



# Friendship Force

Wisconsin — Madison

ffwis.org

*Sept/Oct 2024*

## A NOTE FROM THE Co-PRESIDENTS

The mission of Friendship Force is to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Journeys are the primary way this mission is realized. The nine Ambassadors on the FFWM Outbound Journey to **Ghana** were repeatedly reminded of the mission. We were hosted by members of the Volta Lake Club and the Trinity Club of Legon. Both clubs warmly welcomed us with ceremonies that included dancing, singing, and even a bouquet of flowers.

During our two-week Journey, we visited a durbar, a village festival honoring the local chief; a carpentry workshop that makes “fantasy coffins” for elaborate Ghanaian funerals; and a Cedi Bead workshop where we observed how traditional glass beads are made from recycled glass bottles and learned about their significance in indigenous cultures. We also toured the Volta Lake Hydroelectric Plant and Dam; the Shai Hills Nature Preserve; the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum in Accra; the Volta Lake Hospital; and Lila's Child Care Foundation where we met Lila, the founder, and presented her and the children with books and bags of rice. After visiting a Kente cloth weaving workshop and watching how Kente cloth is made, we attended a Kente Festival. We were entertained there by village chiefs and Queen Mothers in the Ghana/Togo region and saw the best weavers in the area honored. We learned of Kente cloth's cultural

heritage that contributes to cross-border cooperation between Ghana and Togo.

At the club's Annual Picnic at Marshall Park on Sept. 7, we shared Wisconsin food (brats, baked beans, potato and sauerkraut salads) and camaraderie. Several of the Ambassadors to Ghana shared favorite stories about host families that reinforced how FF helps with global understanding across countries. They talked about Ghanaian family values, funeral practices, religious services, and education. One of the Ambassadors described how her middle-class host family is striving for home ownership. Thank you to the picnic organizers – Gail, Jan, Donna M., Donna U. and Dorothy, with a special thanks to brat & hamburger griller, John Baldwin.

To reinforce our connection to the mission of Friendship Force and strengthen our bond with other clubs, fifteen club members are attending the FFI North American Regional Conference in Milwaukee in October. Conference workshops will provide innovative ideas for planning and goal setting. In addition, attendees will learn about the work of other clubs in the areas of marketing, connecting with other organizations, developing cultural experiences, attracting a more diverse membership, and promoting global understanding.

We are grateful to be leading a very active club and appreciate the involvement and support of our members.  
—*Diane and Larry*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS**2024**

- Sept 13: *Cancelled:* Adopt-A-Highway  
 Sept 21: Sun Prairie Multicultural Fair p6  
 Sept 23: Book Club (in person) p5  
 Sept 25: Second Harvest service day  
  
 Oct 6: *No Dining on the 6th in October*  
 Oct 7-10: **Regional Conf: Milwaukee**  
  
 Oct 21: Book Club (in person) p5  
 Oct 24: Venezuela: dinner/panel p6  
 Oct 28: *Sign up for Second Harvest*  
 Oct 30: Second Harvest service day p7  
  
 Nov 3: **Brazil application deadline** p3  
 Nov 6: Dining on the 6th?  
 Nov 15: *Newsletter Deadline*

**2025**

- Jan 4: **Holiday Party!** p2  
 Jan 15: *Newsletter Deadline*  
  
 Mar 28 **Open World - Kosovo** -  
 - Apr 5:  
  
 May 27 **Outbound - Brazil** p3  
 - June 6  
  
 Fall: **Outbound - Birmingham, AL** p3  
 TBD: **Inbound - Olympia, WA** -

**Monthly Events:**

- Social: Dining on the 6th ☕  
 Board Mtg: 2nd Thursday  
 Book Club: 3rd Monday  
 Foodbank: Last Wed of each month

