



friendship force
WISCONSIN - MADISON

ffwis.org

September 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are finishing a busy month with preparations for Turkey and plans for an inbound journey from the Northwest. For many people September begins the fall season with school again starting. For more than 20 years as a teacher, fall started for me a new lifestyle -- out the door at 7 am and not home until 4 pm. Since retirement, fall is not quite the same but the changing weather does hint of things to come.

One thing I would like to suggest to all of us is to use this month to look at your friends and neighbors and see if you know someone who might benefit from being a member of Friendship Force.

On October 25th we will be having a membership meeting with some sharing from the Turkey trip which would let them see one of the unique things we do as a club. We plan to have some mixer- type activities which would help them get to know people in our club and help us also to get to know our members and our visitors.

So look around at the people you know. I have two people in mind that I hope to have invited to that gathering and to interest them in our organization.

Happy fall to you all. I look forward to seeing you along the way.

Kathy Johnson, President



Wisconsin State Capitol – Madison, WI

Club Activities Calendar



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

2026

September 6	Dining on the 6 th (CANCELLED)
September 8	Adopt a Highway
September 20-27	Seferehisar, Türkiye Outbound Journey
September 30	Second Harvest
October 6	Dining on the 6 th (TBD)
October 11	Adopt a Highway
October 13-20	Lower Columbia (Washington State) Inbound Journey
October 28	Second Harvest
November 18	Second Harvest

2027 Journey Assignment

May	Inbound Birmingham, AL USA
August	Outbound Yogyakarta and Bogor, Indonesia
September	Outbound 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 programs, roles and tools.

All times are Eastern Time Zone.

September

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

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=1356194104 (Control + click to follow link)



After careful review of various locations in Europe, Friendship Force International has chosen Porto, Portugal to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Between late August and mid-September 2027 is the time frame being looked at for the Celebration. Once hotel selections are finalized the confirmed dates will be announced.

Let's begin to acquaint ourselves with Porto, Portugal.

Porto, located in northern Portugal where the Rio Douro meets the Atlantic Ocean, is the country's second largest city. The well-preserved city with its red-tiled roof houses, church towers piercing the skyline and mosaic patterned stones lining the streets was spared by the 1755 earthquake that destroyed Lisbon. The city is synonymous with port wine. Two sight-seeing "musts" are the ambiance of the riverfront Ribeira District and Vila Node da Gaia, the port wine cellars of Porto.

JOURNEY NEWS



What's happening with our 2026 journeys?

Outbound Journey to Seferihisar, Türkiye, September 20-27

Ambassadors depart later this month for Seferihisar, Türkiye. We wish them safe, enjoyable, and fulfilling travels as they experience a new culture, make new friends, and represent our club abroad!

Inbound Journey from Lower Columbia, Washington, October 13-2026

Get ready for some fun—and an opportunity to meet new friends! Our club will host Ambassadors from the Lower Columbia, Washington, club from October 13–20, 2026. The planning team has spent the past several months developing an exciting week that will showcase the people, places, history, culture, and natural beauty of Madison and southern Wisconsin.

While our guests will learn about our part of the country, we can also learn a little about theirs. The Lower Columbia region, located in the southwestern corner of Washington State, is shaped by the scenic Columbia River as it flows toward the Pacific Ocean. The area is known for its natural beauty, rich history, forested landscapes, and communities deeply connected to the river, logging, agriculture, and maritime industries. With the Pacific Coast nearby and Oregon just across the Columbia River, the region offers a distinctive blend of natural beauty, small-town charm, and Northwest heritage.

Here's How You Can Be Involved

Join the fun! We hope you will consider being part of this special week. Participate in one—or all—of the planned activities



Multnomah Falls Columbia River

Please complete the sign-up sheet at the end of the newsletter and return it to Journey Treasurer Mike Di Iorio by September 20. His address is listed on the form.

1. Open your home. We still need a couple of home, day, and dinner hosts. Contact Tom or Donna Miller if you would like to volunteer.
2. Lend a helping hand. We also need help setting up and taking down events, picking up lunches, or donating a small prize or two for trivia at the Welcome Event, game night, or the scavenger hunt. Contact Tom or Donna if you can help.

Your active participation in these journeys further our mission to create bridges between people—both across our country and around the world.

As the Journey approaches, we will provide more details, including event addresses, parking options, and answers to any questions that may arise.

To volunteer or ask questions, please contact Tom Miller at tfmillerphoto@sbcglobal.net or 608-334-3327, or Donna Miller at miller1950@sbcglobal.net or 608-609-2617.

JOURNEY NEWS



In 2027, we will host the Birmingham, USA, club. They provided us with wonderful Southern hospitality during our journey to Birmingham in the fall of 2025, and we are excited for the opportunity to return that hospitality next year!

