message to magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com. Being on the list does not require any commitment; it just means you might get an occasional email that is not sent out to the entire membership. You can either respond and participate, or you can simply ignore them.

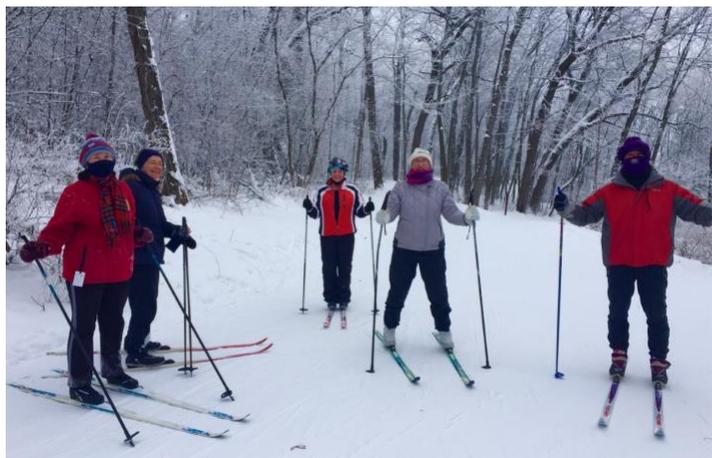
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ACTIVITIES

SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING

We have started a new winter activity cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Since this activity depends on the actual weather conditions, particularly snow conditions and trail conditions, it is organized on an ad hoc basis. If interested, please email Tamas Gaal at tgaal@wisc.edu.

Tamas will send out emails **a day before** a planned outing. Being on the list does not require any commitment; it just means you might get an occasional email that is not sent out to the entire membership. You can either respond and participate, or you can simply ignore them. We already had two meetings, on December 31st and on January 4th, four and five of our members and one guest skiing in Elver Park. We stayed on the "easy" and "moderate" trails and had a great outdoor time.



PROGRAMS

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS - A CULTURAL PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Our Club is very excited with our new relationship with **Global Connections**, which is a volunteer-driven non-profit organization affiliated with Pennsylvania State University. Their mission is similar to that of FFI: to foster intercultural understanding, and to build a strong, inclusive community across cultures.

From now on, their monthly cultural event, Global Conversations, will be accessible for our membership! Our first event connection is:

PROGRAMS

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

Global Conversations: Chihuahua, Mexico February 3, 2021



Meet Cristina Marquez from Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Christina will share her upbringing in Ciudad Juarez. You will hear about her life and the regional culture that is a unique blend of Mexican and US cultures. Find her at: <https://www.gc-cc.org/blog>

Conversation Date and time: **Wednesday, February 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. CST**

Duration: approximately 1 hour

To get the Zoom link, please register at the link below:
<https://globalconnections.wildapricot.org/event-4132601>

Trivia Night: February 19, 2021

A NIGHT OF TRIVIA AND FUN

JOIN US ON FEBRUARY 19TH, FROM 4:30 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M., for a fun night of trivia and laughs.

We will touch on topics like Wisconsin trivia; famous quotes; naming bygone commercials and jingles; and more. If you have any favorites regarding any of these topics, we encourage you to bring them up at the event.

Please contact Mike Lambert,
at lambertmichaelj@gmail.com, to register for the event.

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PROGRAMS

THE FOLLOWING PROGRAM EVENTS ARE AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE AT ANY TIME, AT NO COST:

Virtual Travel Experiences in Europe

Rick Steves' Travel Talks – Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary

In this travel talk, Rick Steves' guidebook co-author Cameron Hewitt takes us on a journey through a trio of Eastern Europe's most accessible and enjoyable countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. Along the way, we'll stop off in bohemian Prague, charming Kraków, gorgeous Gdańsk, and bustling Budapest.

