



friendship force  
GREATER DES MOINES



2023 FFGDM Calendar  
(Dates and activities subject to change)

May 2 - 8	FF Tallahassee outbound journey
May 18	Table of Friends
May 22	Book Friends
May 27	CelebrAsian Walkabout
June 14	Iowa Cubs Game
June 15	Table of Friends
June 24	All-Iowa FF Picnic in Ames
June 26	Book Friends
July 14	Bastille Day Fete
July 20	Table of Friends
July 22	Art Center Tour
July 24	Book Friends
Aug 17	Table of Friends
Aug 27	Sundaes on Sunday
Aug 28	Book Friends
Sep 16	World Food & Music Festival
Sept 17-27	FF Leuven outbound journey
Sep 25	Book Friends
Sep 28	Table of Friends
Oct 2 – 5	FFI Conference, Dubrovnik, Croatia
Oct 11-16	FF Tallahassee inbound journey
Oct 19	Table of Friends
Oct 23	Book Friends
Nov	Annual Meeting
Nov 16	Table of Friends
Nov 27	Book Friends
Dec 5	Happy Feet Lunch
Dec 18	Book Friends
Dec 21	Table of Friends

*"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry,  
and narrow-mindedness."  
-- Mark Twain*



## CelebrAsian Walkabout

Saturday, May 27

11:00 am

Western Gateway Park  
Downtown Des Moines, Iowa

Don't miss out on the largest Asian American event in Iowa, showcasing cultural exhibits, history, food, performance artists, sports, martial arts, and family-friendly activities.

Those of you who would like a little company to share a wander through the festival are invited to meet up at the NE corner of 12th and Locust between 11:00 am and 11:15 am on May 27.

Pat Westphal will be there to greet you. We'll divide into small groups and plan to reconnect for lunch among the food vendors around 12:30.

Remember to wear your FF badge.

No reservation is required but for more information contact Pat at [WestphalP@central.edu](mailto:WestphalP@central.edu)

## President's Message

Dear FFGDM Members,

We started the first quarter of 2023 with some very successful events. In February members went to the Iowa Culinary Institute at DMACC for lunch and a lecture “International Year Focus” by James Stick, Academic Dean for Liberal Arts. Thank you to Nancy Lundstrom for organizing the lunch.

March had us celebrating St. Patrick's Day with a potato bar at the Hy Vee Center on Euclid Avenue. Thank you, Shelley Bain, Alice Rasmussen, Donna Archer, and Karen Kirkpatrick for organizing the activity, Isabella Hurless-Banks for her story, and Dee Willemsen, and Christine McQuillen for staffing the check in table.

We celebrated Springfest on a snowy day in April with a delicious appetizer and dessert potluck. I think that next year we might call our April event Winterfest! Our guest speaker, Brooke Heldt, told us about the wonderful things that the YMCA Supportive Housing Campus does for its residents. We took this time to do our first community service project of 2023 - we collected needed items and made financial donations to the YMCA Supportive Campus. Thank you to Shelley Bain, Alice Rasmussen, Pat Westphal, Janette House, Roseanne Hixenbaugh, Carmie Renda, Elaine Bredesky, Pat Headley, Nancy and Steve Lundstrom, Karen and Chuck Kilpatrick, Marilyn Wadden, the members who brought food, and those who helped set up and cleaned up after the event.

In May, we are trying a new activity – a walkabout – at CelebrAsian. This is a casual activity that has a coordinator in Pat Westphal and requires only that members and friends show up at the designated time and location (details on page 1). Not only is this a great opportunity to enjoy one of the premier ethnic festivals in Des Moines but you get a little exercise, too.

In June there are two activities that you might entertain attending. We are organizing an afternoon at an Iowa Cubs Game on June 14 (details on page 3) and on June 24th, Friendship Force of Central Iowa is hosting the All-Iowa Friendship Force Picnic in Ames. The All-Iowa Picnic is always fun and since it is practically next door, I hope that I will see you there (details on page 4).

Several years ago, our Friendship Force club organized two Special Interest groups - a Book Club and a Dinner Club. These clubs within FFGDM have been very successful. This year we are exploring the possibility of starting two additional Special Interest clubs - a Lunch Club and a Performing Arts Club. Members will sign up and then the group will set up how they will operate. One member will be selected to coordinate the club. (details on page 6). We have also suggested several other possible Special Interest Clubs – let me know if you are interested in those as well.

