



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2024 FFGDM Calendar
(Dates and activities subject to change)

May 5	Afternoon Tea fundraiser
May 7	Lunch Friends
May 11	DM Tiny Trees Community Service
May 16	Table of Friends
May 22	Iowa PBS Tour
May 27	Book Friends
June 5	Lunch Friends
June 13	Architectural Walking Tour
June 13	Table of Friends
June 18-25	Journey to FF Southern Oregon
June 24	Book Friends
June 29	All-Iowa FF Picnic
July 2	Lunch Friends
July 12	Bastille Day Fete
July 18	Table of Friends
July 22	Book Friends
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



Afternoon Tea

Sunday, May 5

3:00 pm

at the home of
Isabella Hurless-Banks
4520 75th St, Urbandale, IA 50322

Join us for afternoon tea with all the traditional fare. You'll be welcomed with a glass of prosecco followed by sandwiches, scones, strawberry jam, clotted cream, desserts, and tea.

Hosted by Isabella Hurless-Banks, Shelley Bain, Jane Escobar, and Ginny Renda

Reservations are required as seating is limited.

Reservations – May 1 deadline

Reserve _____ seats at \$35 per person

Name(s) _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please send this completed form, with your check made payable to FFGDM, to Shelley Bain, 1008 38th St, Des Moines, IA 50311-3619.

SAVE THE DATE!

All-Iowa Friendship Force Picnic

Saturday, June 29
11:30 am - 3:30 pm

Homestead Welfare Club
4215 V ST, Homestead, IA 52236

We look forward to seeing all of you!
---- Nancy York, FFCR-IC President

President's Message



Hello Friendship Force Members and Friends,

This month I encourage you to consider attending the FFI North America Conference in the fall. I'm not usually a fan of conferences but there is something special about Friendship Force conferences. They are an opportunity to reconnect with people you've met on club or special journeys and also a chance to network with clubs that may result in a journey in a couple of years.

Depending on who you drive to Milwaukee with and who your roommate is, you'll likely make deeper connections to members of our club. That's always a plus. I love road trips with FF members because I've learned how to play board games, the pride and love members have for their families, their interests and hobbies, who are easy travelers, who is inherently funny and fun, and who is a driver I would trust my life with. Then there are the wonderful memories – I look forward to making new ones in Milwaukee.

“There is an unspoken bond you create with the friends you travel with.” Kristen Sarah

FFGDM Members, who are interested in attending the conference, are encouraged to complete the form on the next page to help Janette coordinate ride shares and hotel rooms.

As you travel this year, consider submitting a “Where in the World” article and a few photos for the newsletter. Most FF members are in love with traveling and new experiences, even those of others. To inspire you, read about the Ecuadorian adventure of Lenne, Mike, and Ronda later in this newsletter.

We just received our journey matches for 2025 from FFI – two outbounds, one domestic and one international – but we won't advertise those until we have more information. We are looking at creating one or two inbound journeys so we can show off our beautiful part of the state. Plus, we are working on an overnight road trip within Iowa. Stay tuned for those announcements.

In friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

Friendship Force North American Conference

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:

<https://whova.com/web/gjG-Tw7jXN2ln78ilbTPPmlqLicFmnx-NZKq8rLCuk4%3D/>



October 7-10, 2024
Drury Plaza Hotel Downtown
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

\$250 plus fees for conference registration

Your conference fee includes local entertainment, all conference materials, a hotel lunch and coffee breaks, farewell drinks reception on October 9, souvenir bag with conference gifts and program, opening plenary session with speaker and global updates, topic workshops on a variety of club, member, and journey themes, special regional breakout sessions to discuss issues particular to your needs.

Additional paid options include accommodation at the conference hotel with breakfast, and a variety of fun excursions around Milwaukee on October 9.

If you are interested in attending the conference, please provide the information requested below in an email to Janette at j.house@mediacombb.net or mail the completed form to Janette House, 280 S 79th St #801, West Des Moines, IA 50266.

Questions? Contact Shelley at bainshelley@gmail.com

Conference Interest Information

Name _____

Address _____

Cell Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Email _____

Have you registered for the conference? _____

Independent travel

____ will fly / ____ will drive / ____ will ride with _____

Carpooling

____ will drive and can take ____ passengers / ____ will ride

Carpools will probably leave DSM the morning of Oct 7. Passengers will pay for their driver's gas costs.

Return preferences (if carpooling)

____ Leave Milwaukee on Oct 10. This option includes 3 nights in the hotel.

____ Leave Milwaukee on Oct 9 in the afternoon (skipping the optional activities and closing reception).
This option includes 2 nights in the hotel.

____ I'm flexible, either works for me.

Roommates

____ I'll book a single room / ____ my roommate is _____ / ____ I need a roommate

Activities



Iowa PBS Tour

May 22, 2:00 pm
6450 Corporate Drive
Johnston, IA 50131

Nancy Lundstrom has arranged a tour of the Iowa PBS headquarters in Johnston. The tour will include everything you want to know - the history of Iowa PBS, information about new shows, Iowa PBS Foundation, production facilities, etc.

Look for an email in early May with final plans, in the meantime, Nancy is taking reservations at nancylundstrom@mchsi.com. The deadline is May 18.



Architectural Walking Tour

June 13, Time TBD

Pat Westphal is coordinating a guided walking tour of Downtown Des Moines through the Iowa Architectural Foundation (AIA). Look for an email in mid-May with the date, time, and the walking route.

