



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON

ffwis.org

August 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

July was a busy month with the Journey from Quad Cities in Iowa and Illinois. There were all sorts of challenges including hot weather and smoke. Moving the picnic indoors was a wise move and much more comfortable than being outdoors.

Preparing the meal from a catering company led to finding the company closed due to the death of the owners. Donna Miller came to the rescue and did an amazing job of filling in for them. Thanks Donna.

We are also busy interviewing people for the journey to Turkey in September. Many people from other parts of the US will be joining us and I had two interviews, one person from Texas and one from Maine. I didn't know that there are no Friendship Force clubs in Maine so you can get a global membership in FF International which she has. So we are very lucky to not only have a local club but to be a part of a regional group which meets monthly. How many of us would join a club that has a membership of one?

In August you will have a chance to find out more about Turkey at a lunch in Sun Prairie which you won't want to miss. Watch for sign up information in this newsletter and also by Mail Chimp. Hope to see you there.

For the rest of the summer, stay safe and cool. We are looking for people to help on several committees. See if you can give our club a little time in the coming weeks.

Kathy Johnson

>Thank You<

Dear Friends of Friendship Force,

Thank you for the emails, memorials, and cards following John's passing. Your kindness meant more than words can say. We were also deeply touched by those who were able to attend the memorial service to celebrate John's life with us. Having so many friends there meant the world to our family.

Each gesture was a true reflection of the spirit of friendship this club was built on, and it brings real comfort to us during this difficult time.

With heartfelt thanks,

Dorothy and Lindsey Baldwin and Family



Wisconsin State Capitol – Madison, WI

Club Activities Calendar



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

2026

August 6	Dining on the 6 th
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	Outbound New Hampshire Seacoast, USA



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.

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-EcWzjXQQY6Rne5WbFsVcbA7CctfWHHeSy-Og/edit?_kx=4j7SMbWBJpbKMw6djTVJ1vEQC1LM0m8Ncr39pMtYnM.RaH2Qb&gid=1356194104#gid=13561click94104

(Control + click to follow link)

CLUB NEWS



**AN OPPORTUNITY
FOR FRIENDSHIP
FORCE WISCONSIN
TO SUPPORT OUR
FRIENDS IN UKRAINE**

Home Hosts are needed in October/November for two Ukrainian Fellows coming to Madison under auspices of the International Institute of Wisconsin. The International Institute of Wisconsin is collaborating with American Councils for International Education to implement an international leadership development program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State that will bring Ukrainian business leaders to the U.S. to work with their professional counterparts.

CLUB NEWS

Home Hosts are needed to allow these Fellows to participate in the programs in Madison from October 16 – November 9 2026. Hosts can sign on for 1, 2, or 3 weeks. Both Fellows are men who are proficient in English.

Hosts are asked to provide:

- A private bedroom with a door that can lock (International Institute can provide travel locks if needed).
- Breakfast and dinner each day. Alternatively, hosts may provide groceries so the fellow can prepare their own meals.

Transportation to and from the fellowship placement site is also needed. Fellows typically use public transportation, carpool with coworkers, or driven by their host. Anticipated program locations should be around UW campus or downtown but are not firmly determined as of July 2026.

Prospective Home Hosts will need to fill out an application that includes a complete background check, which is required for all adults 18 and older living in the homestay home. Click on the link for the application form.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HomestayUBLPIE>

The program is: Ukrainian Business Leaders Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship (UBL PIE) Program. Click on the following line for more on the program.

<https://ukrainianbusinessleaders.americancouncils.org/>

Click on the following link for information on the fellows.

https://mcusercontent.com/08d4d607e3df4554b0db9868d/files/ec234171-208b-8541-a946-9fad480d3418/UKRAINIAN_BUSINESS_LEADERS_3.pdf

The program goal is to empower entrepreneurs, innovators, and businesspersons from across Ukraine with the skills to develop innovative economic, policy, and business solutions at home. Through hands-on fellowships in the United States, Fellows will be exposed to sound business practices, leadership skills, and networking opportunities with their counterparts that will position them as leaders to effect change in their home businesses and communities. The Madison Fellows will focus on land and water conservation, early-stage Ag-Tech, and innovative startups.

. PLEASE CONSIDER HOSTING SO THAT THESE FELLOWS ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR PROGRAMS AND BRING EXPANDED SKILLS, INFORMATION AND HOPE BACK HOME!

Please contact Agnes Rona at whereowhere5@gmail.com with any questions.

