



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON

ffwis.org

March 2026

CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Recently you received a “Welcome to 2026” video message from FFI CEO Jeremi Snook. In his message, Jeremi talks about how we live in an era when national policies directly contradict the mission of Friendship Force and constrain international travel. Yet, he says we can still be creative in how we maintain FF values and advance intercultural understanding. Furthermore, he comments on how in the long-term Friendship Force supports positive change by choosing to make connections rather than accepting division. He seeks to reassert the vision of FFI from its origin - to promote a more connected and compassionate world in which we find common ground.

If you missed Jeremi’s video message, we encourage you to watch it. He reflects on where FFI has been, where the organization is today, and why FF’s “mission matters now more than ever.” [watch the video here.](#)

FFI will be planning its fifty-year anniversary in 2027. There will be new “branding and messaging” to disseminate the FFI vision, the development of educational initiatives, and external donor funding. As this occurs, FFI’s core mission of spreading intercultural understanding and world peace will be maintained and strengthened.

Our club is slowly moving adjusting to changes in the size and structure of our membership. As we do this, we remain a vibrant group of individuals who are connected to one another around a shared purpose. This means we need to strengthen connections as we reassert our club’s core values and purpose.

Interconnections grow as we plan and travel on journeys together and when we participate in club activities, such as Dining on the 6th, the monthly book club, Second Harvest, and at club picnics, programs, and meetings. We reinforce connections through club newsletter articles, “Mailchimp” messages, and our website. Our club can only flourish if each member contributes time and attention to helping one another and to maintaining club operations.

In an era when national policies contradict the mission of Friendship Force and make international travel difficult, we can still maintain FF values and advance intercultural understanding. One way we can do this is to reaffirm the importance of international ties and connect with people from other countries who reside in our community. FFWM Board of Directors plans to invite a speaker to our Annual Meeting who can inform us of how we might connect locally while building friendships globally.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming FFWM events and on April 18 at the Annual Meeting.

Larry and Diane



Wisconsin State Capitol – Madison, WI

Club Activities Calendar



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

2026

March 1	World Friendship Day	p. 2
March 6	Dining on the 6th	p. 5
March 7	International Festival	p. 3
March 16	Book Club	p. 5
March 25	2 nd Harvest	p. 6
April 18	Annual Meeting	p. 6
April 20	Adopt a Highway	p. 4
April 24-27	North American Regional Conference Memphis, TN	p.2
April 29	2 nd Harvest	
May 13-19	Sacramento, CA Outbound Journey	
May 27	2 nd Harvest	
June 7	Adopt a Highway	
June 24	2 nd Harvest	
July 14	Club’s Annual Picnic	
July 14-18	Quad Cities Inbound Journey	
July 29	2 nd Harvest	
August 26	2 nd Harvest	
September 8	Adopt a Highway	
September 30	2 nd Harvest	
Late September	Seferehisar, Türkiye Outbound Journey	
October 11	Adopt a Highway	
October 13-20	Lower Columbia (Washington State) Inbound Journey	
October 28	2 nd Harvest	
November 18	2 nd Harvest	

FRIENDSHIP FORCE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

FFI 2026 Training Schedule

These workshops are designed for both new and experienced members who want to deepen their understanding of FFI programs, roles and tools.

Why join a training workshop?

- Build confidence in your role as a member, leader, or journey coordinator
- Learn best practices for journeys, matching, insurance, and succession planning
- Better navigate MyFF and Friendship Force resources
- Stay informed and connected with the global Friendship Force community

All times are Eastern Time Zone.

