



friendship force  
WISCONSIN - MADISON

ffwis.org

July 2026

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Happy Friendship Force New Year! Your new officers elected in April take their jobs this month. July is also the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United States which makes July 4<sup>th</sup> even more special than it usually is.

I could also say Happy Anniversary to my husband Doug and me for 20 years being members of Friendship Force Wisconsin-Madison. We have had many memorable experiences during those two decades. Two of them come to mind, even though both happened in February. I'll share them now because I might forget them by February.

The first happened when we were in Guadeloupe in the month of February. Sitting in the open air living room of our host. I felt something on my cheek, brushed it off and a small green frog hopped away.

The second happened here in Madison when a club from Indonesia asked to come to Madison in February to experience winter. When asked the coldest weather temp they had experienced, 75°F was the answer. We prepared activities that we thought they would like and had a wonderful time. They most liked making snow angels, taking a picture with an icicle and a sleigh ride with a "two horse open sleigh" singing Jingle Bells, which they knew.

All of you have similar memories that you have experienced in this club. At our summer picnic on July 14, 2026, you have a chance to make new memories with friends from the Quad Cities and our local club. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Kathy Johnson



Wisconsin State Capitol – Madison, WI

**Club Activities Calendar**



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

**2026**

- July 14 Club's Annual Picnic
- July 14-18 Quad Cities Inbound Journey
- July 21 Book Club
- July 29 Second Harvest
- August 6 Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup>
- August 18 Book Club
- August 26 Second Harvest
- September 8 Adopt a Highway
- September 20-27 Seferehisar, Türkiye Outbound Journey
- September 30 Second Harvest
- October 11 Adopt a Highway
- October 13-20 Lower Columbia (Washington State) Inbound Journey
- October 28 Second Harvest
- November 18 Second Harvest

**2027 Journey Assignments**

- May Inbound Birmingham, AL USA
- August Outbound Yogyakarta and Bogor, Indonesia
- September New Hampshire Seacoast, USA

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# 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.

All times are Eastern Time Zone.

### 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-EcWzjXQOY6Rne5WbFsVcbA7CctfWHHeSy-Og/edit?\\_kx=4j7SMbWBJipbKMw6djTVJ1vEQC1LM0m8Ncr39pMtYnM.RaH2Qb&gid=1356194104#gid=13561click94104](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hu86Sm-EcWzjXQOY6Rne5WbFsVcbA7CctfWHHeSy-Og/edit?_kx=4j7SMbWBJipbKMw6djTVJ1vEQC1LM0m8Ncr39pMtYnM.RaH2Qb&gid=1356194104#gid=13561click94104)

(Control + click to follow link)

## FFI Announces

### *50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration*

Tentatively plans are for Late September or early October 2027.

Mark your calendars for this once in a generation celebration of friendships built over five decades.

Look for an update in the coming months.

## 50 Stories for 50 Years Friendship Force International Celebrates 50 Years in 2027

Friendship Force International is working on a project called **50 Stories for 50 Years**, which will be a collection of personal experiences from Friendship Force members around the world. The goal is to capture the moments of cultural exploration, connection and genuine friendship that this organization has made possible and to share them as a tribute to what members have experienced and created over the past five decades.

We hope FFI members will contribute a personal story. It could be something about a meaningful exchange with a host family, a moment that changed how you see the world, a long-lasting friendship, or whatever has stayed with you.

Below are some simple guidelines from FFI:

- You can write as little as you'd like but keep it to a maximum of 2 pages.
- Share your name, your club, and how long you have been an FFI member.
- Focus on one story, BUT it can be about anything meaningful to you. This could be a story from your first trip, the first time you hosted, a time you stayed with a host family, an outing you did with your club, a moment from a memorable meal or an outing on a journey, and so forth.

