



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2024 FFGDM Calendar
(Dates and activities subject to change)

Mar 5	Lunch Friends
Mar 21	Table of Friends
Mar 22	Iowa Judicial Branch Building Tour
Mar 25	Book Friends
Apr 3	Lunch Friends
Apr 14	Springfest
Apr 18	Table of Friends
Apr 22	Book Friends
May 7	Lunch Friends
May 11	DM Tiny Trees Community Service
May 16	Table of Friends
May TBD	IPTV Tour
May 27	Book Friends
June 5	Lunch Friends
June TBD	Architectural Walking Tour
June 18-25	Journey to FF Southern Oregon
June 20	Table of Friends
June 24	Book Friends
June 29	All-Iowa FF Picnic
July 12	Bastille Day Fete
July TBD	Harkin Institute Tour
Aug 4	Sundaes on Sunday
Aug 22-27	Journey to FF Kansas
Sep 13-20	Journey from FF Saitama, Japan
Oct 7-10	FF North America Conference
Oct 28	Annual Dinner Meeting
Dec 3	Happy Feet Lunch

Member Directory

The member directory was emailed several weeks ago. If you did not receive it, please contact Shelley Bain. If you should find any mistakes, or change any of your information during the year, please notify me at off4ever@aol.com so we can keep the directory correct.

--- Alice Rasmussen, Membership Coordinator

Iowa Judicial Branch Building Tour



Friday, March 22
10:40 am

1111 E Court Ave
Des Moines, IA 50319

*Free public parking available east of the building,
off Court Avenue at E 13th Street.*

LOCAL
FARMS
GLOBAL
FLAVOR

HoQ

Lunch following the tour (optional)

HoQ Restaurant

303 E 5th Street, Des Moines 50309

Menu changes weekly – a sample from the take-out menu
<https://order.toasttab.com/online/hoq-303-e-5th-st>

RESERVATIONS **REQUIRED** . . .

by **March 19** to Gail at gail.lucht@gmail.com or
text 515-210-0301

President's Message



Dear Members and Friends,

As an activist in many organizations over a lifetime, I never found a truer statement than “Many Hands Make Light Work”. We don’t have staff, we have members and the more members who participate, the easier the work is and the stronger we are as an organization. Many of you checked off tasks or committees when you completed your membership application and some left it blank. It’s okay if you left that section blank because we’ll ask you to participate anyway - your involvement and ideas are important to us. Please say YES when asked to join a committee or help at an activity, whether that ask is by phone or email or this newsletter.

If you are ready to get more involved, here are some ideas:

- Read this newsletter and print the frontpage calendar as a reminder.
- Come to Springfest on April 14, you’ll meet friendly people, hear an interesting speaker, donate to the well-being of the community, and enjoy good food.
- Join a Social Club – Table of Friends, Book Friends, Lunch Friends, and Performing Arts Lovers would all welcome you.
- Join the Activities Committee where most club activities are scheduled and coordinated.
- Consider applying for the Journey to FF Kansas in August.
- Join the FF Saitama Planning Committee as we prepare to welcome our Japanese friends.

If you have other ideas or talents you wish to share, please send me an email and we’ll chat.

If you did not receive this email from FFI on February 16, please let me know.



Friendship Force North American Conference

Date: October 7-10, 2024

Location: Drury Plaza Hotel Downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Registration is officially open for the FF North American Conference. This is your chance to join us for an inspiring event celebrating cultural exchange and friendship while discussing the issues that matter in your region. You can expect networking opportunities, engaging workshops, exciting activities, and celebrations of friendship.

Register now to secure your spot! Visit our conference website for more information about the conference and how to book your hotel room with the conference discount code.

NOTE: FFGDM members can expect an email regarding car sharing and room sharing opportunities for our club members.

In friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

Activities



Sunday, April 14

Luther Memorial Church
1201 Grandview Ave, Des Moines, IA 50316

Doors open at 1:00 pm

Potluck

Members are asked to bring a salad or casserole.

Speaker

Michelle Bolton King

Executive Director of After School Arts Program
Donations of cash/check are welcome

This is a great opportunity to bring friends who may be interested in Friendship Force and our activities.

RSVP, if attending, by April 10 to Ginny at
rendaginny@gmail.com or text 515-778-8506

Community Service and Trees!

Des Moines Tiny Trees Program

by Christine McQuillan, Coordinator

Each year Des Moines Forestry puts on the very popular Tiny Trees program with the aim of increasing the urban canopy in Des Moines and educating the public on the importance of urban trees and tree diversity. Any resident of Des Moines can order up to five free tiny trees which can be planted anywhere in the city, including private property.



Saturday, May 11

Polk County River Place
2309 Euclid Ave, Des Moines
Shifts: 7am - 10am or 10am – 1pm

The event is like a large drive through with several ways to serve - walking trees to cars, sitting at a table and checking order details on a large-printed spreadsheet, or bagging tree orders and stapling care instructions to the bag.

When signing up put "FFGDM" next to your name.

