



friendship force  
WISCONSIN - MADISON

[ffwis.org](http://ffwis.org)



MARCH 2021

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

My husband and I have been hunkered down for the duration of the pandemic and are certainly ready to ditch our cabin fever and welcome Spring! In contrast to the winter doldrums, we felt a bit as if we had won the lottery when we were notified that we could receive our first Covid-19 vaccinations last week!

After so many years of taking vaccinations for granted, I'm humbled by the global impact of science and medicine on our shared humanity and how the world and its citizens can come together to address a global problem. I remember my childhood immunization experience at the office of our family physician in South Florida. Sitting in the waiting room with my mother and siblings, I was captivated by a group of Native American women from the nearby Seminole tribe. They wore long, colorful dresses and gorgeous beaded jewelry, and were nimbly creating more beaded treasures as they waited.

It was the first time I remember seeing someone who looked and dressed differently than me. I was enthralled. Here were beautifully different people with families like mine: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, with common human needs. That visit to the doctor made a lasting impression on me.

I am so grateful for this vaccine. While our virtual visits with grandkids and friends have been delightful and most welcome, we are looking forward to our time together again! I've been encouraged to hear from a number of you who have begun receiving your vaccinations as well. We are hopeful for a rapid global expansion of the vaccination rollout. It brings us one step closer to expanding the concentric circles of our "bubbles" and eventually re-connecting with our global community through our Friendship Force journeys!

Kathy Speck Kemeny

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Monthly Board Meeting:

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

March 3: Global Connections. "Programs"

March 1-5: International Festival "Programs"

March 6: Music on the 6th. "Activities"

March 17: Live Presentation on Hmong Culture-Part 1. "Programs"

March 25: Second Harvest Food Bank. "Activities"

March 22: Book Club. "Activities"

April 7: Adopt a Highway. "Activities"

April 16: Live Presentation on Hmong Culture-Part 2. "Programs"

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Please check Wisconsin – Madison website ([ffwis.org](http://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!



## JOURNEYS

### Who Knows Where or When ....

Our diligent Journey Manager, Stephanie Sorensen, continues to keep up with travel requirements and restrictions and is also waiting for FFI to tell us any time now about our assignments for 2022. But for now travel planning is still on hold.

The FF Wisconsin's travel "wish list" submitted to FFI included as our first choice the trip to New Zealand and New Caledonia that we had to postpone in 2020. We are invited to Toronto in 2022 also, so we will see what happens and let you know as soon as possible. Stephanie hopes that 2022 will be a more normal year and we will be able to travel.

We have a trip to Niagara, Canada on the books for fall of this year. But Canada has cancelled all cruises from docking there for all of 2021. There are very strict entry requirements in place - you must have a negative covid test before entering the country, take another test upon arrival, quarantine for 14 days and the first 3 must be in a government approved hotel. Unless these requirements change, that doesn't appear to be a likely Journey. The requirements would need to change in time for both us and the Canadian hosts to plan.

We have the potential to reschedule our Global Bike Journey for this fall also. Many of the travelers were from the US or Canada, but some were from Germany and New Zealand. We will need to decide if we are willing to host this Journey and under what conditions - something for all of you to think about. This requires several months of planning on our part, so we will have to see what is happening with the virus and the variations, the effectiveness of the vaccine, the level of infections and "herd immunity" within the next couple of months to make a decision regarding this Journey.

There are some potential options for either hosting or visiting a few places in the US, and it may be that this is the more feasible option for 2021.

\* \* \* \*

In the comfort of our homes, [virtual FFI journeys](#) are always available to members by using this link:

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

## JOURNEYS

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 another 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.

## ACTIVITIES

### MUSIC ON SATURDAY MARCH 6!

For our Zoom meet-up on Saturday March 6th beginning at 5:00 PM, we are asking you to introduce us to a music memory or favorite piece of music or an interesting genre of music or music you have discovered on a trip or your favorite drinking song or—why not-- the worst piece you have ever heard!

Sharing Suggestion: we look forward to hearing your music selection via CD or You Tube.

**To round out our festivities we'll have a sing-along!**

**To receive the Zoom invitation please RSVP to Maureen Kind : [dmkind@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dmkind@sbcglobal.net) by March 5th.**

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## ACTIVITIES

### THE CHOCOLATE REPORT

#### Tasting Wine or Beer with...WHAT? Why not chocolate?

In the past year of COVID, our club has expanded our range of non-travel activities to offer opportunities for all our members to join together in some social activity either outdoor, when the weather was favorable, or more recently on-line using Zoom.