Explore • Understand • Serve®

New Membership Application Form

To reflect how membership dues are to be paid going forward we have updated the application form on our website. When a member joins our club, they must first join Friendship Force International (FFI). The new form on our website provides a direct link to FFI's membership page. On the FFI's website, they join our club by checking our club to join. Membership will then make sure they have submitted our application to join our club. Please throw away any old forms you may have.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Mary Lindquist & Lise Skofronick, Membership



Using AI to Support Your Friendship Force Activities

We have all heard all of the buzz about AI and chances are you are using it every day without even thinking about it. If you search on Google, the first return that you will often see these days is an AI overview.

Friendship Force International presented a program recently with suggestions as to how you could use AI. There are multiple AI systems that can be downloaded to your phone or computer but two common ones are ChatGPT and Claude. Once they are downloaded, they are very easy to use. You simply type in your questions. It is important to be specific. So let's say you are planning to travel before or after a journey, you might ask for suggestions for a 4 day travel itinerary at an easy pace in (name a city or country). Within seconds, you will receive a list of recommendations. If you are communicating with a host in another country you can ask AI to translate your message and make it friendly. Unsure what type of gift to take, ask for culturally appropriate gifts for hosts (you can specify ages or interests) located in a specific country that are under \$25.00 and representative of Wisconsin or Madison. AI can also be used as a translator or as a way to convert your journal notes into a document. The systems can also edit your photos. Need to remove that irritating head at the bottom of your photo... done!. Weirdly, it can add or remove people from a photo as well.

AI is simply a tool. It reduces the amount of time that is required for initial research or makes some tasks quicker and easier. It isn't perfect and has been known to spit out wrong answers when it is stumped so trust but verify.

Sandi Wysock

Electronic Communications

Hosting Ambassadors

Open Your Home and Hearts to Friendship Force Ambassadors!

Hosting Friendship Force Ambassadors is one of the most rewarding ways to experience the spirit of people-to-people diplomacy. From October 13 - 20, 2026, we have the pleasure of welcoming Ambassadors from the Lower Columbia Friendship Force Club in Washington State.

As home hosts, we open our home and share the everyday rhythms of life in Madison. Over meals and conversations, we will learn about our guests' lives, families, travels, and experiences in the Pacific Northwest. These informal moments—often around the kitchen table—will be where friendships begin and grow.

As day hosts, we can introduce our guests to some of the places that make our community special. Sharing our favorite local sights and experiences helps us see the Madison area through visitors' eyes and learn more about their home in Washington.

Dinner hosts provide a table for everyone to gather around, sharing good food and great conversation. There is something special about sharing a meal with people we've just met and discovering how quickly strangers can become friends.

To volunteer for one of these important roles, please contact Journey Coordinators Tom or Donna Miller at miller1950@sbcglobal.net or at 608-334-3327 (Tom) or 608-609-2617 (Donna).



What's happening with our 2026 & 2027 journeys?

2026

The September 20-27, 2026 journey to Seferihisar, Türkiye is fast approaching. Journey Co-Coordinator Maureen Kind and Margaret Harrigan recently met with journey ambassadors, and are actively planning the post-journey activities.

Nine ambassadors from the Quad Cities Friendship Force Club thoroughly enjoyed their "mini journey" with our club from July 14-18. See related article this issue.

Planning for the Lower Columbia, Washington journey from October 13-20, 2026 continues. The tentative plan includes a couple of unique activities and a new venue for the Welcome. We are actively recruiting members to serve as home hosts, day hosts and dinner hosts. Please contact Tom or Donna Miller to volunteer.

2027

For our inbound journey, we will be hosting the Birmingham USA club in 2027. They provided a wonderful hosting experience for our club in Fall 2025. We are enthused to welcome them to the Madison area next year! We are now recruiting journey co-coordinators for this journey. Please contact Journey Managers Tom Miller or Kathy Speck if you are interested in serving as co-coordinator or as a member of the planning committee. The May 2027 date is approximate and will be determined in consultation with the Birmingham club.

Our two outbound journeys are **Yogyakarta and Bogor, Indonesia** suggested for August 2027 and **New Hampshire Seacoast** USA suggested for September 2027.

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



The New Hampshire Seacoast is best enjoyed between early June and early October, when the weather is nice and the attractions are open. A week's journey usually includes touring the coasts of NH and Maine, sightseeing in the White Mountains and Lakes Region, visiting the state capital, Concord, and nearby Shaker Village, and learning about the history of the quaint towns of Portsmouth and Dover.

