



friendship force  
WISCONSIN - MADISON

ffwis.org

July 2025

**A NOTE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS**

Summer has arrived, and many of us are enjoying Wisconsin's beauty. To celebrate Dining on the 6th, several club members biked to the Green Lantern on Lake Waubesa where they were joined by those who drove. Others participated on a sunny May morning in our Adopt-a-Highway Program or went to Madison's famous Bratfest. Our out-of-town friends remark that being in Madison in the summer is like being at a resort with the area's natural beauty, its lakes, and its many outdoor cultural events. Each week brings free outdoor music concerts, art & craft fairs, and community festivals. We can watch our local Mallards and Night Mares teams, see waterski shows, take garden tours, travel to American Players Theater (APT) in Spring Green to view world-class theater, and participate in other outdoor activities including biking, hiking, boating, and picnicking. Please feel free to contact club members to join you at these events to build our club's community. We can also reach out to individuals and organizations that share Friendship Force's core values and celebrate special days like the June 20 UN-designed World Refugee Day that honors people forced to flee their home countries.

We would like to thank Doug Johnson for leading FFW-M for five years as vice-president, president, and past-president. We appreciate his leadership and dedication to the club. We are also grateful for all the board members who have served in various capacities for many years and are willing to continue in those roles.

As mentioned in our June message, we are currently looking for people who are interested in joining with others to be part of a revitalized program committee. Ideally, three or four people could share responsibility to reduce the burden on any one person. Even if you have no prior FFW-M committee experience, your commitment, energy, and creative ideas are needed!

We hope you enjoy the many Madison summer events and will join us on August 20<sup>th</sup> for a family-friendly picnic at McKee Park.

Diane and Larry

**A World of Friends is a World of Peace**



**Club Activities Calendar**

**BOARD meets VIRTUALLY the second Thursday of the month at 4:00 PM**

- July 6 Dining on the 6th, Canceled
- July 21 Book Club, Canceled
- July 30 Second Harvest, 12:30-3:30 PM
- August 6 Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Canceled
- August 17 **Reservation Deadline** -Annual Club Potluck Picnic
- August 18 Book Club, Canceled
- August 20 Annual Club Potluck Picnic, 5-7:00 PM
- September 13 Book Club
- October 19-24 Birmingham, AL Outbound Journey

**2026**

- March Sacramento, CA Outbound Journey
- April 24-27 North American Regional Conference
- July Wairarapa, NZ Inbound Journey
- August Seferehisar, Türkiye Outbound Journey
- September Lower Columbia, Inbound Journey

JUST A LITTLE  
*Reminder*

Remember to 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!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING at the CLUB LEVEL

### Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison Family Friendly Summer Potluck Picnic

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

McKee Farms Park Shelter  
2930 Chapel Valley Road  
Fitchburg

5:00 PM Social Time  
5:30 PM Picnic Potluck Buffet

Program by  
Brazil Ambassadors

**Directions:** From Highway D (Fish Hatchery Road) traveling south, turn right onto Brenden Avenue; if traveling north turn left onto Brenden Avenue. The park will be on your left. From Highway PD (McKee Road) traveling east, turn right onto Chapel Valley, jog left onto Brenden. The park is in front of you. Follow the road past the tennis courts and the splash pads to the end where the parking lot and two-story shelter are located.

Members are welcome to bring their entire family of children and grandchildren to our annual picnic. McKee Farms Park is a very family-friendly park offering a playground, story walk, volleyball court and splash pad. In addition to the park's facilities, lawn games will be provided.

Meat for our meal is being prepared by John and Dorothy Baldwin. We are having shredded chicken and pulled port sandwiches.

Please provide a dish to share for the potluck such as potato salad, pasta salad, vegetable salad or platter, baked beans, hot dish, meat dish, hors d'oeuvres, chips and dip, fruit tray, variety of desserts, or your favorite picnic food.

Strawberry lemonade drink and cans of flavored water will be provided or you may bring your own beverage. No glass containers are allowed in the park.

Paper plates, utensils, napkins, and cups will be provided.