February

- New Club Leader Orientation-February 5, 1:00 PM
- New Member Orientation-February 9, 1:00 PM
- Travel Insurance Q&A-February 11, 1:00 PM
- General Club & Journey Q&A-February 25, 1:00 PM

March

- New Member Orientation-March 12, 11:00 AM
- Independent Journeys-March 23, 1:30 PM
- General Club & Journey Q&A-Date TBD

April

- Journey Coordinator Training-April 6, 1:00 PM
- New Member Orientation-April 9, 2:00 PM:
- General Club & Journey Q&A-April 13, 1:00 PM

May

- Travel Insurance Q&A-May 7, 7:00 PM
- New Member Orientation-May 20, 12:00 PM

June

- General Club & Journey Q&A-June 11, 7:00 PM

July

- Open World Information Session-July 1, 12:00 PM
- Journey Coordinator Training-July 13, 1:00 PM

August

- New Member Orientation-August 3, 11:00 AM

September

- Matching Process-September 7, 8:30 PM
- New Member Orientation-September 10, 2:00 PM
- Planned Special Journeys-Date TBD

October

- New Member Orientation-October 5, 7:30 PM
- Recruiting New Members-October 22, 7:00 PM
- General Club & Journey Q&A-Date TBD
- Independent Journeys-Date TBD

November

- New Member Orientation-November 11, 1:00 PM
- Travel Insurance Q&A-November 17, 1:00 PM

December

- New Member Orientation-Date TBD

An overview of all 2026 workshops, registration links, and available recordings, can be found on FFI's website:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hu86Sm-EcWzjXQQY6Rne5WbFsVebA7CctfWHHeSy-Og/edit?_kx=4j7SMbWBjpbKMw6djTVJ1vEQC1LM0m8Ncr39pMtYnM.RaH2Qb&gid=1356194104#gid=1356194104

(Control + click to follow link)



World Friendship Day- March 1

Friendship Force International observes worldwide World Friendship Day on March 1, the date the organization was established in 1977. President Jimmy Carter introduced the organization's mission to a group of state governors at the White House asking the governors to return to their states and identify a volunteer leader who would serve as State Director for the Friendship Force in their state. The date is important as it reflects the organization's core mission of fostering global understanding and bridging the culture divides and barriers that separate people. FFI encourages its members to celebrate on that day or sometime in March as a way to honor the connections that enrich our lives. *FFWM has chosen to celebrate on March 6 when club members gather for Dining on the 6th. We are asking each person coming to Dining on the 6th to share a favorite FF memory.*



Memphis, Tennessee – April 24-27, 2025

Still time to register for the conference. For registration and more information about the North American Conference, see the FFI conference website: <https://my.friendshipforce.org/>

The club is offering financial assistance (up to \$400 per person) for up to five club members to attend and who are willing to assume leadership roles in the Madison Club. The financial assistance covers the conference registration fee plus some funds toward hotel/transportation expenses. A report is expected to the Board on what they learned at the conference and become actively engaged by coordinating club journeys, leading a club committee or activity, or assuming other club leadership positions.

If you are interested, please contact the club vice-president, Kathy Johnson, by email: Kjohnson44@ameritech.net

CLUB NEWS



Two FFWM Committees Seek Members!

A vibrant club depends on maintaining an active membership base as well as on attracting and welcoming new members who can replenish/renew the base. Two standing committees spread the word to attract new members: Outreach and Membership. Both are seeking additional people to join and assist current committee members. Both committees also need a chairperson. Please consider contributing an hour or two per month. Your time and commitment will build our club and expand the network of friendships in the Madison area!

Club bylaws state that the Outreach Committee will *make the club visible to the general community*, and the Membership Committee *will recruit and mentor new members*.

Official Membership Committee responsibilities include the following:

- Maintain the database of members including members' interests in volunteering for various club activities and club journeys.
- Provide information to potential new members and welcome new members
- Plan New Member Orientation meetings to familiarize new members with FFWM policies, commonly used terms, and to provide them with opportunities to meet other club members.
- Send annual membership renewal notices to all members in November.
- Collect membership dues and donations.

Official Outreach Committee responsibilities include the following:

- Reach out to individuals, organizations, and the public in the Madison area to raise the profile of the club in the community and attract new members.
- Organize presentations for interested groups.
- Utilize various forms of social media as part of an effort to reach a wider audience.

We hope you will share your passion for and knowledge of FF by committing a few hours to sustain FFWM. Current committee members will assist you in learning more about committee functions. Please contact anyone on the Board of Directors with questions and to express your willingness to strengthen and grow membership in your club.