## CLUB NEWS



### Club Annual Picnic

July 14, 2026

Huegel-Jamestown Park  
5810 Williamsburg Way  
Madison, WI

Please bring potluck items for ten people.  
A-H Veggie salad or pasta salad  
I-P Dessert  
Q-Z Fruit or fruit salad



## JOURNEY NEWS

### Outbound Journey to Seferihisar, Türkiye

Planning for the September 20-27 Journey to Seferihisar, Türkiye is underway. Journey Co-Coordinator Maureen Kind and Margaret Harrigan have collaborated with FFI to recruit additional Ambassadors for this exciting journey. They are also exploring post-journey activities to extend the experience.

We wish them safe travels and look forward to hearing about the friendships, cultural discoveries, and memorable experiences they bring home.

### 2026 Inbound Journeys

#### **Quad Cities**

Get ready, get excited to welcome nine Ambassadors from the Quad Cities Iowa Friendship Force Club. Their arrival in Madison on Tuesday, July 14, will coincide with the annual club picnic at Huegel-Jamestown Park, 5810 Williamsburg Way, Fitchburg. After four days of activities and a farewell dinner, the Ambassadors will depart for home on Saturday, July 18.

#### **Lower Columbia**

Planning for the Lower Columbia (Washington) Journey is progressing, with a range of activities for the expected 10-12 Ambassadors. The planning consists of Lola Barrientos Marquez, Faith Lerner, Vivian Norton, Hank Weiss, and Mike Di Iorio, Treasurer, led by Journey Coordinators Donna and Tom Miller.

**IMPORTANT:** We need members to serve as home hosts. Open your home, share your life, and gain a lifelong friend by hosting a visiting Ambassador. We will also need day hosts and dinner hosts to provide a well-rounded journey. Please contact one of the Journey Coordinators to learn more.

### Journeys for 2027

#### **Inbound:** Birmingham, Alabama

Journey Managers Kathy Speck and Tom Miller are recruiting two volunteers to serve as Co-Journey Coordinators for the inbound journey from Birmingham. The Birmingham club hosted 14 Ambassadors from our club in October 2025. We are excited to host them next year in May or June. For questions and to volunteer for this important and rewarding experience, please contact Tom or Kathy.

#### **Outbound:**

Stay tuned for more information on these journeys in a future newsletter.

### Yogyakarta and Bogor, Indonesia suggested for August 2027.

The Bogor club is a small club in the 6th-largest township in the Jakarta metropolitan area and the 14th-largest nationwide. The

## JOURNEY NEWS

### Yogyakarta and Bogor, Indonesia cont.

town covers about 46 square miles and has population exceeding one million. Bogor is considered an important economic, scientific, cultural, and tourist center, as well as a mountain resort. The Yogyakarta Club is another small club located on the Indonesian island of Java. With a population numbering approximately 375,000, the city is known for its traditional arts and cultural heritage.



The distance from Bogor to Yogyakarta, Indonesia is **364 miles** driving or **258 miles** flying.

### New Hampshire Seacoast, US suggested for September 2027.

This is a description of the Seacoast Region from the FFI website. This area is best enjoyed between early June and early October, when our weather is nice and our attractions are open. We are in a largely summer-season-based tourist area. Usually, a week's journey will include touring the coasts of NH and Maine, sightseeing in the White Mountains/Lakes Region, visiting the state capital, Concord, and nearby Shaker Village, and learning about the history of the quaint towns of Portsmouth and Dover.

### Sacramento Journey--May 16, 2026 as experienced by Ambassador Maureen Kind.



**Sutter's Mill in 1850 by R, H, Vance**

Our day begins with breakfast in Helen's sunny kitchen: yogurt, cereal, coffee/tea and lots of fruit; blueberries, strawberries, nectarines, bananas. Helen has already packed our picnic lunch in a cooler.

## Sacramento Journey cont.

We set off for Colona on a route that is not all freeway but winding, wooded and hilly. We wander through the museum while everyone arrives and then meet our guide, Ed, who is a historian and somewhat of a celebrity for his 23 years of service.

He tells us about the Nisenan people who had been living here 1500-2000 years before gold was discovered. They lived in cedar bark homes and called this area Columah. Their pre-European-arrival population of 300,000 was reduced by the diseases brought by the Spanish in 1778 so in 1848 they numbered only 100,000. We see the Umacha, the bark houses, and a rock where they ground acorns, a large part of their diet.