Tours cover both contemporary and historic architecture – explaining architectural detail, style and elements, along with intriguing facts and the historical significance of the buildings.

Tours are guided by architects and historians, typically last 90 minutes, and are approximately 14 city blocks in length. Comfortable shoes are a must. Each tour is \$20.00 per person.



We Celebrated Spring at Springfest

Springfest was April 14. Our presenter, Michelle Bolton King, Executive Director of After School Arts Program. She explained how important arts education is to the well-being of children and how ASAP works with the public schools to provide opportunities for children in the areas of music, drama, culinary arts, and various mediums of traditional arts.

About \$300 was donated by our members to ASAP. Thank you to Ginny Renda for coordinating the activity, Michelle Bolton King for presenting, and our members for their generous cash donations and delicious food.



Iowa Judicial Branch Building Tour

Members toured the Judicial Branch Building on March 22 and heard



Supreme Court Justice Edward Mansfield share his experiences serving on the court and how the district court systems works. Several members enjoyed lunch afterward at HOQ Restaurant in the East Village. Thank you to Gail Sheridan Lucht who coordinated this interesting day.

Journeys



FF Southern Oregon Outbound Journey

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

This journey is full and the ambassadors are looking forward to packing their bags and seeing the Redwood Forest.



FF Kansas Outbound Journey

August 22 – 27, 2024
Ambassador Coordinator
Elese Johnson
gram.elese@gmail.com

Co-Ambassador Coordinator
Lenne Orona
crotia2023@gmail.com

This journey is nearly full, to apply or be placed on the waitlist, contact Lenne or Elese ASAP.



FF Saitama Inbound Journey

September 13 – 19
Host Coordinator
Darlene Blake Beers
darleneblake@hotmail.com

We are expecting a group of 15 Ambassadors from Saitama, Japan, on September 13 for 7 days, 6 nights. Saitama is known for its well-developed industries and cultures, well-balanced urban and natural environment, and convenience to Tokyo.

Saitama’s name means “Divine Spirit of Happiness”, 埼玉県 in Japanese characters. The northern half of Saitama is abundant with nature, especially the Chichibu region, known for its many mountains and temples. The Nagatoro Valley is renowned for its beautiful scenery and whitewater rafting. Mount Fuji is visible across much of Saitama like a watchful guardian of the natural beauty that lies just beyond the grey commuter towns.

There are several ways you can help to make this a most memorable trip for our guests. You can greet our guests when they arrive, welcome a guest or two into your home, participate in some of the day activities, invite a few guests for a home cooked meal, donate souvenir gifts, provide interpretation services for Japanese to English, or wish them a pleasant journey at our farewell party.

To become a part of this epic journey please contact me darleneblake@hotmail.com or 515-724-1894.

--- Darlene Blake Beers, Host Coordinator

Special Interest Groups



Mahjong Club?

Word got out at Lunch Friends in April that Sally Merritt is a long-time Mahjong player and would be willing to teach Friendship Force members how to play. Lessons started within a week. The newbies heard the clack of the tiles and learned about bams, cracks, dots, winds, and dragons. Oh, my.

Mahjong is a game of strategy, skill and luck. Typically, there are four players seated around a table, although two or three people can also play. The objective of the game is to be the first, by drawing and discarding tiles, to match tiles to a specific hand from a National Mah Jong League (NMJL) card. The excitement of Mahjong lies in the continuous decision-making process during a game. If there is interest, a new FF club may be created. If you are interested in learning this intriguing game or joining the club, contact Sally at merritt69_99@yahoo.com.

Crafting Club?

Are you looking for a group to share your interest in creating and learning crafts? We may have one in development! Several members have expressed an interest in forming a new club for the purpose of expressing themselves artistically, making cool items for themselves or friends, creating gifts for inbound ambassadors, or crafting ornaments for a Friendship Force tree at Christkindlmarket. So many options!

If you would like to learn, improve your skill, teach a craft, or coordinate the group, let me know. We'll put together a brainstorming meeting to explore the options, probably in June.

---- Shelley Bain, wannabe crafter, bainshelley@gmail.com

Table of Friends

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

Performing Arts Lovers

PAL has two to eight members who attend each performance. If you are interested in joining the club and inviting members to performances you wish to attend, contact me at WestphalP@central.edu.

---- Pat Westphal, PAL Coordinator

Lunch Friends

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 me at lordmco@gmail.com.

----- Christine McQuillan, Lunch Friends Coordinator

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
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



New Member

Mary Gayle Van Ingen
12701 SE River Rd #209 NP
Portland, OR 97222
503-353-7219
allagourd@comcast.net



Our Sympathy
to the family of former member
Lucy Sanderson
Nov 21, 1934 — Feb 22, 2024

Our Sympathy
to the family of member
Elaine Bredesky
June 21, 1934 — Feb 24, 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 - Veep
darleneblake@hotmail.com
Nikki Hubbard
nihubbard@aol.com
Anita Lindfield
anitalindfield@gmail.com

Other Committees and Tasks

Marla Carr – Activities Co-Chair
marlaccarr@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 Lovers
WestphalP@central.edu
Connie Walter – Book Friends
yourfriendconnie@gmail.com
Sally Merritt – Mahjong
merritt69_99@yahoo.com
TBD - Crafters Club
bainshelley@gmail.com

Where in the World

Are Mike, Ronda, and Lenne? . . . In Ecuador!

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. 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.



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.