Thank you,

Diane and Larry Co-Presidents



Saturday March 7, 2026
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Overture Center, 201 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

This is a great way to make our club's presence known in the Madison community. If you are now free on this day and would like to share our mission and your knowledge, support, and welcoming energy with fellow participants, email Jan Barbone (madcapjan@yahoo.com) or call her at 608-219-7479 to sign-up for times that you are available to volunteer. Thanks so much and please come to the International Festival of the Arts.

JOURNEY NEWS



Birmingham Journey Follow Up

or George Wysock if you are interested in serving as a On Saturday, February 7, Madison's ambassadors for the October 2025 Birmingham journey presented an overview of their adventure to 30 club members. Afterwards, attendees enjoyed a tasting of classic southern dishes such as corn bread, country grits with sausage, green bean bundles, southern greens, cabbage casserole, shrimp/chicken/sausage gumbo, and more. Pecan pie was served for dessert.

2026 Journey News

Ten members from the Madison club and four members from the Milwaukee club will be hosted by the Sacramento Friendship Force Club from May 13-19.

The journey to Seferihisar, Turkiye is scheduled for late September. Journey planning is on hold until we find Journey Coordinators from our club. Please contact Kathy Speck or Tom Miller.

July 14-18 The Quad Cities Iowa Club will journey to us, replacing the journey canceled by Wairarapa, New Zealand. We will welcome the ambassadors at our annual club picnic on July 14 in Fitchburg. Please contact journey coordinators Kathy Speck or George Wysock if you are interested in serving as a home host, day host and/or dinner host.

Our club will host the Lower Columbia (Washington State) Friendship Force club in Madison from October 13-20. Planning has begun with Tom Miller and Kristen Matthews serving as Journey Co-Coordinators.

2027 Journeys

Preferences for inbound and outbound journeys were submitted to FFI in December and February, respectively. We anticipate announcement of both domestic and international journey assignments at our annual meeting in April

Birmingham Journey Event February 5, 2026

Letter written by Ambassador Pat Watson to the host Birmingham Coordinator, Melanie Pollard.

Good Morning Melanie,

Pat Watson, here to fill you in on what the Madison ambassadors have been up to. Due to the holidays and club events in January, our Birmingham program meeting was postponed until February. The wait was worth it, for last weekend over 30 of us gathered to experience some southern hospitality.



David's warm y'all southern greeting set the tone for fun and relaxation. This was followed by Ken's trip slide show with comments from all of us and culminating with a pot luck feast (and I do mean feast). As the title of one of the recipes stated we did "pig out".

Our Madison ambassadors took on the task of recreating the booklet's recipes along with Wickles Wicked Pickle Chips and Sister Schubert's Rolls. Attendees filled out the meal with salads, blackeye peas, corn bread, etc. We cut the pecan pies (three recipes) into small servings, so people could taste as many as they wished. It was GRAND!

Copies of the recipe booklet (along with a handout of recipes that did not make it into the booklet) were given to each attendee, with the comment they might want to star the ones they particularly liked. I starred them all!

Now I have a favor to ask of you, if you be so incline. I have copies of the recipe booklet for each person who donated a recipe. For convenience and postage saving would it be possible to send them to you for distribution? If yes, I need your address. If you can't I understand completely and will send individually.

Thank you again for all you did in arranging our trip. I know how much work it was.

In friendship, Pat

Adopt a Highway Clean Up Monday, April 20 1:00-3:00 PM

Our first Adopt a Highway clean up for the season is on Monday April 20th, 1-3pm. Come help our environment while enjoying some fresh spring weather. Meet up on Highway 51 (Parking on Highway 51 at the intersection with Tower Drive – there is a large gravel shoulder to park on. See map link below. Note, there is a Tower Rd that intersects with Highway 51 near McFarland that could be confused with our location. Another way to find it is to search for “Altemus Corners House Bed and Breakfast” in google maps, which is at the same intersection.



https://www.google.com/maps/@42.9186274,-89.1515839,15z?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDQxMy4wIKXMDS0ASAFAw%3D%3D

These are the dates for the rest of 2026:

- Sun June 7, 6-8 pm
- Tues Sept 8, 10am-12pm
- Sun Oct 11, 2-4pm

Please contact Stephanie Vanden Bush (sljacobs2@gmail.com or 920-676-1441) to commit or with questions