The program following our potluck will be a welcome back to our Brazil ambassadors—Coordinators Jan Barbone and Mary Crave, Deb Gunther and Matt Gazo, Gail Holmes, Kristin Mathews and Donna and Tom Miller.

Reservations are due by Sunday, August 17, so that serving supplies, tables, and supplemental food can be prepared. Either email Gail Holmes, [gholmes@wisc.edu](mailto:gholmes@wisc.edu), or phone 608-249-1846. Please indicate your potluck contribution and your meat choice of chicken or pork when making the reservation.

**The Picnic Committee**  
Dorthy Baldwin, Gail Holmes, Maureen Kind, Diane Mertens and Donna Ulteig

## JOURNEY NEWS

### Help Wanted (Needed!) for 2026 Journeys

The proposed 2026 journey schedule will be exciting, busy, and challenging for our club. To be successful, we need many hands (members) to plan and execute both incoming and outbound journeys in a seven or eight-month timeframe. Journey Coordinators for each of the journeys are one of the keys to success as are planning team members for the inbound journeys.

We have contacted the leadership of each of the assigned outbound and inbound journeys. We've heard from most and expect to hear from all in the next couple of weeks.

We especially need Journey Coordinators for the outbound journey to Sacramento and the inbound journey from New Zealand. A little about each of these clubs.

Friendship Force Sacramento, California is a vibrant club with over 100 members. Visiting ambassadors typically see historic Old Town Sacramento, visit nearby wineries, see the giant sequoias, and experience former gold mining sites in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. All of this plus homestays with interesting hosts. This club is suggesting a late March to mid-May journey so it's important for Journey Coordinators to determine travel dates.

The Wairarapa New Zealand club is one of the oldest clubs in the country and has over 30 active members. They are situated on the south end of the North Island. This area is known for its wineries, charming towns, and diverse landscapes. It has a rich history with many Māori settlements and heritage sites. The club is looking forward to its visit to Madison. They are also assigned a journey to the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada club.

### 2026 Inbound Journeys

July - Wairarapa, New Zealand to Manitoba, Canada and Wisconsin-Madison

September - Lower Columbia (in Washington State) to Wisconsin-Madison

### 2026 Outbound Journeys

March-May - Wisconsin-Madison, USA to Sacramento, USA

August - Wisconsin-Madison, USA to Seferihisar, Türkiye

Please note: The months listed are tentative, exact dates will be worked out with each of the clubs.

Please contact Kathy at [kspeckemeny@gmail.com](mailto:kspeckemeny@gmail.com) or 608-557-4885 and Tom at [tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net) or 608-334-3327 to volunteer. They can answer your questions and provide support for the Coordinators for the duration of the journeys.

**Ambassadors Find Friendship, Food and Festivals in Brazil  
May 27-June 6, 2025**

Two large cities in Brazil hosted from FFI Madison eight ambassadors the end of May into the first week of June. The ambassadors were: Jan Barbone, Mary Crave, Tom and Donna Miller, Matt Gazo and Deb Gunther, Gail Holmes, and Kristin Mathews. It was Kristin's, Matt's, and Deb's first international FF journey. A ninth person had to drop out due to illness.



For four days and nights we were hosted by a small but lively Belo-Horizonte club that loved music and dancing. They even hired a dance instructor for the farewell party so there were no excuses for not getting on the dance floor and moving to traditional regional Brazilian songs. The city is the second planned city in Brazil and ambassadors stayed in houses, apartments, and high rises. A relatively temperate climate at 2,700 feet elevation made for interesting tours of a bird sanctuary, old Catholic cathedrals such as Oro Prieto, built by gold miners, and a botanical garden that also has art installations. It was there that the ambassadors had a chance to talk with high school students on a field trip. It's a toss-up as to who had the most fun conversing. The state of Minas Gerais is Brazil's dairy land and much like Wisconsin, most meals included some sort of fresh cheese or cheese dish.