We continue to a replica of the sawmill John Sutter, an entrepreneur in Sacramento, had built by engineer James Wilson Marshall. In January 1848, Marshall, checking for glitches in the newly built sawmill, caught sight of a sparkly pebble on the ground in the tail race. The piece was duly tested by various methods and deemed to be gold. While Sutter and Marshall decided to keep the find a secret, it got out and people from all over the world rushed to California. The brochure notes “the gold rush changed the demographics of the state in permanent ways. The individuals who came seeking fortune and adventure brought cultural and ethnic diversity to the state’s population that carries on today. One could say the state was enriched in more ways than gold!

After our tour we drive up to the James Marshall monument which shows him pointing down to the river where the sparkly pebble was found. We have an enjoyable picnic lunch with Elaine, Rick, Lise and Pat.

Following lunch it is on to Folsom, stopping at the Folsom Power House, one of the oldest hydroelectric plants in the world. In 1895 it was one of the nation’s first power systems to transmit high voltage alternating current over long distances, in this case 22 miles to power Sacramento’s streetcars, streetlights, gristmills, breweries and the California State Capital! It was an “ahhah!” moment for me since I had not ever sought to understand how a power plant works. That copper wires spinning past magnets in space could produce electricity! What the words “penstock” “turbines” “generators” (site of that copper/magnet event), “transformers” and “transmission” had to do with the process.

We then head to Sacramento to have dinner with our hostess, Elizabeth. Johanna and Ann arrive and we have hors-d’oeuvres, conversation and a tour of Elizabeth’s house and garden, filled with new and old treasures of a very adventure-filled life. Sample: a plaque of a Dutch proverb which hung in her sister’s house- “Life is a concert for which no one has a program.” Elizabeth is a wonderful cook and the meal was as delicious as the conversations were stimulating.

The perfect close to a very delightful day

## Adopt a Highway Clean UP

Thank you to Katie Martinson, Donna and Tom Miller, Larry Neuman, Diane Mertons and my family Dean, EV and Hazel Vanden Bush for helping with June 7, 2026 AAH clean up. It was beautiful (cool) weather, and I was grateful the rain held off. Join us for our next clean up Tuesday September 8<sup>th</sup>, 10am-12pm. Meet up on Highway 51 (Parking is on Highway 51 at the intersection with Tower Drive – there is a large gravel shoulder to park on. See map link below. 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=tту&g\\_ep=EgoyMDI1MDQxMy4wIKXMDS0ASAFAQAw%3D%3D](https://www.google.com/maps/@42.9186274,-89.1515839,15z?entry=tту&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MDQxMy4wIKXMDS0ASAFAQAw%3D%3D)



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



Adopt a Highway June Clean-Up Crew



Remember to check Wisconsin-Madison website ([ffiwis.org](http://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!

## ACTIVITIES

### Book Club

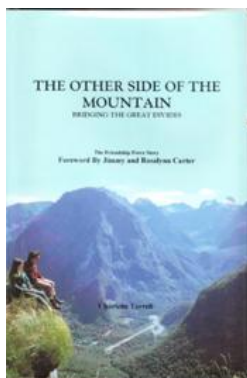
On Tuesday, June 16, six members of the book club, including Gail Holmes, LoLa Barrientos Marquez, Margaret Harrigan, Sandi Wysock, Marjie Marion and Marian Ehrenberg met at the Sequoya library for an interesting discussion of Madison author Madeline Urunack's book **HOW TO MAKE A LIFE: a Tibetan Refugee Family and the Midwestern Woman They Adopted**.