Once again, thanks to all of you who have volunteered and supported our club. Our FFGDM members are what makes our club so special.

**“I would rather walk with a friend in the dark than walk alone in the light.” Helen Keller**

In Friendship,  
Ginny Renda  
President FFGDM

## Journeys



### Journey Report

The journeys to **FF Tallahassee** and **FF Leuven Belgium** have a full complement of ambassadors and the ambassadors are preparing to start their adventures.

The planning for the next inbound journey, from **FF Tallahassee** in October, has started. The Planning Committee met to brainstorm the program activities and assign tasks. If you would like to help but didn't sign up on your membership application, contact Ginny at [rendaginny@gmail.com](mailto:rendaginny@gmail.com).

We will hear soon, from FFI, our journey matches for 2024. Look for that in the next newsletter.

– Mike Davis, Journey Director

## Activities



### Iowa Cubs vs Indiana

Wednesday, June 14

12:08 PM (afternoon game)

#### Venue

Principal Park, 1 Line Dr, Des Moines, IA 50309

#### Tickets

\$ 8.00 per person If 25 people or more attend.

\$10.00 per person If less than 25 people attend.

#### Seating

We will sit as a group and be welcomed on the “billboard” to the crowd!

An elevator is available if we need that service.

#### Interested?

Send your name and phone# to Nancy Lundstrom at 515-289-2800 or email at [nancylundstrom@mchsi.com](mailto:nancylundstrom@mchsi.com) by **Monday, June 5.**

**Reminder:** Principal Park is a “cashless” venue - credit cards only

**Friendship Force of Central Iowa**  
**Will be hosting the**  
**All-Iowa Picnic in Ames**  
**Homewood Golf Course Clubhouse**  
**401 E 20<sup>th</sup> St. Ames 50010**  
**Noon to 3:00**

**Saturday, June 24, 2023**

**Rain or Shine**

**Food catered by Hickory Park Restaurant**

**Turkey, Beef, Pork, Saucy Southerner, Potato Salad,  
Coleslaw, Baked Beans, Chips, Dessert, Iced Tea and Water**

**Vegetarian meal option available upon request**

**All-Iowa Friendship Force Picnic Reservation**

Paid reservations are due **June 14.**

Make checks payable to FFCI and mail to Margaret Epplin, 2114 State Avenue, Ames IA 50014

Name(s) _____		
Club _____		
Email _____	Phone _____	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check if requesting a Vegetarian Meal _____	
\$ 16 per person	Number of tickets _____	Total amount enclosed _____





## IRISH CELEBRATION

What a day! We had a nice time at the Irish Celebration despite arriving at the venue and finding the HyVee catering manager had our party scheduled for Monday, March 12, instead of Sunday, March 12!!



Two people from catering hustled putting the potato bar together; we started 40 minutes late which gave everyone a chance to chat and catch up. The food was surprisingly good, lots of people won at bingo or won Irish Tartan bookmarks as door prizes, and most (except our Irish super-group of Isabella, Mike, and Ronda) found the quiz too difficult. Everyone wore green beads thanks to Ginny Renda.



A Heartfelt thank you to the planning committee of Alice Rasmussen, Donna Archer, and Karen Kilpatrick - they made planning a breeze. Also, thank you to Dee Willemssen and new member Christine MCQuillen who staffed the sign in table. ----- Shelley Bain, Irish Celebration Coordinator



On Sunday, April 16, forty members and guests celebrated Springfest on the day some called the "last throes of winter" for the light snow and wind that greeted us.

We heard from Brooke Heldt, a program director at the YMCA Supportive Housing Campus. What a benefit to the community Brooke and the Supportive Housing Campus are to members of our community. The "Our Housing First Model" helps people experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness move into stable and secure permanent housing supplemented by supportive services. Wrap-around services help people meet their basic needs and reach their life goals.



They serve 140 people at a time who can stay up to 15 months. Their clients include the disabled, youth leaving foster care, and veterans in need. The clients pay rent and live in safe and secure efficiency apartments that contain a bed, bathroom, and kitchenette. There are shared meals daily and many activities to engage the clients including a library, TV area, and walking club.



Members generously made cash donations or brought items for the food and household pantry at the campus. For more information check out: <https://www.dymymca.org/locations/supportive-housing-campus>.

Before dining on a bounty of appetizers and desserts, Alice Rasmussen introduced long-time and oldest club member Doris Andre who attended with members of her family. It was a pleasure seeing her.