This YouTube video is 1 hr. 10 minutes and is **free**, and can be viewed at **any time** at your convenience at:

<https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/video/travel-talks/czech-republic-poland-hungary-with-cameron-hewitt>

There is a handout for this lecture that can be downloaded from:

<https://d3dqioy2sca31t.cloudfront.net/Projects/cms/production/000/014/034/original/8b2cc556767ad434620eee90b7715010/class-handout-czech-poland-hungary.pdf>

Rick Steves' Travel Talks – Germany & Austria

In this travel lecture, Rick Steves takes us on a scenic tour of the heart of Europe. In Germany we'll learn about the poetic Rhine, Romantic Road, and Bavaria's fantasy castles and favorite beers; and in Austria we'll visit Mozart's Salzburg, the blue Danube, and stately Vienna.

This YouTube video is 1 hr. 13 minutes and is **free**, and can be viewed at **any time** at your convenience at:

<https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/video/travel-talks/germany-austria>

There is a handout for this lecture that can be downloaded from:

<https://d3dqioy2sca31t.cloudfront.net/Projects/cms/production/000/014/035/original/c1f1681da13f02b4865c601ea6e9c700/class-handout-germany-austria.pdf>

PROGRAMS

Badger Talks with Mark Loudon – The Amish in Wisconsin

Professor Mark Loudon will present on one of America's most familiar yet widely misunderstood religious groups, the Amish. A practicing Mennonite himself, Mark will address central aspects of Amish life and the Christian faith that anchors it, with a special emphasis on communities in Wisconsin, which has the fourth-largest population of any U.S. state.

This YouTube video is 1 hr. 2 minutes and is free and can be watched **any time** at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FMvGTeBorg>

We Stand on Their Shoulders – A History of Wisconsin Women and Voting A bit of history, related to our recent elections experience:

A new exhibition at the Wisconsin Historical Museum marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. Laurel Miller and Simone Munson present the exhibit that was created to shine a light on iconic Wisconsin women suffragists and political leaders, and how they helped to gain the long overdue rights and recognition for women in Wisconsin and the nation.

This 51 minute YouTube video is **free** and can be watched **any time** at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzNpOfOajXM&feature=youtu.be>

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MEET OUR MEMBERS

Marions: Brave and Bold Adventurers



The Marions have been FF-W members for eight years, during which time they have home-hosted and served as day trip guides. They look forward to traveling abroad with FF-W friends. Pete hopes to return to Brazil to show Rio to Marjie and to boat down the Amazon River. As Trenton Lee Stewart wrote, “May your adventures bring you closer together, even as they take you far away from home.”

To call Marjie and Pete Marion adventurous would be an understatement. This brave and bold couple met in Guatemala in the 1970s when Pete was working in the Peace Corps with local savings and credit cooperatives, and Marjie was traveling with her sister. Despite two earthquakes in February 1976 that killed 25,000 people, followed by six weeks of tent living without running water, the Marions stayed in Guatemala for eight years. These life-changing experiences profoundly shaped their outlook and Pete’s career path.

Pete’s work with international credit unions and micro-loan programs offered numerous travel opportunities. He has visited over 60 countries, probably more than any other Friendship Force member! One of the Marions’ most memorable experiences was in the Republic of Georgia when Pete was employed by the World Bank and took his entire family. The family discovered a different culture, with a strange alphabet, but delicious food and wonderful people. They enjoyed singing around bonfires and visited the birthplace of Georgia’s most famous person, Joseph Stalin. They recalled a Georgian custom of a long series of toasts in a specific sequence led by a toasting leader. Luckily, the toasts were in small glasses of good wine!

When they are not in Madison or visiting grandchildren, Pete and Marjie continue their adventures. In 2019 they took a 7,000 mile motorcycle trip from Madison to Tiburon, California, mostly on non-Interstate roads, and visited ten national parks.

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BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: Lise R. Skofronick 608-274-7732
liskofronick@gmail.com

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Outreach: Dorothy Baldwin 608-742-6493
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Communications: Sandi Wysock 608-833-5326
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Program :

Mike Lambert (608)-577-1057
lambertmichaelj@gmail.com
Magdi Sebestyen (608)-213-5768
magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS

Leaders for specific activities are:

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

Winter Snow-Shoeing/Cross-Country Skiing--Tamas Gaal (tgaal@wisc.edu)

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

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS

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 – Jan Hornback (jhornback@wisc.edu)

Book Club – Reta Harring (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)

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