Beginning with the close relationship between the author and Tenzin Kalsang, a Tibetan woman newly arrived in Madison in 1993, the book continues as over the years Tenzin's husband and four children arrive from their Tibetan settlement in India, the children start school, the parents learn to drive and eventually obtain citizenship. We learn of their Buddhist religion and how much this faith plays in their lives. Urunack travels to India and Nepal when the grown children are ready to marry within their religion. Having visited Nepal with the Milwaukee Friendship Force some years ago, Marian was able to share a bit of that journey - the sights and sounds of that interesting culture - and an affirmation of displaced Tibetan people's desire to maintain both culture and religion which are really one entity. The author remains almost a part of the family until they settle into their own lives here in Madison, though returning frequently to the land of their birth. We talked a bit about the immigrant community's need to maintain native heritage while, at the same time, blending into a new community and a new culture. We had an interesting discussion about immigration, the Buddhist history here in Madison, and how the Madison community welcomes all cultures to make for the vibrant city we know.

### Our book for July is **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN** -

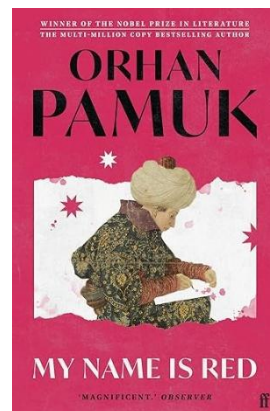
Bridging the Great Divide (1997) 338 pp, which is really The Friendship Force story as told by the countless people who have availed themselves of this unique travel experience. The author is Charlene Terrell with a forward by Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter. There are no copies in the library system. However, several books are available thanks to the generosity of Donna Hussin; some FF



members have copies to lend, including Marjie Marion and Marian Ehrenberg; and inexpensive used copies are available online. Most books are at Marjie's house, so just call, text, or email and plan to get one. Even if you don't have time to read the whole book, borrow one and read what you can! We will meet at the Sequoya Library at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, July 21. Hope to see you there!

## ACTIVITIES

In August, we will read **MY NAME IS RED** (1998) 413 pp, by Orhan Pamuk, Turkish author and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. "The novel's subject, **miniaturists in the Ottoman Empire of 1591**, garnered for Pamuk an international reputation and contributed to his reception of the **Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006**." – Wikipedia.



Pamuk gave a UW "Humanities Without Boundaries" lecture in 2013 which was enjoyed by a wide audience. We again plan to meet at one of the libraries, on Tuesday, August 18.

We hope everyone is having a pleasant summer! Look forward to seeing many of you at the book club meeting in July. Happy reading!

Upcoming meetings:

### ***The Other Side of the Mountain***

Tuesday, July 21, 7:00 p.m.

Sequoya Library, Study Rooms 104 and 105, combined

### ***My Name is Red***

Tuesday, August 18, 7:00 p.m.

Location TBD

Happy reading!

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

**How do members request a copy to read at their leisure of The Other Side of the Mountain: Bridging the Great Divide by Charlene Terrell (1997**

Contact the Membership Committee Chair, Lise Skofronick, [liserkofronick@gmail.com](mailto:liserkofronick@gmail.com),

***The loan period is 30 days.***



Friendship is defined by the words we use, the actions we take, and the commitments we all make every day to advocate for peace through friendship.

## ACTIVITIES

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**Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup>  
Thursday  
August 6, 2026  
12:00 noon for Lunch**

**Meze Mediterranean Grill,  
503 West Main Street  
Sun Prairie, WI**



Directions: Take U.S. Hwy 151 North from Madison and take exit 101 for Main Street in Sun Prairie. Continue East on to 503 West Main Street which will be on your right. There is ample parking in front and it is wheelchair accessible.

Figo Akcay, the chef and owner, will be there to greet you with his family providing a delicious Turkish luncheon. You will enjoy the warm atmosphere and friendly service. They provide Greek, Italian, Mediterranean as well as Turkish dishes. There are vegan, vegetarian and gluten free options as well. Figo has won numerous culinary awards. He will just be back from three weeks in Turkey so he can share his experiences with you and answer any questions you may have.

Menu: They have vertically grilled beef and lamb that is sliced and served with turmeric rice. Lentil soup and house salad are \$7 each and Caesar salad, the Mediterranean and Caprese salads are \$9. Appetizers like Hummus, Cigar Borek, and Babaganoush are \$9 each. Kebabs are \$19 to \$21 while the Turkish meatballs are \$19. Calamari is \$17, Shrimp Scampi is \$22 and Salmon \$24. Vegetarian lovers enjoy stuffed eggplant for \$19. Desserts are all \$8 each for favorites like baklava, cannoli, ganache cheese cake, Italian almond cake, limoncello raspberry cake, and carrot cake. You can view the menu at [mezemediterranean.com](http://mezemediterranean.com)

Drinks: Tea and coffee are available for \$2 as well as 12 wine choices and 15 various beers. Credit cards are accepted but they may include a processing fee.