The February 6<sup>th</sup> event hosted by Lise Skofronick, Peter Kaufman and Gabor Kemeny was no different. But, again, it was different. Twenty-four members met to learn and to share their experiences pairing their beverage of choice – wines, beers, or others, with chocolate. This kind of pairing is a concept some deny as a good idea, while others are enthusiastic. Our hosts wanted it to be a lively event, all in the spirit of the friendships we enjoyed over the years of hosting and traveling.

Normally at a tasting party, all the participants taste the same wine or beer. But to accommodate a larger number of participants, the choice of beverage was open to each person's preferred beverage as long as it was accompanied by some form of chocolate. The creativity was amazing! Guests enjoyed regular chocolate bars alongside fancy morsels from a local chocolatier, some baked brownies, and others hug a mug of hot chocolate. To start the celebration, our hosts showed two short videos on wine making, borrowed from the Wollersheim Winery. Peter Kaufman shared his experience of trying his favorite beer (Indian Pale Ale) with dark 70% cacao and a 90% chocolate and concluded that 70% tasted better. He tried pairing with a dark sweet wine (Shiraz), but switched back to his IPA.

Next it was Gabor Kemeny's turn to teach us a bit of history with pictures. Some of us who had journeyed to Guadeloupe, learned that chocolate comes from a pod.



## ACTIVITIES

### THE CHOCOLATE REPORT

It's actually a creamy color seed that requires processing and sugar before we can really enjoy it.



Gabor gave us his personal spin and proposed a group of sweeter beverages such as Port, Sherry and Madeira. These are old Portuguese and English wine-based drinks with a bit higher alcohol content but less than the spirits. On the chocolate side, he chose a home-made truffle with dark chocolate, dried cherries pecans, orange zest, heavy cream and other goodies. Great when you can't go shopping because of the virus.

Eventually all the participants had a chance to share their impressions regarding their personal choice of beverages and chocolate. The group showed great imagination with lots of stories to raise our spirits.

We concluded the hour with numerous toasts to friendship and good health in many different languages – Hungarian, Russian, German, French, Spanish, Polish and even English.

It was a fun event on the 6<sup>th</sup>. CHEERS!

### SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

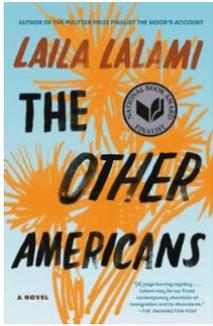
Our club volunteers will meet on March 25 (last Thursday of the month) from 12:30 – 3:30 pm at the Second Harvest location: 2802 Dairy Dr, Madison, WI 53718

Our club's choice of Second Harvest as a service project continues to be a vital link in the food chain that serves so many individuals and families in Madison who rely on our community to help them meet their most basic needs.

## ACTIVITIES

### BOOK CLUB

The next meeting will be March 22nd at 7:00 via ZOOM. Published in 2019, the book will be "**The Other Americans**" by Laila Lalama, a Pulitzer Prize finalist. It deals with the suspicious death of a Moroccan immigrant but it becomes a murder mystery and a love story as neighbors in a small California desert town are divided by race, religion and class.



Please Email Reta Haring at [retaharring@charter.net](mailto:retaharring@charter.net) if you plan to attend the meeting.

On February 22, 8 people met on ZOOM to discuss "**The National Road**" by Tom Zoellner. Although not all attendees were able to obtain the book, there was lively discussion about whether the book was intended to be a travelogue of places in America or a cultural journey among the variety of people he met on his travels.

### ADOPT A HIGHWAY

Please join us Wednesday April 7 at 10 am for our next highway clean up event. It's a great way to get outside, enjoy the warming spring weather, and make our roadsides look clean and beautiful, while enjoying each other's company safely. Please meet at the Middleton park and ride off Hwy 12 exit 249. Direct questions to Stephanie Vanden Bush [sljacobs2@gmail.com](mailto:sljacobs2@gmail.com) or 920-676-1441.

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## PROGRAMS

### GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



Global Connections 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. Our members are cordially invited to their upcoming event:

### **Global Conversations with Freddy Koumba, from Gabon, Africa**

Freddy Koumba is currently visiting America on the Humphrey Fellowship program, studying teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) at Penn State. He will share about life in Port Gentil, Gabon, (West Coast Central Africa), where his family lives.

Date and time: **Wednesday, March 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-4180271>

### INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

#### Overture Center's Annual International Festival 2021

The International Festival usually takes place in the Overture Center. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 International Festival will be an all-virtual event from Saturday February 27 through Friday, March 5. Enjoy cultural arts performances (music and dance), cooking demonstrations, visual arts, discussions and more by logging in into individual programs that you find interesting.