Calendar updates will be emailed to you directly and/or posted on our website: [ffwis.org](http://ffwis.org)

~~~~~

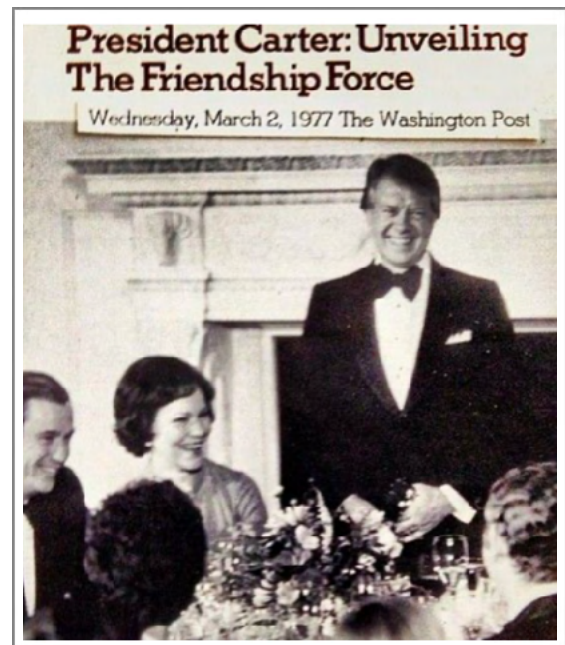
**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Holiday Party**  
**Saturday, January 4, 2025**  
**12 noon - 3 pm**

**Vintage Brewing Company West**  
**674 S. Whitney Way**  
**Madison, WI**

~~~~~

Happy 100th Birthday,  
 Jimmy Carter!



**President Carter: Unveiling The Friendship Force**

Wednesday, March 2, 1977 The Washington Post

—photo: FriendshipForce.org

## JOURNEYS

### *Outbound: Brazil — May 27-June 6, 2025*

We will travel first to Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from May 27 to May 31, 2025, then on to Belem, Brazil, from May 31 to June 6.

Belo Horizonte, population 2.3 million with over 6 million in the greater metro area, was the first planned city in Brazil. Located in the south-central part of the country, Belo Horizonte is surrounded by mountains and is known for its parks and 17 educational institutions in the area.

The city of Belém is in northeast Brazil about 60 miles from the Atlantic Ocean on the Para River, part of the Amazon River system. Nicknamed the “City of Mango Trees,” it has an estimated population of 1.5 million people, with an additional 1 million living outside the city proper. From all reports there is a lot to see and do in Belém. Both cities have international airports.

***NOTE:*** If you are interested in participating in the Brazil journey, you will need to apply with a **\$25 non-refundable application fee** to Journey Co-Managers Tom Miller or Kathy Speck by **November 3, 2024**. The application form is available in a few ways and forms:

The first way is to click on this [link](#) to print a paper copy to be filled by hand.

The second way is to click on this [link](#) for a PDF fillable application to be completed on your device (desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone) then printed and submitted.

The third method to apply is to logon to the [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org) website. Access the form through the website Help Center, then enter Ambassador Application in the search bar.

Once completed, either email the application to the Journey Managers or print and mail along with the application fee to Tom Miller, 5414 Denton Pl, Madison, WI 53711.

## JOURNEYS

### *Outbound: Brazil (cont)*

Since both Brazil clubs have limited capacity, there is a possibility that some ambassadors may need to stay in a hotel rather than with a host family. In addition, there is the possibility of a side trip organized by our club before or after the journey.

### *Outbound: Birmingham, AL — Fall, 2025*

While we are not yet accepting applications for the Birmingham journey, scheduled for mid-to-late Fall, 2025, please email us if you have an interest in participating. (Email addresses below)

Birmingham has a very active and enthusiastic club, and we expect a very interesting journey. Sightseeing may include the Civil Rights Museum, the Botanical Gardens, the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, Barber Motor Sports, the Sloss Furnace from its days as an iron and steel town, plus parks and art galleries.