We are recruiting Journey co-coordinators and members for the planning committee. Please contact Journey Managers Tom Miller or Kathy Speck if you are interested in helping. The May 2027 dates are approximate and will be determined in consultation with the Birmingham club.

This is a great opportunity to demonstrate our core mission of creating connections by hosting and sharing our community with others. As the saying goes, “Many hands make light work.”

Hope to see you there!

ACTIVITIES

Adopt a Highway Clean Up **Tuesday, September 8, 2026 10:00 am-noon**

Our next Adopt-A-Highway Clean up is Tuesday September 8, 10am-noon. Meet up on Hwy 51 at the intersection with Tower Dr.

https://maps.app.goo.gl/8zcaw43WkNnSuz6f8?g_st=ac

RSVP to Stephanie Vanden Bush 920-676-1441 or sljacobs2@gmail.com.



Book Club **Monday, September 14, 2026** **7:00 pm** **Sequoia Library Study Room 105**

On Tuesday, August 18, seven readers met at Sequoia Library (and two more joined by zoom) to discuss *The Geography of Bliss*. Author Eric Weiner gave us plenty to talk about! In his survey of ten disparate locations – The Netherlands, Switzerland, Bhutan, Qatar, Iceland, Moldova, Thailand, Great Britain, India and America (USA) – he attempts to identify and explain what brings happiness to a culture, and what might stand in the way of finding happiness. It’s a tall order, and his rather casual interviews and short stays in each location made for some sweeping generalizations. Still, we all appreciated his perceptive observations of the cultures, and he was genuinely interested and appreciative of each in its way. Even in Moldova, where the people seemed to find little

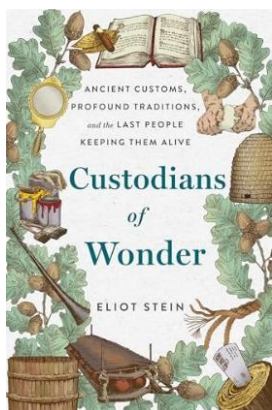


ACTIVITIES

Book Club, cont.,

to be happy about or even proud of (“...the fruits and vegetables. They are very fresh.”) he was able to find some humor and win over our empathy. Happiness, after all, is defined differently depending on one’s culture, environment, and language. I believe we all were happy to have read this.

Next, we will read *Custodians of Wisdom: Ancient Customs, Profound Traditions, and the Last People Keeping Them Alive* by Eliot Stein. This is the UW Big Read for 2026, and we can all hear the author speak when he comes to Union South on November 19. Get on the library hold list ASAP, as there is a long list of people lined up to borrow this book. It is not yet out in paperback, but there are inexpensive copies available from used book sellers.



“A vivid look at 10 astonishing people who are maintaining some of the world's oldest and rarest cultural traditions. Eliot Stein has traveled the globe in search of remarkable people who are preserving some of our most extraordinary cultural rites. ...Stein introduces readers to a man saving the secret ingredient in Japan's 700-year-old original soy sauce recipe. In Italy, he learns how to make the world's rarest pasta from one of the only women alive who knows how to make it. And in India, he discovers a family rumored to make a mysterious metal mirror believed to reveal your truest self. From shadowing Scandinavia's last night watchman to meeting a 27th-generation West African griot to tracking down Cuba's last official cigar factory "readers" more than a century after they spearheaded the fight for Cuban independence, Stein uncovers an almost lost world.”

Upcoming meetings will take place on Mondays, as this now works best for most of our regular participants. We will meet on the second Monday for the next two months, to accommodate the outgoing travelers to Türkiye and the incoming group from Lower Columbia River region.

Monday, September 14, 7:00 pm – Sequoya Library, Study Room 105

Monday, October 12, 7:00 pm – Sequoya Library, if available. Watch details in October newsletter.

Happy reading! Marjie Marion (midsi@aol.com) and Marian Ehrenberg (marianeh2014@gmail.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 @gmail.com,

Contact the Membership Committee Chair, Lise Skofronick, liserkofronick

The loan period is 30 days.

ACTIVITIES

CANCELLED FOR SEPTEMBER

Dining on the 6th
Sunday, September 6, 2026
12:00 noon for Lunch



2802 Dairy Dr, Madison, WI
Wednesday, September 30
12:30-3:30 pm

Thanks to Gail Holmes, Mary Crave, Matt Gazo and Deb Gunther and Deb's and Matt's grandson Evan for working at Second Harvest on August 26. The Friendship Force members joined 20 other volunteers to repackaged 3,500 pounds of frozen gnoche in just 2.5 hours!

Join us September 30, 12:30-3:30. If you haven't done so yet, go to the Second Harvest website at secondharvestsw.org and go to the *Repack and Sort* menu and register as a volunteer. It's easy.