**Please register by Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, with Patrick Fleming, phone (608) 249-5992 or email [pflaming@edgewood.edu](mailto:pflaming@edgewood.edu). Please remember your name tag.**

**Dining on the 6<sup>th</sup>  
is not being offered in July.**

Second Harvest has changed their volunteer sign-up process. If you expect to volunteer with them at any time, please go online and register yourself. For the call for volunteers each month, Mary Crave will include the link to sign up. Here's how:



Go to [secondharvestsw.org](http://secondharvestsw.org)  
Hover over "Get Involved" and click on "Volunteer"  
Click on "Food Sort/Repack" and fill in the questions.

At our June 24 shift, Matt Gazo, Deb Gunther, Gail Holmes, Donna Hussin, and Mary Crave put labels on cans of corn. It was pleasant work and we were able to talk about our latest travels and other topics of the day. Volunteers from other organizations sorted carrots or packaged rice.

The next times our organization is committed to volunteer are July 29, August 26, and Sept 30. Don't let the online signup scare you. Second Harvest has a lot of reporting requirements and an easier volunteer sign up helps them immensely.



**John Baldwin  
April 20, 1951 – May 10, 2026**

John Baldwin, our friend, passed away on May 10, 2026, after a twelve-month struggle with glioblastoma.

John and Dorothy joined Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison in 2010. They have served as hosts, committee members and ambassadors. He cooked the meat for our summer picnic in 2025. John was an avid traveler. With his wife Dorothy some of his favorite Friendship Force Journeys were to New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Those of us who served as ambassadors with him remember his easy-going personality and humor as well as his love of golf, his convertible and his service to his country and community.

A memorial gathering, with military honors, was held for friends and family on June 28, 2026, at the VFW Hall, 215 W. Collins St., Portage. There was a brief memorial service at 1:00 p.m. with military honors at 1:30 p.m. Following the service, the family invited everyone to share memories, food and drinks until 4:00 p.m.

For the full obituary, click on the following link.  
<https://www.pmmfh.com/obits2026/BaldwinJohn.html>

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Presidents & FFI Liasons**

Kathy Johnson (608) 238-1785

[kjohnson44@ameritech.net](mailto:kjohnson44@ameritech.net)

### **Co-Vice Presidents**

Mary Crave (608) 575-9847

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

Tom Miller (608) 334-3327

[tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.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)

## **ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Journey Managers**

Kathy Speck Kemeny (608) 577-4885

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

Tom Miller (608) 334-3327

[tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net)

### **Members at Large**

Dorothy Baldwin (608) 742-6493

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

Audrey Liimatainen (608) 558-2295

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

### **Newsletter/Historian**

Donna Hussin (608-770-0980)

[djhussi558-2295n@yahoo.com](mailto:djhussi558-2295n@yahoo.com)

### **Past Co-Presidents**

Diane Mertens (608) 271-8657

[mertensdk27@gmail.com](mailto:mertensdk27@gmail.com)

Larry Neuman (608) 271-8657

[wneuman@yahoo.com](mailto:wneuman@yahoo.com)

## **COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

### **Activities**

Gail Holmes (608) 249-1846

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

### **Electric-Communications**

Sandi Wysock (608) 833-5326

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

### **Membership**

Lise Skofronick ((608) 274-7732)

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

### **Outreach**

(Contact a Board Member)

### **Program**

Contact a Board Member)

## **ACTIVITIES LEADERS**

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

### **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 [wneuman@yahoo.com](mailto:wneuman@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)

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

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

### **Second Harvest Foodbank**

Mary Crave (608) 575-9847

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

## **WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP FORCE**

**Official Publication of**

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**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)