More Than a Journey: Friendship, Service, and Discovery in Sacramento *By Tom Miller*

What happens when Friendship Force members open their homes to visiting Ambassadors, roll up their sleeves, and explore a community together?

Friendships grow.

During our May 13–19 journey to Sacramento, members of the Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison and Milwaukee clubs connected with Sacramento hosts through shared meals, service projects, history, and adventure. From picking up litter along the American River to standing beneath giant sequoias and exploring California's Gold Rush history, we discovered that the most memorable part of any journey isn't always the places we visit—it's the people we meet along the way.

During our time in Sacramento, I kept a daily journal of the places we visited and the people we met along the way. Those notes became articles on my blog, *Traveling With Tom*. Below are links to the first three posts about our time in Sacramento. More are coming. Click those links for more details and photos from our time in Sacramento, a place that surprised me.

[Sacramento Surprised Me](#)

[From Litter Patrol to Highway Patrol](#)

[Where Gold Changed History](#)

Inbound Quad Cities Mini Journey July 14-19, 2026

Nine ambassadors from the Quad Cities Friendship Club experienced a *very* warm welcome on their July 14 arrival to Madison! With temperatures rising into the unusually hot and humid 90's, the welcome picnic was moved indoors thanks to the gracious hospitality of the Madison Christian Community on Old Sauk Road. Kudos to Vicki Warren for making these last-minute arrangements!

Iowa ambassadors were greeted by an enthusiastic representation of FF Madison club members and home hosts Pat Watson, Stephanie Sorensen, Ken and Vicki Warren, Pat Fleming and Margaret Amundsen, Jennifer Angelo and Hank Weiss, Tom and Donna Miller, Kathy Speck and Gabor Kemeny. Dinner was provided with delicious entrees prepared by Donna Miller, complemented by a sumptuous variety of homemade salads, fruit and desserts contributed by members. Following introductions of ambassadors and home hosts, Wisconsin and Iowa trivia contests ensued, with some surprising historical nuggets. Who knew that the grounds of Olbrich Gardens formerly housed a city dump?

Inbound Quad Cities Mini Journey cont.

The first full day of the journey began with a tour of the International Crane Foundation in the beautiful Baraboo Hills. Despite the heat, all but one of the fifteen crane pairs were observed within their respective compounds. Afterward, the group enjoyed a traditional Wisconsin lunch, complete with deep fried cheese curds, at Tumbled Rock Brewery and Kitchen in Baraboo. Next, the group traveled to nearby New Life Lavender and Cherry Farm for an afternoon wagon ride through the blooming lavender fields, while enjoying strawberry lavender lemonade and lavender macaroons. In the evening, home hosted dinners were provided by Kathy and Doug Johnson, Deb Gunther and Matt Gazo, Diane Mertens and Larry Neuman, George and Sandi Wysock, Agnes Rona and Sandy Drew. Accolades were later heard about delicious cuisine and lively conversation infused with stories of memorable Friendship Force journeys.

Thursday dawned with continued heat and the added challenge of wildfire smoke that reduced the air quality to concerning levels. Not to be deterred, retired nurse Donna Miller saved the day, providing N95 masks to tour participants. The Olbrich Gardens staff graciously allowed the group to proceed with the scheduled tour of the gardens and Blooming Butterflies exhibit despite closing the gardens to the public that day. The weather prompted another program change, again moving the picnic lunch inside - to Pat Watson's condominium community room. Thank you, Pat! The afternoon program followed with a self-guided tour at EPIC's "Intergalactic Headquarters." Ambassadors were impressed by the unusual workspaces and the variety and creativity of local art on display throughout. The evening of home hosted dinners was thoroughly enjoyed by ambassadors, hosts and other dinner guests.

With wildfire smoke and heat threatening the Friday forecast, MSCR cancelled the scheduled pontoon boat ride. Consequently, home and day hosts spent a more relaxed free day enjoying a variety of Madison interests, including Babcock Hall ice cream production, Aldo Leopold Nature Center, Madison Textile Arts and more. A lovely farewell dinner was held at Maple Bluff Country Club. Prizes were awarded by Dorothy Baldwin, the creator of a scavenger hunt, embedded with funny and interesting historical facts about Wisconsin - a big hit with ambassadors and hosts alike.