Birmingham Journey Event, February 5, 2026

ACTIVITIES

BookClub

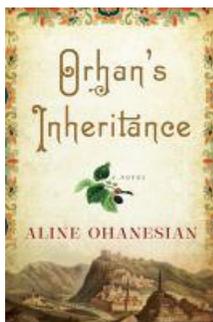
Monday, March 16, 2026
7:00 p.m. via Zoom



At our February 16 meeting, there were nine participants who joined on zoom to discuss Alexei Navalny's "powerful and moving memoir," *Patriot*. Begun during his recovery from a 2020 poisoning and continuing through early 2022 as he receives the latest of many prison sentences – this final one assigning nine additional years, while the average sentence for murder in Russia is seven years – he kept on recording his life, beginning with his childhood and carrying through his years as a determined and capable opposition leader in Russian politics. The resulting book is remarkably engrossing, as the reader is caught up in his love for Russia and its people, and as he finds irony and even humor in the impossible situations that arise in its corrupt and authoritarian regime. Until his death on February 16, 2024, from yet another poisoning in that Russian prison, he never gave in to despair, but remained hopeful for a better future for Russia. Highly recommended by our group!

At our March 16 meeting we will discuss *Orhan's Inheritance*, a novel by Aline Ohanesian (2015); 340 pp.

"When Orhan's brilliant and eccentric grandfather, who built a dynasty out of making kilim rugs, is found dead in a vat of dye, Orhan inherits the decades-old business. But his grandfather's will raises more questions than it answers. Kemal has left the family estate to a stranger thousands of miles away, an aging woman in a retirement home in Los Angeles. Her existence and secrecy about her past only deepen the mystery of why Orhan's grandfather would have left their home to this woman rather than to his own family.



Intent on righting this injustice, Orhan boards a plane to Los Angeles. There, over many meetings, he will unearth the story that eighty-seven-year-old Seda so closely guards--the story that, if told, has the power to undo the legacy upon which Orhan's family is built, the story that could unravel Orhan's own future.

Moving between the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the 1990s, *Orhan's Inheritance* is a story of passionate love, unspeakable horrors, incredible resilience, and the hidden stories that haunt a family." - from the library site

There are six copies, all currently available, in the library system. Plenty of used copies are available for purchase online. Let us know if you are having trouble finding one - we also have a couple to lend.

We hope to have an in-person meeting in April, so watch for that. A zoom link will be sent to those who have added their names to our book club list. Let us know if you want to be added. No obligation to attend meetings.

Happy reading!

Marjie Marion (midsi@aol.com) and Marian Ehrenberg (marianeh2014@gmail.com)

Dining on the 6th

Friday, March 6th

Erin's Snug Irish Pub.
12:00 PM for lunch
4601 American
Parkway
Madison. WI 53718



Directions: Take I-39/I-90/I-94 west to Highway 151 (East Washington Avenue). Take exit 135B toward Sun Prairie. Then take exit 98B to American Parkway. Erin's is straight ahead on the right corner of Eastpark Boulevard and American Parkway.

In Olde Ireland, the word "Pub" was short for Public House which was used as a gathering spot for friends to catch up on the latest news, gossip, and discuss the events of the day. Experience Ireland in all of its glory and see what "Pub Life" is all about and enjoy the "camaraderie while partaking of food and beverage" with your Friendship Force friends.

Their lunch menu has the usual entrees: appetizers, soups, salads, a wide variety of classic sandwiches, and wraps. You can add colcannon (mashed potatoes and cabbage), thin cut fries or sweet potato fries, and baked potato for \$3.99. Pub fries are \$4.99. Most entrees are \$13.99 to \$15.99. Irish Specialties shepherd's pie, cottage pie, Guinness stew, Murphy's Irish stew, bangers & mash, and fish & chips are \$17.99 or \$18.99. Corned beef & cabbage and Irish breakfast are \$19.99. You might want to save room for desserts like Guinness chocolate cake or Bailey's Irish cheesecake and specialty drinks from the bar.

Tis the day for "wearing of the green" in honor of St. Patrick's Day in March and to celebrate World Friendship Day among friends. Remember to wear your name tag!