After a quick but generously hosted few days in Belo-Horizonte we flew to Belem in Para State. Belem is one of the oldest cities in Brazil with 1.3 million residents, built in part by rubber barons, and the site of the upcoming November Climate Change

Convention. As much as we wanted to say we were on the Amazon River, our guide told us that was not quite the case – though it's at the delta of and gateway to the Amazon. Six nights and days gave us plenty of time to see the local port Ver-o-Peso, some island attractions, a chocolate factory, an evening cruise, a traditional performing arts theater, and the location where the Portuguese first landed in Brazil. We used virtual reality to see what the crowd of more than 2 million pilgrims at an annual festival of the Virgin of Nazare might experience.

Many of the group meals were at *very* large buffets that featured lots of Brazilian meats, fruits, vegetables and salad bars with as many as 50 entrees. Price was usually by plate weight. While boarding our flight from Belo-Horizonte to Belem, we learned that "older" travelers – 60 years and older – were able to board in an expedited line. People of voting age in Brazil are fined if they don't vote in public elections, but after age 70, voting is not required. Besides jumping to the head of the buffet line, other perks for older adults include free entrance to movies and not having to pay taxes!

Prior to the start of our FFI program, six of the group did sightseeing around Rio de Janeiro and Foz Do Iguassu. Iguassu Falls is a UNESCO designation and a point where Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil meet.

Join us at the August picnic for more highlights of the journey.

**Mary Crave and Jan Barbone, Journey Co-coordinators**



Front Row Left to Right: Gail Holmes, Maria Paulina, guide, Donna Miller, Diana Maria de Morais, host

Back Row Left to Right: Maria Lucia Vasconcelos, host, Jan Barbone, Tom Miller, Mary Crave, Deb Gunther, Matt Gazo, Kristen Mathews

## ACTIVITIES

### Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> ALERT!

Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> will not be held in July or August. In July it falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend and in August we are having our annual summer potluck picnic. Details on the picnic appear earlier in this newsletter.



The June Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> was organized by Larry Newman and Vivian Norton as Gail Holmes was on the Brazil Journey. It was a combined bike ride and lunch with all participants enjoying lunch at the Green Lantern in McFarland. Since the 6<sup>th</sup> was a Friday many had the Green Lantern special, cod.

## ACTIVITIES

Cyclists Left to Right: Maureen Kind, Vivian Norton, Diane Mertens, Larry Neuman, Allen Rieland, Mike Di Lorio



The Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup> June crew including the cyclists who biked from Cahill Main, Fitchburg to the Green Lantern in McFarland. It was a beautiful day for this adventure.

Front Row Left to Right: Vivian Norton, Donna Ulteig, Maureen Kind, Diane Mertens, Margaret Harrigan, Lola Barrientos Marquez, Allen Rieland, Mike Di Lorio, Carla Di Lorio

Back Row Left to Right: Hal Wissink, Larry Neuman, Richard Harrington

## ACTIVITIES



2802 Dairy Drive, Madison,  
Wednesday, July 30, 2025

As you know since 1986 Second Harvest Foodbank has provided nearly 241 million meals to our neighbors in need in Southern Wisconsin. Friendship Force is one of many volunteer organizations that helps in the preparation and distribution of all this food. We have committed to eight volunteers every last Wednesday of every month from 12:30 to 3:30 to help out in this effort. Unfortunately, in May due to holidays and other Friendship Force commitments we were unable to offer any volunteers to help out at Second Harvest. In June they do annual inventory so we were not needed. Let's make up for that with a robust response in July. Please consider volunteering on **Wednesday, July 30, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.** To volunteer please email or call me by Monday, July 28, as Second Harvest needs to know how many volunteers will be coming in order to plan what projects can be done.