Mary Crave

JUST A LITTLE
Reminder

Remember to check Wisconsin-Madison website (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!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Presidents & FFI Liasons

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

Co-Vice Presidents

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Secretary

Vicki Warren (608) 617-2213
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Treasurer

Deb Gunther (262) 422-0176
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ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

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Donna Hussin (608-770-0980)
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Past Co-Presidents

Diane Mertens (608) 271-8657
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Larry Neuman (608) 271-8657
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COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Activities

Gail Holmes (608) 249-1846

Electric-Communications

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

Membership

Lise Skofronick ((608) 274-7732)
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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
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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

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Sign up for Incoming Lower Columbia Journey Activities – Deadline September 20					
Name(s):		Email:	Phone:		
Date	Time	Activity	Cost per person	Number Attending	Total Cost
Tuesday October 13	5-8 PM Dinner @ 5:45	Welcome Dinner – Lake Edge Lutheran Church – 4032 Monona Drive, Madison Theme: Tailgate Party	\$20		
Wednesday October 14	10:30 - 11:00 AM	Cheese Tasting – Fromagination 12 S. Carroll Street, Madison (On the Capitol Square)	Free		
	11:30 – 1:15 PM	Lunch at Daily Cabin in Maple Bluff with sandwiches from Fromagination			
		Select sandwich choice from one of the following options (includes chips, beverage, and cookie)			
		Signature Sandwich – Smoked turkey breast, creamy French brie, Fromagination cranberry relish, and lettuce leaf on sunflower honey wheat bread	\$15		
		Pasture Harvest – Smoked turkey breast, Granny Smith apple slices, Wisconsin Swiss cheese, and house made maple mayo on telara roll	\$15		
		Beef Sandwich - Roast beef, mayonnaise-based black pepper and garlic aioli, leaf lettuce, Wisconsin cheddar cheese, on a telera roll	\$15		
		Veggiletta – French brie with olive tapenade, quince and apple fig and black tea conserves, and leaf lettuce on focaccia	\$15		
	1:15 – 2:30 PM	Tour of Governor’s Mansion	Free		
	Arrive by 6:15 PM – Timed entry begins at 6:30 PM	GLEAM Exhibit at Olbrich Gardens (Note: Members can purchase discounted tickets from Olbrich Gardens) The Journey Committee has purchased 25 tickets for GLEAM. Seven tickets will go to the Ambassadors, the remainder can be purchased by hosts, day hosts, and club members.	\$18		

Please note that club members are encouraged and welcome to participate in all events. For free events, please indicate if you plan to attend to ensure we have sufficient space.

Turn over and complete back side .

Sign up for Incoming Lower Columbia Journey Activities Continued – Deadline September 20					
Thursday October 15	9:30 – 10:30 AM	Effigy Mound Walking Tour at Mendota by local historian Teri Venker	\$5		
	11:00 – 12:00 PM	Presentation by UW Professor Sissel Schroeder on the discovery of dugout canoes in Wisconsin - Warner Park Community Recreation Center	\$5		
	12:00 – 1:00 PM	Boxed Lunch from Cranberry Creek Choose from the following options below Each includes potato chips, brownie and beverage:			
		Beef cheddar sandwich w/onion focaccia, bistro mayo, lettuce, tomato	\$15		
		Turkey and provolone on focaccia with pesto mayo, lettuce, tomato	\$15		
		Salad - chicken w/ mixed greens, cheese, tomato, pecans, bacon, honey Dijon dressing	\$15		
		Vegetarian wrap - herb flour tortilla with red pepper hummus, cucumbers, tomatoes, mixed greens, onion	\$15		
	1:00 – 3:00 PM	Service Project at Warner Park – Activities for all abilities	Free		
	5:00 – 8:00 PM	Game Night with Pizza + - Fitchburg Library Meeting Room	\$15		
Friday October 16	9:00 – 10:00 AM	Tour of UW Dairy Cattle Center	Free		
	10:30 – 11:30 AM	Babcock Hall Tour	Free		
	Lunch On Your Own				
	2:30 – 4:30 PM	Epic Self-guided Tour – Pending Limited spaces available	Free		
Saturday October 17	On Your Own	Dane County Farmers Market – On your own	Free		
	11:00 – Noon	Tour of Wisconsin State Capitol	Free		
	Lunch On Your Own				
	1:00 – 2:00 PM	Tour of Monona Terrace	\$5		
Sunday October 18	1:30 – 2:30 PM	Guided Tour of International Crane Foundation – Baraboo	\$12		
Monday October 19	9:00 – Noon	Tour of UW Geology Museum and UW Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences Weather and Climate Center	\$3		
	5:00 – 8:00 PM Dinner at 5:30 PM	Farewell Dinner – Holy Wisdom Monastery, 4200 Co. Hwy M, Middleton	\$32		
				Total	
Please make checks payable to Friendship Force of Wisconsin-Madison and send with completed form to Journey Treasurer Michael Di Iorio, 517 West Main St. #209, Madison, WI 53703					
Final date for receipt of activity selections and payment is September 20 - earlier receipt is much appreciated!					