---

### **Journey Coordinators and Co-Coordiators Needed!**

To be successful, all inbound and outbound journeys need to have both a Coordinator and a Co-Coordinator. We are recruiting to fill these positions for 2025 and 2026. (Journeys unknown for 2026).

To that end, we invite any club members interested in serving in one or more of these roles in the next couple of years to contact us. We would like to set up a training session to review the expectations for these positions and answer any questions you might have.

Please contact one of us:

Kathy Speck [kspeckemeny@gmail.com](mailto:kspeckemeny@gmail.com)  
Tom Miller [fmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net)

## JOURNEYS

### *Recent Outbound: Ghana — Aug 1-15, 2024*

Our African adventure to Ghana, hosted by the Volta Lake and Trinity Friendship Force Clubs, included nine FFWM members as Ambassadors!

A detailed account of their amazing trip and of their very entertaining presentations at our recent Annual Summer Picnic may be found in the “*Summer Picnic*” article on this page, and also on p.1 in “*A Note from the Co-Presidents.*”



## ACTIVITIES

### *Dining on the 6th: Recent*

A special edition of Dining on the 6th was held on Monday, **July 15**, for dinner at Holisac’s Taste of Africa restaurant in Sun Prairie. A couple from Ghana are the owners and we were able to choose from a menu of Ghanaian foods. Each pre-ordered dish was individually prepared and served.

We were limited to 16 participants at their two round tables. Those enjoying this dining adventure were John & Dorothy Baldwin, Jan Barbone, Sandy Drew, Gail Holmes (leader), Maureen Kind, Mary Lindquist, Pete & Marjie Marion, Diane Mertens & Larry Neuman, Julie Pretell & Allen Weiland, Lise Skofronick, and George & Sandi Wysock. A great opportunity to expand our knowledge of African foods!



**Note:** There is no *Dining on the 6th* planned for October due to so many members going to Milwaukee to attend the FFI North American Conference that week.

*Gail Holmes*  
Activity Leader

## ACTIVITIES



### *Summer Picnic Review*

The Club’s annual summer potluck picnic was held on Saturday, **September 7**, at Marshall Park at 5:00 p.m. Thirty-two people were registered altho several were unable to come. There was plenty of delicious food to choose from plus trips for seconds. Many thanks to all for their culinary contributions and especially to grill master John Baldwin for preparing brats and hamburgers!

The Program Committee arranged for our recently-returned Ambassadors to Ghana to share stories of their adventures and hosts. They wore beautiful stoles made for each of them with their name by the Trinity Friendship Force club, and their presentations were quite entertaining!



*L-R: Ariel Ford tells an amusing tale from Ghana while Margaret Harrigan, David Blado, Maureen Kind, Larry Neuman, and Diane Mertens look on. Not pictured are Dorothy Baldwin, Magdi Sebestyen, and Audrey Liimatainen. —photo: A. Garrison*

Even though the weather was cooler than we would have preferred, we very reluctantly ended the celebration and conversation after two hours.

Many thanks to the picnic planning committee: Dorothy Baldwin, Jan Barbone, Donna Miller, Donna Ulteig, and Gail Holmes.

— *Gail Holmes, Activity Leader*

ACTIVITIES*Book Club*

The book club enjoyed two wonderful in person meetings this summer. The first took place on **August 6** at the home of Kathy Speck and we very much enjoyed our conversation around the novel *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese. It was indeed, as described by Goodreads, “a sweeping, emotionally riveting first novel – an enthralling family saga of Africa and America, doctors and patients, exile and home.”

Participants were Julie Pretell, Stephanie Sorensen, Kathy Speck, Vicki Warren, and the co-leaders Marian Ehrenberg and Marjie Marion.



On **September 23** we gathered at the home of Maureen Kind for a discussion of Nina Willner’s family memoir, *Forty Autumns: A Family’s Story of Courage and Survival on Both Sides of the Berlin Wall*. The author’s depth of family research and her ability to relate events and situations on both sides of the wall over many decades was impressive, and the stories compelling. Truly a testament to the “hidden strength of the human spirit,” as she quotes Andrei Sakharov.