Link to volunteer form:

<https://desmoines.rja.revize.com/forms/7802>

Please wear your FFGDM name badge. Bagels and coffee provided.

The Danish Brotherhood Hosts



Aebleskiver Brunch

Sunday, March 17
10:30 AM – 12 Noon
\$8 or donation

Luther Memorial Church
1201 Grandview Avenue, Des Moines 50316

Danish Trivia: The LEGO Group was founded in 1932 by Ole Kirk Kristiansen. LEGO stands for "Leg Godt" meaning "to play well" in Danish.



Community Service & Seeds!

NINE SQUARE FEET

Several members participated in Nine Square Feet's seed repackaging project on February 10. The effort created 10,000 packets of seeds that were distributed through 32 libraries statewide on February 24.

For more information on this non-profit, which is part of the effort to teach community members how to grow fresh and healthy food, check out their website at

<https://www.ninesquarefeet.org/>

Chinese New Year Dinner



Members dined at Jade Garden Chinese Restaurant on February 5 to celebrate Chinese New Year “The Year of the Dragon” and hear from Swallow Yan, Executive Director of the Chinese Association of Iowa, and four delightful students attending Dowling and Valley High School.

The students played ehru, a traditional string instrument, and shared how they celebrate the new year with their families. They eat whole fish which symbolizes well-being and prosperity and also give red envelopes as a way to send good wishes and luck (as well as money). One of the students lamented that he would miss receiving red envelopes this year because it was so lucrative for him. Thank you to Gail Sheridan Lucht for organizing this enlightening dinner.



Journeys



FF Southern Oregon Outbound Journey

June 18 – 25
Ambassador Coordinator
Lenne Orona
crotia2023@gmail.com

Wait List Only.



FF Kansas Outbound Journey

August 22 – 27, 2024
Ambassador Coordinator
Else Johnson
gram.elese@gmail.com
Applications open in late--March.



FF Saitama Inbound Journey

September 13 – 20
Host Coordinator
Darlene Blake Beers
darleneblake@hotmail.com

The journey Planning Committee will meet in late-March. Let Darlene know if you can help.

Special Interest Groups

Table of Friends

After skipping January due to weather (just like last year), Marla Carr hosted our February dinner at OPA! which serves Italian and Greek food including pizza and steak. Some favorites entrees - Souvlaki Platter, Spanakopita, and Manicotti Ala Forno. We look forward to Nikki Hubbard's selection for March - Chuck's in Highland Park.

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. ---- Ginny Renda, TOF Coordinator, rendaginny@gmail.com

Performing Arts Lovers

In February members attended a classical guitar performance by Steven Kennedy, a concert by Scottish band Huron Valley, and Des Moines Storytellers on “Community”. PAL has two to six people attend each performance. If you are interested in joining the club and inviting members to performances you wish to attend, contact Pat at WestphalP@central.edu.

Lunch Friends

January lunch was hosted by Alice Rasmussen at Lindo Jalisco Mexican Restaurant which some discovered is next door to Linda's Donuts and its yummy Cronuts. Jane Escobar hosted in February at Tito's Lounge in Urbandale which serves American and Bosnia food and a delicious classic burger. We're heading to the ICI Bistro on March 5; email host Shelley Bain at bainshelley@gmail.com by March 3 if you'd like to join us.

Our gatherings are open to anyone who enjoys delicious food, engaging conversations, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. If you would like to join our lunch group, please email Christine McQuillan, Lunch Friends Coordinator, at lordmco@gmail.com.

Book Friends

Join us on the 4th Monday of each month from 2:30 to 4:00 pm at Northwest Community Center, 5110 Franklin Avenue in Des Moines. In the summer we sometimes meet at Gray's Lake Park.

We are open to all Friendship Force members and their friends - the only requirement is a love of books. Contact coordinator Connie Walters at yourfriendconnie@gmail.com or 515-971-1916 for more information.

DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	MEMBER	NOTES
Mar 25	Redemption	David Baldacci	Mary	Detective discovers that a rookie mistake he made may have led to deadly consequences.
Apr 22	All Boys Aren't Blue	George M. Johnson	Polly	Personal essays about growing up Black and queer in America.
May 27	The Memory Shop	Ella Griffin	Nikki	Uplifting novel, set in Ireland, about love, family and finding your way.
June 24	The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane	Lisa See	Anita	Lives of a Chinese mother and her daughter who was adopted by an American couple.
July 22	The Spitfire Girls	Saraya Lane	Ginny	Historical fiction of UK and US female pilots in WWII.
Aug 26	Loving Frank	Nancy Horan	Dee	Fictionalized account of Mamah Borthwick's love affair with Frank Lloyd Wright.
Sept 23	Maisie Dobbs	Jacqueline Winspear	Charlotte	Historical mystery, set in 1910-1929 England.
Oct 28	Once and Future Witches	Alix E. Harrow	Connie	Set in 1893, sisters struggle for autonomy and power in a patriarchal world.
Nov 25	2025 Recommendations			
Dec 16	Crow Mary	Kathleen Grissom	Ginny	The story of a Native woman caught between two cultures in 1870s.

