



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON



ffwis.org

NOVEMBER 2021

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was great to see so many of you at our Fall meeting on October 24 at Maple Bluff Beach Park. Many thanks to all who organized the space and afternoon events! Since our journeys continue to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we talked about how our club can continue to fulfill FFI's mission **to promote global understanding, cultural education and citizen diplomacy through individual friendships.**

It was heartening at the Fall meeting to see the overwhelming support from our members for projects that support refugees in Wisconsin. You can learn more details in this newsletter. Our work with refugees will not only benefit the refugees, but also will help to get the word out about one of the best kept secrets in our community - Friendship Force!

I'm optimistic that journeys will slowly resume in 2022 and be in full swing by 2023. However, for this year and into early 2022, journeys are not resuming as much as expected or hoped and Friendship Force International needs additional financial help to sustain the organization through 2022. Our club and many others provided generous donations to FFI last year to ensure their continued operations through 2021.

Journey fees provide a significant portion of FFI's operating budget, and unfortunately FFI's total revenues for 2022 will not reach budgeted levels. Even with dramatic reductions of expenses and staff, they are heading toward a deficit. FFI CEO Jeremy Snook is asking each of us to recognize FFI's 45 years in operation with individual donations of \$45, to supplement our annual membership dues. I encourage you to provide whatever you can for ongoing support of our local club and FFI.

As we prepare to celebrate one of my favorite holidays – Thanksgiving – I share the words of Marcus Tullius Cicero: **Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others.** You are all beacons of light in our global community! Best wishes for a blessed holiday with friends and family!

Kathy Speck

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monthly Board Meeting:

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

November 6: Dining on the 6th. "Activities"

November 29: Book Club. "Activities"

December 2: Second Harvest. "Activities"

December 6: Holiday Cookie Party. "Activities"

Please check our 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!

We remind you that ZOOM support is available from FFI and from our club. View the FFI Zoom training video at <https://vimeo.com/436845540>.

Or Contact Peter Kaufman pkaufman@gmail.com



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JOURNEYS

2022

An outgoing Journey to Toronto is **definitely** on for September of 2022. An outgoing Journey to Dallas along with an Iowa club is still a **possibility** in 2022 in either spring or fall. Our Journey Manager is working on scheduling.

2023

Our current plan is to request to reschedule our outgoing Journey to New Zealand and to request to reschedule our incoming Oita, Japan as well as our Tweed Valley Australia Journeys in 2023.

None of these 2023 requests are promised because there are 2 - 3 years of cancelled Journeys to coordinate and it will be complicated for FFI as well as local clubs. But this is the current plan. Our assignments for 2023 may not be assigned until spring of 2022.

But you can now take out your suitcase and think about Toronto in less than a year! Two Ambassador Coordinators for the Toronto Journey are needed to work as a team. Anyone interested in volunteering to lead this Journey should contact the Journey Manager Stephanie Sorensen: ssorensen268@gmail.com or 608 819-6646.



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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison has partnered with the **International Institute of Wisconsin** to provide dinner hosting for international guests who are part of the International Visitors Program, an affiliate of the US State Department's National Council for International visitors for several years. Because of COVID our hosting has become ZOOM based.

Our role in this partnership is to provide the visitors with an opportunity to visit with everyday Americans, visit our homes (virtually for now), learn a little about each other's lives, and families, food, cultures etc. The guests may be from a single country or many different countries but all of them are part of a program focused on a shared interest or occupation. Our most recent group were all leaders involved in emergency preparedness.

We would like to add to our list of members who are willing to visit with these international guests for 1-1 1/2 hours on ZOOM. The Institute sets up the ZOOM links, provides support and interpreters. Recent programs have been conducted mid-day to accommodate multiple time zones. You can partner with another member or may be matched with someone from the Milwaukee area. At this point, we are receiving requests to host no more than two to three times per year. If you are interested, please contact Sandi Wysock: sandrawysock@msn.com. You will need to fill out an application which allows the Institute to provide the visitors with a little information about their American hosts.

Some day we hope to return to in-person gatherings for home-cooked meals and good conversations around a host's dinner table. However during the pandemic we have become frequent and often skilled ZOOM users and are grateful for the technology that has allowed us to stay connected and even make new friends during this long pandemic time.

ACTIVITIES

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Over the past several months our Board and members have followed the responses of local agencies to the complex processes of welcoming and supporting the resettlement of over 13,000 thousand Afghan refugees who have been initially received at Fort McCoy in Monroe County Wisconsin. Our news media continue to update us on the conditions and Fort McCoy and the needs of the thousands of people living there.