Joining leaders Marian and Marjie were Dorothy Baldwin, Maureen Kind, Chris Miles, Julie Pretell, Stephanie Sorensen, and Vicki Warren,

Many thanks to Kathy and Maureen for supporting and hosting these worthwhile conversations!

ACTIVITIES*Book Club (cont)*

Looking forward, we have one book selected for our meeting on Monday, **October 21**. It is *This is Happiness* by Irish author Niall Williams and it appeared on the FF International book list. Margaret Renkl of *The New York Times* calls it “a book so beautiful and so funny and so true that it will make you love the whole human race and forgive it all its trespasses.”

In the book, a seventy-eight-year-old fellow describes the world of his youth in a village in County Clare as it emerges out of the rain and into a world that is changing around it.

There are copies available through the public library, so please enjoy reading it and then join us on October 21. We will meet at the home of Stephanie Sorensen, most likely at 7:00 pm.



If you want to be added to the book club email list, let us know. It is the best way to keep in touch with the books we are considering and any changes in meeting situations.

We look forward to seeing you!

Marjie Marion [midsi@aol.com](mailto:midsi@aol.com)  
Marian Ehrenberg [marianeh2014@gmail.com](mailto:marianeh2014@gmail.com)



## OUTREACH

*Editor's note:* The Outreach Committee, led by Jan Barbone, 'reaches out' into the greater Madison community to let people know about us (both the Madison Club specifically and FF in general) and to let us know about other international activities happening in the area.

Here are reports on two recent events and an invitation to another:

### *Int'l Music Sessions at McPike Park – Aug 8-10*

In July the Board approved the purchase of an outdoor tent-canopy. We set it up for 3 days at the McPike Sessions Festival which features outdoor international music.

Pat Fleming, Ken Warren, and Hal Wissink helped with the setup; and Hal and Ken stayed to volunteer for a couple of hours. Other volunteers were Donna Ulteig, Kathy Johnson, Doug Johnson, and Vicki Warren. Doug Johnson and his son helped with the take-down.

There were 22 people that signed up for more information! All were sent the current newsletter and Membership Form.

### *Sun Prairie Multicultural Fair – Sept 21*

On September 21, we set up the tent-canopy at Sheenan Park in Sun Prairie for the Multicultural Festival. Maureen Kind and Lise Skofronick volunteered, and Lise also helped with the take-down.

There were 16 people who signed up for more information, and all were sent the current newsletter and Membership Form.

*Jan Barbone  
Outreach Committee*

## OUTREACH



### *Upcoming Activity*

#### **Culinary Passport Series - Venezuela**

The Catholic Multicultural Society is sponsoring another event in their Culinary Passport series. It will be a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the rich culture and vibrant flavors of Venezuela, and we have all been invited to join them for the evening!

In addition to an authentic dinner at a local restaurant, we'll hear from our neighbors of Venezuelan origin who will share personal stories about the significance of food in their culture and the challenges facing their country.

**Thursday, October 24th, 2024**  
6:00 - 8:00pm

**La Taguara - Far East**  
3010 Crossroads Dr.  
Madison, WI

By attending, you'll be supporting essential programs at the Catholic Multicultural Center.

We expect tickets to sell quickly, so we encourage you to reserve yours while they're still available.

Tickets are \$50 each at this link:

### [Culinary Passport to Venezuela](#)



ACTIVITIES*Second Harvest Foodbank*

September is Hunger Action Month! For years, people working for food banks have used September to emphasize how their supporters — like you — can take steps toward ending hunger. So, it's a great time to volunteer at Second Harvest Food Bank.

While we all have our “why”, or reason that we volunteer, yours is unique and deeply personal. Second Harvest may not know your “why”, but they do know that we are facing a critical moment.