At the time of submitting this information for the Newsletter, the organizers of the event have not published a detailed program yet. However, after completing your registration, an email will be sent to you with further information. You may also check the Overture Center website during the week of the event.

You can register for this event for **free** at the following link:

## PROGRAMS

### LIVE PRESENTATION ABOUT HMONG CULTURE

Our creative and hardworking Programs Committee Co-Chairs, Mike Lambert and Magdi Sebestyen have done it again! They have created a 2-part program to offer our members a first-hand immersion into Hmong culture in Laos.

**Part 1** is a live presentation by Lopao Vang. He immigrated to the US from Laos after the end of the Vietnam War. In his presentation he will talk about the old, traditional ways of life: how his people used to live in the small mountain villages of Laos in the mid- and late-1900s.

Date and time: **Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. CST.** Duration: approximately 1 hour 30 minutes

In order to get the Zoom link to this event, please RSVP to Magdi Sebestyen, at [magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com)



Traditional House in Sekong Province , Laos

**Part 2** of this program is scheduled for **Friday, April 16, at 4:30 p.m. CST**, with invited speakers Houa Vang and Xue Vang. They will talk about the long and tragic journey from war-torn Laos, through living in refugee camps, crossing the Mekong River, then finally transferring to the US, where they established a new life.

In order to get the Zoom link to this event, please RSVP to Magdi Sebestyen, at [magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com)

## UPDATES

### IMPROVING LIVES OF ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

Sandi Wysock has stayed in contact with one of our 2020 Open World delegates, Marina Yeroma , who wanted to connect to parents of autistic children in the U.S. We were able to introduce her to a Madison parent. As a result of their conversation, Marina returned to St. Petersburg determined to develop services and housing for adults with development disabilities.

We are supporting her efforts by providing connections to resources in Madison. We have been invited to attend a ZOOM conference on March 17 with over 100 Russian parents and educators. Bonnie Lubet of Fitchburg will speak about employment possibilities for adults with development disabilities and the Directors of Home of Our Own will discuss their parent initiative to develop housing for adult children. We are proud to be part of this partnership and will give you another update in the next newsletter.

### WEBSITE UPDATES

Our Electronic Communications ad hoc committee (Sandi Wysock, Tom Miller and Peter Kaufman) reviewed the website and identified several changes that we felt would bring the website up to date and make it easier for members and visitors to find information.

Dan Eggerding and Allen Rieland have been working to implement changes that we identified. We are still under construction but you can already see positive changes. The scrolling photos at the top of the page have been updated to include recent journeys and photos of our service activities and our active outdoor programs. There is now an option on the home page for visitors to link directly to our membership form if they would like to join.

Events, applications and forms, board information, and the link to the members only page can now be found under Members at the top of the page. In the future there will be information on the home page for upcoming journeys and events and we will be adding photos and journals for recent journeys. There is still more work to be done but we think you will like the changes.

## MEETING MEMBERS

### Vivian Norton: Friendship Force Transfer and Traveler



Unselfish, generous, kind, and compassionate describe Vivian Norton. She raised five children, cared for her husband during his struggle with Lewy body, taught elementary and middle school students, and actively volunteered in community and church programs in Davenport, Iowa. Cooking meals at the Salvation Army, assisting on library committees, and working with River Action, Inc., a Davenport organization devoted to river front enhancement and environmental programs, are just a few activities that reflect her commitment to community.

In addition to helping her community, Vivian participated in national and international mission trips. Beside trips to Mississippi for hurricane relief and to South Dakota to assist the Lakota people, she traveled to help others in Asia and Central America. She befriended a monk from Cambodia who attended St. Ambrose University in Davenport. After graduation, he founded the Life and Hope Association to assist rural Cambodians. Vivian visited his home village near Angkor Wat where she taught sewing. She also taught at a sewing center in Nicaragua.

During one of her trips to Nicaragua, she assisted her cousin, who was teaching midwifery. The intense commitment both men and women showed when training to be midwives impressed Vivian. She recounted a story about how the male midwives wore artificial breasts to learn how to teach mothers breastfeeding strategies.

Vivian became an avid cyclist. She was active in the Quad Cities Bicycle Club, crossed Iowa four times on RAGBRAI, explored the backroads in Iowa and Illinois, and cycled in Europe. After her husband passed away in 2019, Vivian moved to Verona, Wisconsin, to live near two of her five children. Vivian and her two cats, Shadow and Dusty, quickly settled into the area. She is a frequent visitor to the Ice Age and Military Ridge trails and active with the League of Women Voters and the DNR seed gathering project.