Please register by Tuesday, March 3, with host Gail Holmes, phone 608 249-1846 or email glholmes@wisc.edu. Dining will be in one of the public rooms so that we don't incur a room charge for our reservation.

A World of Friends is a World of Peace

ACTIVITIES



2026 Annual Meeting

April 18, 2026

Friendship Force WI-Madison Contributes to Second Harvest

Do you have three hours to spare between now and November to help the hungry? Join your fellow Friendship Force members at Second Harvest **one or more of these days** from 12:30-3:30.

March 25
April 29
May 27
June 24
July 29
August 26
September 30
October 28
November 18



Second Harvest cont. With monthly opportunities, you can choose a date that works around your travels, winter get-aways, and other obligations. All you need to do is respond to an email sent in the middle of the month. Mary Crave lets Second Harvest know how many will be coming so they can plan accordingly. The distribution center is located at 2602 Dairy Drive, Madison, just minutes from Stoughton Rd and the beltline.

Donna Hussin, Gail Holmes and Mary Crave sorted carrots with volunteers from a local insurance company on February 25.

Join us March 25 as we join other community groups to serve people who are food insecure in South Central Wisconsin. Let Mary Crave know by **Saturday, March 21**, if we can count on you. mtcrave@gmail.com or 608-575-9847.

!



Remember to check Wisconsin-Madison website (ffiwis.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!

Promoting global understanding across the barriers that separate people

2026 - ANNUAL MEETING

Invitation

***Annual Meeting
of the
FF Wisconsin-Madison***

April 18, 2026 1:30-3:30 PM

***Middleton Public Library
7475 Hubbard Ave
Middleton, WI 53562***

The Board of FF Wisconsin-Madison invites all members to attend the 2026 Annual Meeting on Saturday, **April 18, from 1:30-3:30 pm** at the Middleton Public Library. Full details along with information on who to send your RSVP will be in the April newsletter.

The FF bylaws require a quorum of 25% of the membership in attendance to hold the annual business meeting. The Board hopes to see you on April 18!

BOARD ELECTIONS

Propose Slate of Officers 2026-2027

We present these Nominees for election to the following offices:

President: Kathy Johnson

Co-Vice Presidents: Mary Crave & Tom Miller

Secretary: Vicki Boardsen Warren

Treasurer: Deb Gunther

*Respectfully submitted
Nominations Chair Lise Skofronick*

BOARD ELECTIONS



President - Kathy Johnson

My husband and I have lived in Madison since 1967. We came here for our teaching jobs, knowing very little about the city. It was the best decision we ever made. We don't remember how we came to be involved in the Friendship Force, but someone must have invited us.

I remember serving on a planning committee for an incoming journey and how much I enjoyed that. Home hosting, going on journeys and planning for these as well as leading as Journey coordinators several times have also been great experiences. I especially remember planning the winter experience for the club from Indonesia who wanted to experience winter in Wisconsin. It was a very interesting time and one I won't forget.

I have had many experiences leading other groups in this area. They include 5 years leading the planning group at our local elementary schools for their fundraising carnival. I was the local president of the League of Women Voters of Dane County on three different years, the state League of Women Voters president for 4 years and co-president of a national genealogy group based in Minnesota.

Although I find it harder to travel these days, I know that having a strong board of directors is important to the overall functioning of Friendship Force and would do my best to provide the necessary leadership.

BOARD ELECTIONS



Co-Vice-President - Mary Crave

UW-Madison Extension specialist, Mary Crave has been a member of FFI since 2024 when she joined the Twin Cities FFI chapter on a journey to Mongolia. She was a journey co-coordinator for the 2025 outbound journey to Brazil. Back home she coordinates the monthly Second Harvest volunteers and is on the activities committee. Mary is retired and worked on international development projects in more than 19 countries, led professional associations in Wisconsin and nationally, leads custom tours to India and Ghana, and volunteers for several Madison area causes.