Member News



Ruth Braymen
26254 - 265th St.
New Providence, IA 50206
515-460-1039
ruthbrian2farm@yahoo.com



Our Sympathy
to the family of
member
Doris Andre
February 7, 1926 —
February 3, 2024

2024 FFGDM Leadership

Board Members

Shelley Bain – President
shelleybain@centurylink.net
Janette House - Secretary
j.house@mediacombb.net
Mike Merritt - Treasurer
merritt2007@sbcglobal.net
Mike Davis – Journey Director
mjdavisconsulting@gmail.com
Darlene Blake Beers
darleneblake@hotmail.com
Nikki Hubbard
nihubbard@aol.com
Anita Lindfield
anitalindfield@gmail.com

Other Committees and Tasks

Marla Carr – Activities Co-Chair
marlakcarr@yahoo.com
Nancy Lundstrom – Activities Co-Chair
nancylundstrom@mchsi.com
Lenne Orona – Facebook Coordinator
crotia2023@gmail.com
Alice Rasmussen – Membership Chair
off4ever@aol.com

Social Clubs

Ginny Renda – Table of Friends
rendaginny@gmail.com
Christine McQuillen – Lunch Friends
1ordmco@gmail.com
Pat Westphal – Performing Arts
WestphalP@central.edu
Connie Walter – Book Friends
yourfriendconnie@gmail.com

Where in the World

. . . are Mike and Ronda Davis and Lenne Orona? In Ecuador and the Galapagos!

Ronda and Mike Davis and Lenne Orona joined 17 other Friendship Force ambassadors on an amazing, informative, and grueling journey to Ecuador from mid-May through early June in 2023. Ambassadors came from several states, Canada, and the UK.



Ecuador is fascinating. It is a land of volcanoes and valleys, dry islands (the Galapagos), daily rain in the cloud forest, and deep rain forests and rivers (the upper Amazon). It is heaven for bird watchers, with a huge variety of hummingbirds, tanagers, and species specific to the country. It has a complicated history, a large indigenous population, and a democracy that is currently in the midst of a political upheaval.

Several of us arrived a day or two ahead and got to spend time exploring the capital city of Quito, the second highest capital city in the world at over 9,000 feet, and the only capital city with a volcano within city

limits. With a rapidly growing population of more than 3 million, Quito still has an old town with buildings nearly 800 years old. With the high mountains and the valleys between sections of the city, and the dense traffic, it can take quite a while to get around. Luckily, our hotel was only a couple of blocks from the main square, where we not only saw beautiful buildings but also had the chance to buy locally made scarves and other crafts and foods from the many vendors walking around.

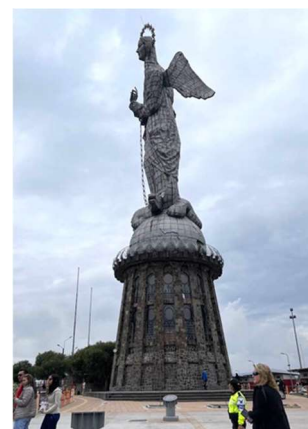


Alison Marie





The three of us and three other ambassadors booked a tour to the Middle of the World area at the equator as well as a volcano caldera (where the volcano center collapsed into a flat area large enough for farms, greenhouses, homes, and roads) and an Inca site that was used for defense and for religious activities (yes, including a spot where human sacrifices occurred). We went to the Intiñan Museum that includes the equator and information about indigenous people, and the Middle of the World monument and museum that is at the first site identified as on the equator (but really a couple hundred feet off).



The FFI tour started with a driving tour to the winged Virgin of Quito, the tallest aluminum statue in the world, where there was a view overlooking the city. We returned to the old town for a walking tour.

On the journey, we visited a reserve established by a family of farmers to see the variety of hummingbirds and tanagers, another that dedicated to birds, a Galapagos reserve for giant tortoises, a butterfly reserve, and a refuge in the

Amazon region that cares for a wide range of animals (and returns them to the wild when possible). There are not only many national parks in Ecuador (including the Galapagos Islands), but there are also even more privately held reserves dedicated to conservation of the land and the animals.



We visited smaller towns, such as the market town of Otavalo and Punta Ayora, the largest town in the Galapagos. In the Galapagos, we saw the tortoises, sea turtles, sea lions relaxing on a pier, pelicans, and the famous blue footed boobies. We learned about Darwin's observations as well as about how the tortoises, finches, and other animals evolved differently on the different islands.



And we spent 3 days in the Amazon. We were lucky enough to meet indigenous people and see how they lived. A highlight was a chance to interact with members of a tribe who are still nomadic and live off the land, who only encountered people from outside the Amazon within the last 70 years, and whose children attend school; this is probably the last generation who will live in the traditional way. We now know what a rainforest jungle is.

And finally, we drove high up on an active volcano—to over 13,000 feet. We met people who live in that harsh environment. We enjoyed getting to know Ecuador and our 17 other FFI ambassadors.