## MEETING MEMBERS

The Quad Cities of Davenport, Bettendorf, Moline, and Rock Island has a small but active Friendship Force which Vivian joined at the urging of a friend. With Friendship Force, the two women traveled to the Isle of Wight in England and to Belgium. Vivian is looking forward to activities and journeys with Friendship Force of Madison and is grateful that members made her feel welcome.

## FF WISCONSIN-MADISON HISTORY

Sandi Wysock has shared special glimpse of our history. A discussion with some of our founding members was recorded by the local tv channel in 2016. Mary Lindquist has managed to pull it off and put in on One Drive with our board manuals. She was also able to save a copy to a thumb drive and will deliver it to Donna Hussin to be included in our materials at the historical society. Most of these founding members are now in their 80s and 90s so we are happy to be able to preserve these conversations.

Here is the video in case you would like to watch it.  
<http://factv.fitchburgwi.gov/vod/7823-History-of-Friendship-Force-10-18-16-Low-v1.mp4>

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Seeking Leaders and Committee Members

Our annual meeting will be held in April and the election of board officers will again be held virtually. With the bylaws change last year, board officers will assume their roles at the July board meeting. That is also a time of some change of committee chairs and committee members.

Succession planning is an important part of ensuring the ongoing vitality of this organization whose mission we all embrace. We would like to establish a balance between leadership continuity and a rotation of other members who also want to contribute to the club and bring fresh ideas to these roles. All members are encouraged to consider how they may be willing to offer their energies and talents.

If you're interested in playing a more active committee or leadership role in our Madison Friendship Force chapter, you are invited to contact our President Kathy Speck Kemeny to discuss the different roles and responsibilities. You also may contact our Nominations Committee chair, Sandy Drew at: [sdrew24@tds.net](mailto:sdrew24@tds.net)

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## **BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Standing Committee Chairs**

**Membership:** Lise R. Skofronick 608-274-7732

[liskofronick@gmail.com](mailto:liskofronick@gmail.com)

**Journey Manager:** Stephanie Sorensen 608-819-1846

[ssorensen268@gmail.com](mailto:ssorensen268@gmail.com)

**Activities:** Gail Holmes 608-249-1846 [glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu)

**Outreach:** Dorothy Baldwin 608-742-6493

[janddbaldwin@gmail.com](mailto:janddbaldwin@gmail.com)

**Communications:** Sandi Wysock 608-833-5326

[sandrawysock@msn.com](mailto:sandrawysock@msn.com)

### **Program :**

Mike Lambert (608)-577-1057

[lambertmichaelj@gmail.com](mailto:lambertmichaelj@gmail.com)

Magdi Sebestyen (608)-213-5768

[magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com)

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## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS**

Leaders for specific activities are:

Let's Hike/Let's Walk–Magdi Sebestyen

([magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com](mailto:magdi.sebestyen@gmail.com))

Winter Snow-Shoeing/Cross-Country Skiing--Tamas

Gaal ([tgaal@wisc.edu](mailto:tgaal@wisc.edu))

Second Harvest Food Bank–Lois Schulz

([loisschulz1942@gmail.com](mailto:loisschulz1942@gmail.com))

Travel/Day trips–Donna Hussin ([djhussin@yahoo.com](mailto:djhussin@yahoo.com))

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ACTIVITY LEADERS**

### **Activities Committee Members:**

Gail Holmes (chair) ([glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu)),

Audrey Liimatainen ([AMCL822@yahoo.com](mailto:AMCL822@yahoo.com)),

Lois Schulz ([loisschulz1942@gmail.com](mailto:loisschulz1942@gmail.com))

Leaders for specific activities are:

Adopt-A-Highway–Stephanie Vanden Bush

([sljacobs2@gmail.com](mailto:sljacobs2@gmail.com))

Bike Rides – Jan Hornback ([jhornback@wisc.edu](mailto:jhornback@wisc.edu))

Book Club – Reta Harring ([retaharring@charter.net](mailto:retaharring@charter.net)) and

Marian Ehrenberg ([marianeh2014@gmail.com](mailto:marianeh2014@gmail.com))

International Institutes–Helen Ann Rugowski

([haharrin@hotmail.com](mailto:haharrin@hotmail.com))

Let's Eat Out (LEO)–Bobbie Vrooman

([bobbiesque@gmail.com](mailto:bobbiesque@gmail.com))

Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> – Gail Holmes ([glholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:glholmes@wisc.edu))

**WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP**  
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