Co-Vice President - Tom Miller

Friendship Force member since 2008, Tom Miller has participated in journeys to NE England, Australia (Journey Coordinator), Toronto, Brazil, and Birmingham. He and his wife Donna have hosted several domestic and international Ambassadors and Open World delegates. Tom served as Co-Outreach Chair and currently is the Co-Journey Manager and Chair of the Mission-Focused Travel and Education Ad Hoc Committee. Tom is a volunteer photographer for Habitat For Humanity of Dane County and a county fair photography judge. In his spare time, he reads, writes, gardens, hikes and bikes.



BOARD ELECTIONS



Vicki Boardsen Warren – Secretary

I am the incumbent secretary. My name suggests part of my biography. I was born Vicki Boardsen, oldest daughter and child of Einar Boardsen and Phyllis Kemmer. My mom was a US mix, an only child who worked in the County Clerk's office when she was old enough; my dad, a twin and an immigrant at three years old in the bowels of a big ship from Norway, an accountant for a trucking company in our hometown of Clinton, Iowa

My four siblings and I were raised in a Midwestern median income neighborhood, close to our Norwegian aunts uncles and cousins, and my mom's parents, our close grandparents, 14 miles away just across the Mississippi.

I was a kind of shy kid, happy and what felt like safe in my unconsidered white privilege, until I was in 7th grade Social Studies class one day and a car drove slowly by our junior high school blaring the news that President Kennedy had been shot. I know better now, 60 years later.

I have been married for 52 years to Ken Warren, husband, dad, Special Ed teacher of kids with emotional and behavior disabilities, my partner in the life that has come our way. We have three grown adult children, two -in-law adult kids and 6 grandchildren we love beyond all understanding and heartily spoil when we have the chance.

I have been a homemaker, a good cook (not excellent), a bread baker, a canner of food (not raised by me for the most part, I am awestruck by gardening folks), a college student for too many years, a Special Ed teacher for over 20 years, full and part-time, with kids who have a visual impairment (I enjoyed all flavors of VI kids but especially the tiny early braille kids on my caseload), and a liberal-minded minister in a small United Church of Christ for 16 years.

I am/we are retired now, and Ken and I live north and a bit east of Wisconsin Dells in a small home in a small piece of woods with our human and earthly neighbors. It is for me/us a sanctuary filled with too much work sometimes, but we are, nevertheless, daily and seasonally invited, from every window, to live with and among woods and trees and birds and bugs of every sort .

Vicki Boardsen Warren – Secretary cont. I enjoy many things. Quiet times, reflection, conversation, loud and noisy times with kids and family. Reading, church stuff, playing games of about any sort (Wingspan!), snowshoeing, walking/hiking (shorter not loooooonngg treks), camping in out-of-the-way places and in off-seasons. I carefully write letters to the editor and record radio ads as one small part of a progressive political rural messaging team in Adams County. I enjoy travel and exploring new places different from what is familiar, learning about different cultures and peoples.

I am very much looking forward to exploring the world with Friendship Force folks. Thank you Friendship Force International



Deb Gunther - Treasurer

Deb Gunther joined Friendship Force several years ago. I am the incumbent treasurer. She and her husband Matt Gazo are residents of Fitchburg (formerly from Cudahy, Glendale, Fond du Lac and Pewaukee), and we have been married over 30 years; I am the mother of two and grandmother of three. A retired Quality Manager and Project Manager, she has an Executive MBA from Marquette University and enjoys travel, scuba diving, genealogy and chocolate (history, biology, and tasting.) She was a home host for two Guadeloupe ambassadors on behalf of the Milwaukee group when I lived in Pewaukee, before she was a member. I was a home host for a Japan ambassador in 2023.

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Meeting, Saturday April 18, 2026
Middleton Public Library
1:30-3:30 PM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vacant

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Pat Watson (cc2ss@yahoo.com)

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Adopt-A-Highway

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Bike Rides

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Larry Neuman wlneuman@yahoo.com

Book Club

Marian Ehrenberg marianeh2014@gmail.com
Marjie Marion midsi@aol.com

Dining on the 6th

Gail Holmes glholmes@wisc.edu

Let's Walk/Let's Hike

Maureen Kind dmkind@sbcglobal.net

Second Harvest Foodbank

Mary Crave (608) 575-9847
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WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP FORCE

Official Publication of

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