So, is your “why” and time to volunteer now?  
We hope so!

You may join FF friends and other volunteers the **last Wednesday of the month** from 12:30-3:30. The staff is friendly and caring and will instruct you as to your “job” for that day. You'll be able to take a break during that 3 hour shift to have some goodies and chat with friends.

To volunteer, please contact Judy Thorpe ([jthorpe12@charter.net](mailto:jthorpe12@charter.net) or 608-772-5438) by **Sept 23** and/or **Oct 28**.

Thank you for your help!

*Autumn dates are:*

**Wed, Sept 25**      **12:30-3:30pm**  
**Wed, Oct 30**      **12:30-3:30pm**

**Second Harvest**  
2802 Dairy Drive  
Madison WI 53718

—photo: @A.Garrison 2020  
*Harvest scene on Old Sauk Road*

ACTIVITIS*Second Harvest — Recent service days*

On Wednesday, **July 31**, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Vivian Norton, Donna Hussin, and Gail Holmes worked with seven middle school students from Blackhawk Church's Madison Mission program and a father/daughter team.

We had an easy and clean job of labeling 4 oz. plastic cups of cut green beans. 64 cups were stacked in tall boxes and our group completed 110 boxes for a total of over 7,000 labeled cups! We were energized by the enthusiasm and caring that these young people brought to the task.

=====

The **August 28** group at Second Harvest Food Bank consisted of Helen Ann Rugowski, Maureen Kind, and Gail Holmes. A new member who was interested was unable to come at the last minute.

We worked with over a dozen high schoolers from the Madison Community Day School. Our first task was to package a dozen uncracked eggs into a carton and put 15 cartons into each large box.

When we finished that, we helped the students package ten half ears of frozen corn into a plastic bag and double seal it, and filled the large boxes with ten bags. We've done this before. We wonder if these monstrous crates of corn will ever run out!



**IN MEMORIAM****Kay Babcock**

Our Honorary Member, Kay Babcock, passed away on Sunday August 11, 2024.

Kay was unique in that she was on the very first Friendship Force of Wisconsin journey in 1978. There were 1200 applications for that trip. Because the plan was to charter a plane, only 250 positions were available.

As Kay told it, they did not know where they were going when they applied — that was the norm for the early exchanges! — but they were asked to list countries that they would *not* want to visit. Kay listed Uganda because they were taking their young children along and despot Idi Amin was the leader of Uganda at the time.

They later learned that they were going to Zurich, Switzerland. The chartered plane would deliver our group to Zurich and then make the return trip to Madison with 250 people from Switzerland aboard.

Another member shared a memory from traveling with the Babcocks from Vladavostock to Irkutsk in Russia: Any time the train stopped they were able to get out and walk around. You always knew where Kay was because she and Steve were handing out wiener whistles to children!

Kay was very active in our club. She and Steve hosted and traveled and supported the club in various ways over the many years of their membership. Kay was a pleasure to travel with and will be remembered for always having a smile on her face.

**IN MEMORIAM**

If you would like to hear more about our history, and Kay's experience in particular, view the video below. (There is also a link to it on our website.) Kay's portion begins approximately 20 minutes into the tape:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IykrB7hVwcl>

Here is an excerpt from Kay's obituary that mentions her international interests:

“Kay [and Steve] were founding members of The Friendship Force of Wisconsin, through which they developed life-long friendships around the world through hosting travelers and traveling themselves to many places. Their appreciation for diverse cultures was enhanced at home with participation in Foreign Foods (now called University League International Foods) a group that would get together to cook and enjoy foods, with a curated menu, from a pre-selected country several times a year.”