Saturday morning found ambassadors and hosts at the Dane County Farmer's Market, followed by a tour of the Wisconsin State Capitol. Ambassadors left for home after a tour of the Monona Terrace Convention Center.

The ambassadors were unanimously enthusiastic about their experience with the Madison Club. This was the first journey for two of them. A few of the ambassador's comments:

Inbound Quad Cities Mini Journey cont

"You have a very friendly club! Thank you for everything!"

"I felt like a queen! Every step of the journey was explained and I can't wait for the next adventure and meet new friends!"

"My hosts were excellent! They felt like family."

Many thanks to the organizing committee members:

Picnic Committee: Vicki and Ken Warren, Tom Miller, Donna Miller - Chair

Journey Planning Committee: Maureen Kind, Donna Miller, Patrick Fleming, Diane Mertens, Larry Neuman-treasurer, George Wysock and Kathy Speck - Co-Coordination.

Last, but not least, thanks to all home hosts, dinner hosts, day hosts and members who supported this journey in so many ways! This is the true spirit of Friendship Force.

Kathy Speck, July 2026



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!



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.

Sacramento Journey – American River Trail Litter Clean-Up Friday, May15 2026 -



FFWM ambassadors include Tom M, Lise S, Pat W, Maureen K, Margaret H and Ann L, Clarine F, JoAnne B, from the Greater Milwaukee FF Club. Sacramento FF Club members are all those standing to the right of the person in the back row with a camera around her neck.

Quad Cities Journey- Olbrich Garden Tour, Thursday July 16, 2026



Bottom Row, left to right: Diane M, Jennifer A, Deb W, Deb S, Kathy B, Vicki W, Donna M, Second Row: Tom M, Kathy S, Steve S, ,Jane S, Lynn S, Paul B, Margaret H, Carla D, Top Row: Patrick F, Elaine J, Barb J, Lola B

ACTIVITIES

Book Club

Tuesday, August 18, 2026
7:00 pm
Sequoia Library
Study Room 105

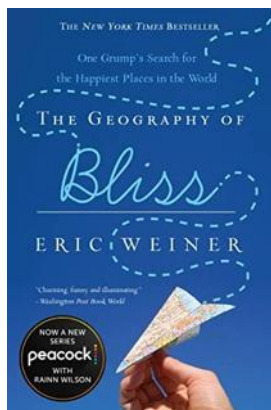


On Tuesday, July 21, four members of the Friendship Force—Sandi Wysock, Margaret Harrigan, Kathy Speck, and Marian Ehrenberg—met at the Sequoia Library to discuss the book, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, the story of Friendship Force with the forward by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.

For those of us who have participated in Friendship Force exchanges, the stories in the book brought back fond memories of our own experiences. We recalled overcoming language barriers, adapting to diverse accommodations—from a mattress on the floor to outdoor facilities—and receiving the traditional red dot on the forehead each morning in Nepal. Despite these challenges, we warmly remembered the delicious, nourishing meals prepared by our hosts and the genuine hospitality we received.

We all agreed that these positive encounters have made us better people, all thanks to a President's dream of promoting world friendship through the Friendship Force.

In the July newsletter we announced Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* for the August book. Since then, the two of us have both read enough of the book to agree that it is not the best fit for our club. Please let us know if you read it and what you thought!



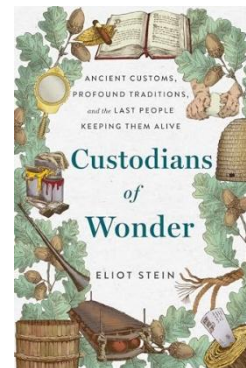
Our new choice for August is *The Geography of Bliss: one grump's search for the happiest places in the world* by Eric Weiner, a short treatise on happiness as experienced in various countries. The book is a 2008 non-fiction story of Weiner's world travels in search of happiness. Weiner, a former foreign correspondent for NPR, sets

out in this travelogue to investigate where in the world people are the most happy and why. Casting himself as an inveterately cranky person, Weiner mixes humor, scientific inquiry and psychological research to explain geographic concentrations of elevated MOOD. Since its publication, the book has been on the New York Times best-seller list and has been translated into almost 20 languages.

14 of 18 copies are available through the library system at this time.

ACTIVITIES

In September, we will read *Custodians of Wonder: Ancient Customs, Profound Traditions, and the Last People Keeping Them Alive* by Eliot Stein. This is the UW Big Read for 2026, and the author will be speaking on campus on November 19.