ACTIVITIES

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT



Many of our members want to offer their time and energies to these efforts. FF Wisconsin-Madison now has an ad-hoc Refugee Support Committee whose task is to investigate the current and long-term needs of the resettlement process and identify agencies to work with and recommend areas where we can be of help.

At the Fall Event on Sunday, October 24, Committee lead Dorothy Baldwin updated attendees on progress to date. Committee members have identified Open Doors for Refugees (opendoorsforrefugees.org) and Jewish Social Services of Madison (jssmadison.org) as two local agencies with long experience in refugee resettlement and support, with strengths that complement each other. They determined that working with these agencies is the best way to focus our efforts. They will continue to report to the members as plans move forward. Because of the restrictions on working directly with refugees one-on-one, and the fluid nature of the resettlement effort, working through agencies is the most effective means to make a difference.

The Refugee Support Committee has identified:

1. **immediate refugee needs** and actions we can take and
2. **long-term needs** and actions that will ask us for more long-term involvement. The long-term needs may change over time depending on the success of agencies to meet current resettlement needs, the process will continue over the long term. The Refugee Support Committee will continue to update members via the Newsletter and/or emails.

ACTIVITIES

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Immediate need that we can help meet is with financial donations to JSS to allow them purchase gift cards to stores such as Woodmans, Burlington Coat Factory, TJ Maxx/Marshalls for families to use to buy clothing, food and other basic necessities from week to week once they leave Fort McCoy for more permanent living locations. Members will receive more information soon on how to send their designated donations for collection by FF Wisconsin-Madison.

Long-term needs are identified primarily by The Open Doors for Refugees, although the Committee expects there may also be projects through JSS in the future. Volunteer support requests that the Refugee Support Committee currently is offering to members are:

**Driving refugees to appointments or around Madison to familiarize them with the city.

**Working with DreamBikes (dream-bikes.org), which provides free bikes to new refugee arrivals, and is looking for volunteers (depending on seasonal demand) to help with bike selection and refurbishment. Tasks include selecting, cleaning, light repairing, and fitting bikes. Fitting helmets, and rider training also may be needed to help refugees learn how to safely bike around Madison. Volunteers must be able to lift and move bikes up to 50 lbs. The Dream Bike location is at 1131 N Sherman Avenue.

**A winter clothing drive is being planned by Open Doors . There are still a few thousand refugees at Fort McCoy who do not have warm winter coats or shoes/boots – more information will be provided as it is available.

**Working with Open Doors and JSS in conjunction with The Literacy Network to tutor refugees in English as a second language. There is an application process to become a tutor, but no teaching experience is required to volunteer.

**When called upon, participate in collection of furniture and other household goods for new homes for refugees. Currently all collection warehouses are full, but we will monitor the situation and inform members when there is a call for household furnishings.

ACTIVITIES

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Another need that is current is the need for sewing machines in working order with basic attachments and needles, since in many cases our guests are not yet comfortable with our women's clothing styles and would like to make some of their own clothing. We all understand that clothing is a way to show the world who we are, and our guests often left Afghanistan with only the clothes on their backs. So being able to make some traditional garments is one of the few ways they can become more comfortable and ease into their new surroundings and cope with the trauma of loss and the huge changes in their lives. The Sewing Machine Project (thesewingmachineproject.org) in Madison is always looking for donated sewing machines. Please consider if you have a sewing machine that you can donate. We will update you on details of how you can make your donation.

The Board felt that since we are not traveling and probably will not be in the foreseeable future, we can better focus our time and energy on developing relationships within the local international community, with our current focus on the refugees who are totally overwhelmed at this point. This process is a marathon not a sprint.

Support for refugee resettlement is a serious long-term commitment on the part of FF-Wisconsin-Madison, and directly in line with our mission **"to enhance Friendship Force activities through addressing humanitarian needs."** Once members commit to action, people will depend on us. Please give this humanitarian mission careful consideration.

The Committee would like to develop an interest list from our membership which includes the amount of time each month each member will be able to volunteer and his or her preference of available activities. The commitment will be from six months to a year. Please email Dorothy Baldwin: janddbaldwin@gmail.com to indicate your interest, availability, and any questions.

Recap - what next?

We are working on an efficient method to collect monetary donations to JSS for gift cards. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

The Refugee Support Committee intends to provide one or more programs to our membership about Afghan culture, which has many diverse elements, as well as programs to help us understand the refugee experience as it is unfolding here in Wisconsin. At this time, we anticipate the programs will be presented virtually. More information will follow as programs are developed.

ACTIVITIES

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Once the Refugee Committee has a list of interested volunteers for long-term projects, members will be contacted and work begun.