Thank you to the volunteers who included Alice Rasmussen, Pam Sadler, Nancy Lundstrom, Jane Escobar, Carmie Renda, Janette House, Roseanne Hixenbaugh, Marilyn Weedon, Chuck and Karen Kilpatrick, and Gene and Gail Lucht. Our apologies to the volunteers we may have missed. - Ginny Renda and Shelley Bain, co-coordinators

## Special Interest Groups

### Are you interested in a new FFGDM Special Interest Group?

Some of you may remember when we started the Special Interest Groups in 2020 as a way for members to get to know each other and introduce potential members to Friendship Force based on shared interests. Although some groups never took off, Table of Friends and Book Friends are going strong and meet monthly. Now, we would like to know if you are interested in forming new clubs that have been suggested. Read on and let me know at [rendaginny@gmail.com](mailto:rendaginny@gmail.com) if you are interested. Each group will need a coordinator. --- Ginny

Lunch Friends	Performing Art Friends	Others?
The idea with this interest group is to have a group similar to Table of Friends that meets on a regular basis to have lunch. Members would take turns deciding where to dine, make reservations, and take names. The group sets the rules.	The idea for this group is to have members who would contact other members to invite one person or many people to attend a play, concert, gallery opening, opera, ballet, etc. Invitations would be generated as performing arts opportunities arise. The group sets the rules.	Board Games Fabric Art Crafts Mahjong Pickleball Sports Activities or Events

## Book Friends

Book Friends meets the 4th Monday of each month (except December), from 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm at Northwest Community Center, 5110 Franklin Ave, Des Moines. **Join Us!** We are open to all Friendship Force members and their friends. The only membership requirement is a love of books. Contact coordinator Connie Walters at [yourfriendconnie@gmail.com](mailto:yourfriendconnie@gmail.com) or 515-971-1916.

### 2023 Selections

Discussion DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	HOST	NOTES
May 22	Shanghai Girls (1 <sup>st</sup> in series)	Lisa See	Polly	China
June 26	An Island at War	Deborah Carr	Ronda	Channel Islands
July 24	The Last Green Valley	Mark T. Sullivan	Ginny	Ukraine
Aug 28	The Personal Librarian	M. Benedict & V.C. Murray	Dee	African American
Sep 25	Lessons in Chemistry	Bonnie Garmus	Nikki	Gender Equality
Oct 23	<i>Member Recommendations For 2024</i>			Cultural Perspectives
Nov 27	Honolulu	Alan Brennert	Polly	Hawaiian immigrants
Dec 18	The Birchbark House	Louise Erdrich	Connie	Native American Ojibwe

## Table of Friends

The March 16 dinner was hosted by Lenne Orona at Panka Peruvian Restaurant on Ingersoll. Despite the cold and flurries, the group enjoyed the warm atmosphere and delicious entrees such as Lomo Saltado and Langostinos Melcocha. New member Marilyn Wadden attended and enjoyed meeting other members in an intimate setting. We all recommend this restaurant.

Barbara Bailey hosted 16 members on April 20 at Fire Creek Grill in West Des Moines. Favorite entrees included Chicken Asiago, Boursin Stuffed Chicken, and Chicken Marsala. It was a chicken-lovers kind of night!

We meet the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm unless that date conflicts with other FF activities. Let me know if you would like to join the group. ---- Shelley Bain, TOF Coordinator, [shelleybain@centurylink.net](mailto:shelleybain@centurylink.net)

## Member News



Marla Carr – May 12  
 Elese Johnson – May 14  
 Cathy Jensen – May 15  
 Chuck Kilpatrick – May 16  
 Pam Sadler – May 16  
 Anita Lindfield – May 20  
 Beverly Lytle – May 21  
 Jane Escobar – May 23  
 Mike Merritt – June 1  
 Lee Ann Bakros – June 16  
 Isabella Hurless-Banks – June 17  
 Elaine Bredesky – June 21  
 Sally Merritt – June 23  
 Ronda Davis – June 24  
 Cookie Major – June 24  
 Darlene Blake Beers – June 26