**Julie Pretell**  
[jopretell.rieland@gmail.com](mailto:jopretell.rieland@gmail.com)  
608-628-0550

### April 2025 Volunteers



Front Row Left to Right: Margaret Harrington, Diane Mertens  
Second Row Left to Right: Lise Skofronick, Judi Dieks,  
Maureen Kind, Gail Holmes, Vivian Norton, Mary Crave,  
Donna Hussin

## ACTIVITIES

### Book Club July and August Canceled



Six members of The Book Club met by zoom on Saturday afternoon, June 28, for a conversation around Eudora Welty's 1972 novel, The Optimist's Daughter. It presented

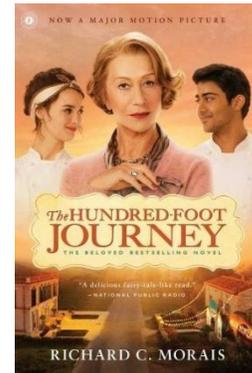
much to discuss! This, in spite of the fact that we were nearly unanimous in not finding a whole lot to love about the story. We experienced an example of the idea that when not all the questions that present themselves in a story find answers, there is plenty of room for interpretation. I think we all enjoyed discussing, interpreting, and thinking about another culture (the south) in a time (the fifties or possibly sixties) quite different from our own.

Dates for our next two meetings have been altered. Of the six members present on Saturday many were scattered and unavailable in July and August, so we opted to skip those months.

### Saturday, September 13, 3:00 PMT

The Hundred-Foot Journey - Richard C. Morais (2008), 245 pp. 10 copies currently available through the library system.

If you can't read the book, then try to see the 2014 movie - or do both! Book and DVD are both available from the library. The book was a New York Times best seller and is now a major motion picture starring Helen Mirren and Om Puri.



Born above his grandfather's modest restaurant in Mumbai, Hassan Haji first experienced life through intoxicating whiffs of spicy fish curry, trips to the local markets, and gourmet outings with his mother. Then tragedy pushes the family out of India, they eat their way around the world before settling in a small village in the French Alps. There they open an inexpensive Indian restaurant opposite the esteemed French *relais* of chef Madame Mallory."

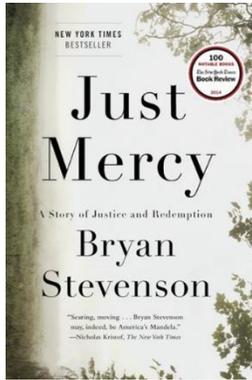
## ACTIVITIES

### Book Club Continued

Saturday, October 4 - Time, Location TBD

**Just Mercy: a story of justice and redemption - Bryan Stevenson** (2014), 336 pp. 53 of 60 copies are available. Contemporary insight into our justice system, from a brilliant lawyer who works however he can to make it a better one.

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship--and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

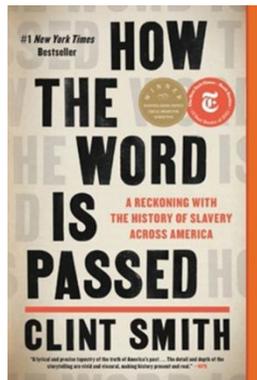


*Just Mercy* is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Additionally, and especially for those who did not happen to read this with the club in September 2023, we add it for October. Each chapter stands alone, as the author visits important sites in a human rights assessment of some historical monuments. This was the UW Big Read for 2022-23.

**How the Word is Passed: a reckoning with the history of slavery across America - Clint Smith** (2021), 336 pp. 74 of 82 copies available.

“Clint Smith's revealing, contemporary portrait of America as a slave owning nation. Beginning in his own hometown of New Orleans, Smith leads the reader through an unforgettable tour of monuments and landmarks - those that are honest about the past and those that are not - that offer an intergenerational story of how slavery has been central in shaping our nation's collective history, and ourselves.”



There is much to be gleaned from each of these books – read one or both for the October meeting, and especially interesting as our ambassadors journey to Birmingham later in October.

## ACTIVITIES

### Book Club Continued

Just in case, watch for changes to the calendar that could occur as we approach September. We would love to hold some more in-person meetings. Let us know if you would like to host. You can adjust the date and time to suit your schedule.

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

*“Reading is a means of thinking with another person's mind; it forces you to stretch your own.” Lionel Trilling*



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SAVE THE DATE!  
April 24-27, 2026  
Memphis, Tennessee

2026  
North American  
Regional  
Conference



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## **WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP FORCE**

### **Official Publication of**

### **The Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison**

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