The Refugee Support Committee is:

Dorothy Baldwin
janddbaldwin@gmail.com

Lise Skofronick
liseerskofronick@gmail.com

Sandy Drew
sdrew24@tds.net

Agnes Rona
whereowhere5@gmail.com

DINING ON THE SIXTH

Please join your friends for a private dinner party at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 6, overlooking the garden at the Imperial Gardens, 2039 Allen Boulevard. Imperial Gardens has been voted the "Best Chinese Restaurant in Madison."



The extensive dinner menu at Imperial Gardens offers over ninety items which can be viewed on their website.

There are appetizers, soup, and numerous entrees of beef, pork, chicken, duck, lamb, seafood, as well as noodles and rice dishes. The menu also includes many vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. Most prices are in the range of \$11 to \$16. We will place individual orders and will receive separate checks. They also offer a full bar.

Please register by November 4 with Gail Holmes: glholmes@wisc.edu, 608-249-1846.

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ACTIVITIES

BOOK CLUB



The Friendship Force book club met via Zoom on Monday evening, October 25. Ten participants shared insights and thoughts about Yaa Gyasi's most recent book, "Transcendent Kingdom" which brings together in a skillful way the hot-button topics of our day, including race relations, drug addiction, and religious beliefs and/or practices. The main character, Gifty, is a black woman raised in beliefs of the Pentacostal church who loses her only sibling, an older brother, to opiate addiction. She is a researcher in a laboratory working with the brains of mice to find an answer to the elusive behavior that compels opiate use and addiction. Her work leads her to ask compelling questions about the intersections of faith and science.

We will next meet via Zoom on Monday, November 29 at 7 p.m., and will be reading and discussing the book "Forbidden by Faith." By Negeen Papehn. It is a novel about a Muslim woman and a Jewish man who fall in love and have to meet head-on their families' and cultures beliefs and prejudices.

Email Marian Ehrenberg at: marianeh2014@gmail.com by November 24 for the Zoom key.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY



In beautiful weather on October 20 four FF members collected 9 bags of garbage near the Middleton Park and Ride off Hwy 12. Adopt-a-Highway volunteers Members usually report they had fun collecting garbage together – more of us should give it a try!

ACTIVITIES

SECOND HARVEST FOODBANK

Our next day of service is December 2, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at 2802 Dairy Drive. Notify leader Lois Schulz (loisschulz1942@gmail.com) know of your interest by November 29.

Second Harvest has a continuing need for more volunteers in order to continue to carry out its urgent mission to provide food and meals to food-insecure residents of Madison and Dane County.

FF WISCONSIN-MADISON FALL MEETING AND SOCIAL

The windy and wet weather did not deter 24 members gathered on Sunday October 24 at the Maple Bluff Beach Park Shelter to discuss volunteer opportunities that FF Wisconsin-Madison may participate in through local agencies that are involved with Afghan refugee support. There was lively discussion after Dorothy Baldwin's presentation of our Club's plans for our volunteer efforts.

Then on to the bonfire and smores and laughter! Perhaps our last outdoor hurrah before real winter sets in – but then we can ski, snowshoe, build snowmen, have snowball fights.....



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ACTIVITIES

HOLIDAY COOKIE SHARING

What is better than the smell of holiday baking? Sharing the results with friends and family.

Under current circumstances, on Monday December 6 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. we can only share our masterpieces on ZOOM, imagine how they taste, exchange recipes, share holiday stories and laughter.



Each participant is asked to bake a favorite cookie or bar. It's time to show off your tradition – Norwegian? French? German? Finnish, Polish, Irish? Was this recipe handed down from your grandma or is it one you created for your own family tradition? Is there a great story associated with this famous cookie?

On December 6, we will gather around our computers / tablets / iPhones and each of us will present a small plate of our confection on camera and explain what it is and why we chose to make it as part of our holidays.

This party is simple and similar to what we did last January with chocolate and wine/beer. To participate in the holiday cheer please send your name to Lise Skofronick by December 1st so you can receive the ZOOM link for the event. Lise Skofronick: 608-274-7732 – home landline with voicemail / liserskofronick@gmail.com

If you wish to share your recipes, please email them to Lise and she will collate them and forward them to the participants.

BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

Standing Committee Chairs

Membership: Lise R. Skofronick 608-274-7732

liskofronick@gmail.com

Journey Manager: Stephanie Sorensen 608-819-6646

ssorensen268@gmail.com

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

Programs:

Mike Lambert (608)-577-1057

lambertmichaelj@gmail.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 – Sandi Wysock sandrawysock@msn.com

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

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

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

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

Day trips--Donna Hussin (djhussin@yahoo.com)

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