### New member

Jean Vesely

3706 Brinkwood Rd.  
 Des Moines, IA 50310  
 515-274-5082  
 jvesely515@gmail.com



### Our Sympathy

To Jack and the family of  
 former member

**Jill Schrieber**  
 1938 – 2023



## 2023 FFDGM Board Members & Committee Chairs

<b><i>Board Members</i></b>	<b><i>Email</i></b>	<b><i>Term ends</i></b>
Ginny Renda – <i>President</i>	rendaginny@gmail.com	2023*
Barbara Bailey – <i>Vice-President, Acting Treasurer</i>	dcblbailey@gmail.com	2023
Janette House - <i>Secretary</i>	j.house@mediacombb.net	2025
Pat Headley – <i>past co-President</i>	headleypatricia651@gmail.com	2023*
Mike Davis – <i>Journey Director</i>	mjdavisconsulting@gmail.com	2024*
Darlene Blake-Beers	darleneblake@hotmail.com	2025
Nikki Hubbard	nihubbard@aol.com	2024
Anita Lindfield	anitalindfield@gmail.com	2024
open		2023
		*2nd term
<b><i>Other Committees and Tasks</i></b>		
Shelley Bain – <i>Newsletter Editor</i>	shelleybain@centurylink.net	
Nancy Lundstrom – <i>Activities Committee Co-Chair</i>	nancylundstrom@mchsi.com	
Marla Carr – <i>Activities Committee Co-Chair</i>	marlakcarr@yahoo.com	
Alice Rasmussen – <i>Membership Chair</i>	off4ever@aol.com	
Shelley Bain – <i>Table of Friends Coordinator</i>	shelleybain@centurylink.net	
Connie Walter – <i>Book Friends Coordinator</i>	yourfriendconnie@gmail.com	



## Where in the World...

### ... are Mike and Sally Merritt?

We have a son, daughter, and two grandchildren that live in Pretoria, South Africa so we visited them, and while we were in South Africa, we visited three different safari lodges at Kruger National Park. My son and his family live in Pretoria where my son works for a part of John Hopkins which exports medical knowledge and practices to countries in the developing world, my daughter-in-law is the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, and my grandchildren go to the Johannesburg International School.

Kruger is in northeastern South Africa, about a 5 – 6-hour drive from Pretoria. It is one of Africa's largest game reserves. Its high density of wild animals includes the Big 5: lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants, and buffaloes. Hundreds of other mammals make their home here, as do diverse bird species such as vultures, eagles, and storks. Our first safari park was the Mjejane River Lodge in Hectorspruit. Our guides are first class, knowledgeable and very experienced at finding the animals and telling us all about them. Our son and daughter-in-law have been on quite a few safaris, so they have become birdwatchers and wound up with a list at the end of trip of approximately 50 bird species sighted.



Our second safari park is Kruger Shalati – the Train on a Bridge. The train is permanently stationed on the Selati Bridge above the Sabie River. The train trestle was built in the early 1920's, when visits to Kruger were first becoming available. The trestle hadn't been used for many years but was recently re-developed as a luxury hotel. The glass-walled train rooms allow for long views along the length of the Sabie River. The first thing we see after arriving is a herd of elephants parading down the river under the train trestle. Game drives are first thing in the morning (5:00 am wake-up calls), then late afternoon when the animals are most active.

Our third safari park is Tanda Tula Safari Lodge at Timbavati. This is a tented camp with outdoor showers. The tents are closed by zippers and a carabiner device, and we are cautioned to always keep the tent closed and locked when we aren't in the room. Mike doesn't take this advice, and the monkeys break into the tent and destroy our breakfast tray. Shalati was inside Kruger National Park and the guides are required to stay on asphalt roads. At Tanda Tula we are outside (but adjacent to) Kruger, and there is no such restriction. The roads are all dirt, and the driver goes off-road right into the bush so we can get a better view of the animals.

We liked South Africa so much we are returning in March 2023, and we will do sightseeing in the Cape Town area of South Africa. Our son and family are still in Pretoria and will be until the summer of 2024. The trip to get there is very, very long, but worth it!



FFGDM membership dues cover a calendar year, January 1 through December 31.

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday MM and DD for newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Check as many as you like, but please check at least one activity you will help with.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Activities Committee   | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical/Archiving         | <u>Inbound Journey activities:</u>             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board Member (future)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Outbound Journey Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Journey Coordinator   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service      | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Editor            | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Party Team    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/Speakers | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographer                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Farewell Party Team   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook posts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker's Bureau             | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Planning Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Audit        | <input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer (future)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Host             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising            | <input type="checkbox"/> Website articles             | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Dinner Host     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greeter at events      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Day Host              |

Your contribution May be tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.