Currently there are 72 holds on the 48 copies in the library system. Get yourself on the hold list early and read it when you can! We will purchase a couple of copies and are willing to share with anyone who has trouble finding one.

We hope everyone is having a pleasant summer despite the heat and smoke from Canadian wildfires (if you did not read our May book *Fire Weather*, by John Vaillant, you might now be inspired to do so.) and we look forward to seeing you at the book club meeting in August. Happy reading!

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

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

Contact the Membership Committee Chair, Lise Skofronick, liserkofronick@gmail.com,

The loan period is 30 days.

ACTIVITIES

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



Meze Mediterranean Grill 503 West Main Street Sun Prairie, WI

Just a reminder that if you plan on joining us for lunch on Thursday, August 6th, at the Meze Mediterranean Grill in Sun Prairie, please register by Tuesday, August 4th with Patrick Fleming. His phone number is 6(08) 249-5992 or email him. pfleming@edgewood.edu.

Figo Akcay, the chef and owner, will be back from three weeks in Turkey by then and will provide us with many Turkish delicacies. He also offers Greek, Italian, and Mediterranean dishes. Check out their menu at:

<https://www.mezemediterranean.com>

We have reservations for 15-20 people, so reserve your seat now!

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.

.Please remember your name tag.

Ottoman Platter



Falafel



Grape Leaves (top) Cigar Borek (bottom)



ACTIVITIES



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 for you to indicate you plan on coming. Here's how:

Go to secondharvestsw.org

1. Hover over "Get Involved" and click on "Volunteer"
2. Click on "Food Sort/Repack" and fill in the questions. Be sure to "sign" it electronically.

Each time you commit to joining Friendship Force on the last Wednesday of the month, you can either

1. Go into the portal and sign up that way (you should be able to choose Friendship Force as your group name)
2. Send Mary your email address and she will connect you to our group electronically.

Either way you MUST register with Second Harvest just once so you're in the system.

Thanks to Diane Mertens, Larry Neuman, Gail Holmes, Matt Gazo, Deb Gunther and Mary Crave for volunteering at Second Harvest on July 29. Diane and Larry brought along a young relative, Lucas, who was a diligent addition to the team. The group worked with eight other volunteers to put labels on cans of corn that Second Harvest bought for distribution. Volunteers from another group repackaged breakfast cereal.

Join us on August 26, 12:30 -3:30 pm for our next scheduled time. There are 30+ pallets of corn that still need labels. Follow the directions to register as a volunteer with the new online system as listed above.

Mary Crave

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Presidents & FFI Liasons

Kathy Johnson (608) 238-1785
kjohnson44@ameritech.net

Co-Vice Presidents

Mary Crave (608) 575-9847
mtcrave@gmail.com

Tom Miller (608) 334-3327
tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net

Secretary

Vicki Warren (608) 617-2213
kenvic1@gmail.com

Treasurer

Deb Gunther (262) 422-0176
debgunther@gmail.com

ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Journey Managers

Kathy Speck Kemeny (608) 577-4885
kspeckemeny@gmail.com

Tom Miller (608) 334-3327
tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net

Members at Large

Dorothy Baldwin (608) 742-6493
janddbaldwin@gmail.com

Audrey Liimatainen (608) 558-2295
AMCL822@yahoo.com

Newsletter/Historian

Donna Hussin (608-770-0980)
djhussi558-2295n@yahoo.com

Past Co-Presidents

Diane Mertens (608) 271-8657
mertensdk27@gmail.com

Larry Neuman (608) 271-8657
wlneuman@yahoo.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Activities

Gail Holmes (608) 249-1846
glholmes@wisc.edu

Electric-Communications

Sandi Wysock (608) 833-5326
sandrawysock@msn.com

Membership

Lise Skofronick ((608) 274-7732)
liserskofronick@gmail.com

Outreach

(Contact a Board Member)

Program

Contact a Board Member)

ACTIVITIES LEADERS

Gail Holmes, Chair glholmes@wisc.edu

Adopt-A-Highway

Stephanie Vanden Bush sljacobs2@gmail.com

Bike Rides

Vivian Norton vjoan@icloud.com
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
mtcrave@gmail.com

WISCONSIN FRIENDSHIP FORCE

Official Publication of

The Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison

5809 Julia St

Madison, WI 53705

www.ffwis.org

Email Accounts:

ffwis.general@gmail.com

ffwis.meeting@gmail.com

ffwis.outreach@gmail.com

ffwis.membership@gmail.com