Kay's full obituary may be found at:

<https://www.gundersonfh.com/obituaries/Karlee-Lillian-Kay-Babcock?obId=32710736>



*photo:*  
@A. Garrison



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS****Co-Presidents & FFI Liasons**

Diane Mertens (608) 271-8657  
[mertensdk27@gmail.com](mailto:mertensdk27@gmail.com)

Larry Neuman (608) 271-8657  
[wlneman@yahoo.com](mailto:wlneman@yahoo.com)

**Vice-President**

Kathy Johnson (608) 238-1785  
[kjohnson44@ameritech.net](mailto:kjohnson44@ameritech.net)

**Secretary**

Vicki Warren (608) 617-2213  
[kenvic1@gmail.com](mailto:kenvic1@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**

Deb Gunther (262) 422-0176  
[debgunther@gmail.com](mailto:debgunther@gmail.com)

**Past President**

Doug Johnson (608) 238-1785  
[djohnson44@ameritech.net](mailto:djohnson44@ameritech.net)

**ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS****Newsletter**

Angie Garrison (608) 833-3656

**Members at Large**

Donna Ulteig (608) 335-0639  
[donna.ulteig@yahoo.com](mailto:donna.ulteig@yahoo.com)

Dorothy Baldwin (608) 742-6493  
[janddbaldwin@gmail.com](mailto:janddbaldwin@gmail.com)

**STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS****Activities**

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

**E-Communications**

Sandi Wysock (608) 833-5326  
[sandrawysock@msn.com](mailto:sandrawysock@msn.com)

**Membership**

Hal Wissink (608) 440-0653  
[wissinks@tds.net](mailto:wissinks@tds.net)

**Journey Managers**

Kathy Speck Kemeny (608) 577-4885  
[kspeckemeny@gmail.com](mailto:kspeckemeny@gmail.com)

Tom Miller (608) 334-3327  
[tmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net)

**Outreach**

Jan Barbone (608) 219-7479  
[madcapjan@yahoo.com](mailto:madcapjan@yahoo.com)

**Program**

Mike Lambert (608) 577-1057  
[lambertmichaelj@gmail.com](mailto:lambertmichaelj@gmail.com)

David Blado (715) 341-8308  
[david-blado@sbcglobal.net](mailto:david-blado@sbcglobal.net)

**ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**

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

Reta Harring [retaharring@charter.net](mailto:retaharring@charter.net)

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

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

**Activity Leaders****Adopt-A-Highway**

Stephanie Vanden Bush [sljacobs2@gmail.com](mailto:sljacobs2@gmail.com)

**Bike Rides**

Vivian Norton [vjoan@icloud.com](mailto:vjoan@icloud.com)

Larry Neuman [wlneman@yahoo.com](mailto:wlneman@yahoo.com)

**Book Club**

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

Marjie Marion [midsi@aol.com](mailto:midsi@aol.com)

**Dining on the 6th**

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

**International Institutes**

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

**Let's Walk/Let's Hike**

Maureen Kind [dmkind@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dmkind@sbcglobal.net)

**Second Harvest Foodbank**

Judy Thorpe [jthorpe12@charter.net](mailto:jthorpe12@charter.net)

**WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP FORCE**

**Official Publication of  
The Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison  
5809 Julia St  
Madison, WI 53705  
[www.ffwis.org](http://www.ffwis.org)**

Email Accounts:

[ffwis.general@gmail.com](mailto:ffwis.general@gmail.com)

[ffwis.meeting@gmail.com](mailto:ffwis.meeting@gmail.com)

[ffwis.outreach@gmail.com](mailto:ffwis.outreach@gmail.com)

[ffwis.membership@gmail.com](mailto:ffwis.membership@gmail.com)

**Co-Presidents:**

Diane Mertens (608) 271-8657

Larry Neuman (608) 271-8657

**Vice President:**

Kathy Johnson (608) 238-1785

**Secretary:**

Vicki Warren (608) 617-2213

**Treasurer:**

Deb Gunther (262) 422-0176

**Newsletter:**

Angie Garrison (608) 833-3656

**Historian:**

Donna Hussin (608) 770-0980