



friendship force  
GREATER DES MOINES



2024 FFGDM Calendar	
(Dates and activities subject to change)	
Nov 5	Lunch Friends
Nov 8	Mahjong Club
Nov 11	Board Meeting
Nov 21	Table of Friends
Nov 22	Mahjong Club
Nov 25	Book Friends
Dec 3	Happy Feet Lunch
Dec 9	Board Meeting
Dec TBD	Mahjong Club
Dec 16	Book Friends
Dec 19	Table of Friends
Dec TBD	Mahjong Club
2025	
<i>See the January newsletter for the 2025 schedule</i>	
May 20-27	Journey to FF Lake Simcoe, Ontario
Jul 23-Aug 2	Open World from North Macedonia
Aug 11-17	Journey from FF Kansas
Oct TBD	Journey to FF Shelby, NC



Our club donated \$250 to World Central Kitchen to help feed the people devastated by the recent hurricanes and flooding in NC and FL.

WCK is first to the frontlines, providing meals in response to humanitarian, climate, and community crises.

Join us for a festive and fun holiday lunch!

# Happy Feet Holiday Lunch



Tuesday, December 3  
11:30 am

Trostel's Greenbriar  
5810 Merle Hay Road, Johnston

Please bring new or lightly used adult socks for the Central Iowa Shelter & Services.

Bring your merriest self and plan to have a grand time with your Friendship Force Friends.  
Guests are always welcome!

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED... to Karen at [karenkilpatrick@gmail.com](mailto:karenkilpatrick@gmail.com) or 515-278-4491 by November 27.

## President's Message



Dear Friendship Members and Friends,

We held elections at the recent Annual Meeting and I've got great news! We elected 3 people to the Board - Alice Rasmussen, Karen Kilpatrick, and Ginny Renda. I am personally grateful that these three will join the board with their years of wisdom, can do attitude, and institutional memory - they'll be an asset to our success as a board and organization. This board term would be an excellent opportunity for a newer member to join the Board – if you are interested in learning more – let me know.

We thank Mike Davis who leaves the Board after two very productive 3-year terms. Mike will continue as Journey Director for a year as he mentors a replacement. We thank outgoing board members Anita Lindfield who led the B Side Singers and scheduled board meetings and Nikki Hubbard who always added her common sense to board discussions. We expect and look forward to their continue involvement in the club. Thank you, also, to Nominations Chair Karen Kilpatrick and her assistant, Mike Davis, who took the task of securing nominees seriously. Good job all.

Speaking of the Board, we are lucky to have Treasurer Mike Merritt, Secretary Janette House, and Vice-President Darlene Blake Beers continue with their current terms. Their contributions help make FFGDM work.

I hope to see most of you at Happy Feet on December 3, our final all-club activity of the year. You can bring your 2025 membership application and check along with the socks.

In friendship,

Shelley Bain, FFGDM President

## Journeys

### FF Kansas Outbound Journey Journal

The journey took place August 22 through August 28. The 17 Des Moines Ambassadors knew it would be hot but temperatures of 100+ degrees put us to the test. Both our Kansas hosts and the ambassadors thrived despite the heat. What follows are excerpts from the journey journal.

Welcome to Wichita! by Nikki Hubbard Thursday 8/22/24  
By 4:00 pm, Thursday, we had arrived and were heading to our host's homes to settle in. At 6:00 we met for dinner at the gracious Harrington's. They had built a new home connected to their former home so they had plenty of space for us to be comfortable. The generous choices of food were topped off





with a plethora of delicious desserts. The Wichita people were so easy to share conversation with that we felt we had found new friends.



Friday AM 8/23/24 by Ronda Davis

After a nice breakfast with our hosts, Steve and Kathy Smith, on Friday we went to Botanica, a spectacular botanical garden. We were greeted by a beautiful Lego creatures and sculptures on display. We began in the butterfly house. Unfortunately, it was not warm enough for the many butterflies to flutter. The variety of gardens included peaceful woodlands, the Shakespeare and Chinese gardens and a wonderful children’s garden. We were like a bunch of kids pounding drums, hitting the pipes with mallets to make music, and appreciating the sculptures. Many of our group rode the beautiful carousel. We enjoyed the delightful morning.



Friday Noon 8/23/24 by Mike Davis

After the garden, we all went to the Pump House in the Historic Old Town district. Originally established in 1931 as a filling station, it is now known for its pizza included in a large and varied menu. Of special interest in the restored building is in the bar area. An old “grease” pit in the lower level was converted into a

wine cellar—you can look down into it from an industrial glass ceiling from the floor in the bar.



Friday 8/23/24 by Pat Westphal

In the afternoon we visited the Wichita Art Museum, which was founded in 1935 by Louise Caldwell Murdock. We had a group picture taken under their exuberant Chihuly. We spent most of our time in a special exhibit of work by the well-known portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz. The subjects of revealing portraits came from all walks of life, but the most fun were the hundreds we could identify.



Friday 8/23/24 Dinner/Play by Ron Munsinger

Friday evening we enjoyed a 3 meat barbecue with all the trimmings at the Mosley Dinner Theater in the Historic Old Town area. Audience participation of ooh, boo, hiss in the

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melodrama production of a karaoke competition. The second half of the show was a look back on 80s music. All 6 performers did a great job.

Saturday 8/24/24 by Ginny Renda

On Saturday we went to the Kauffman Museum in Newton, Kansas which showcased the story of the Mennonite people during the time that they settled in Kansas in the 1870's. The museum had a number of authentic exhibits that were beautifully arranged with nice artifacts of the Mennonites in the Kansas area. The Kauffman Museum is a must stop in you visit this area in Kansas.

Saturday 8/24/24 by Claudia Holcomb

We had lunch at the Anchor Inn in Hutchinson. It was a Mexican restaurant with three huge rooms for seating. Colorful decorations were everywhere, even a large indoor working fountain. A huge choice of entrees, salads and desserts were available from the buffet line. It was quick and delicious. This property was formerly a harness shop, an implement company and a body shop.

Saturday 8/24/24 by Marla Carr

We visited the Strataca Salt Mine in Hutchinson, Kansas. The Carey Mine Company mines road salt that is 650 feet below ground level. It sells for \$25 a ton. There are 200 square miles of tunnels underground. There are 250 tons produced for every four walls of salt. 500 to 1,000 tons of salt are hauled away every day, The next time I see salt being spread on the road, I will remember this tour.



Saturday 8/24/24 Small Group Dinners

We enjoyed our dinner with various dinner hosts this evening. It was a good way to visit with other members of the Kansas Club. One group enjoyed a piano performance by one of the hosts.

Sunday 8/25/24 Morning

We were scheduled to attend the Air Show at McConnell Air Base but Mother Nature had other plans. A quick thinking host, Lynn Harrington, who is also a docent at the Allen House, arranged for a spur of the moment tour. Allen House was designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright and it is said to have the finest Wright-designed living room. It was a nice addition to the day.

Sunday 8/25/24 Afternoon by Jerry Dunkin

We visited Cowtown which is a reenactment of a rural town in the 1800's. I watched the black smith make several items one of which I made in my FFA class. I noticed that you had to be multitasked to survive as a business man. I enjoyed seeing the old tools used in many of the stores. The guns were really loud during the shootout on main street. Curtis, our host, did a good job playing drums with the Native American Drummers.

Sunday 8/25/24 Evening



The group met for a first-time event for this club during a Journey – Game Night and it was a lot of fun. In addition to non-combative games, snacks and beverages were available.



Monday 8/26/24 Morning

The group visited the Tanganyika Zoo. A non-profit that primarily works to enhance the population of endangered species through interactions with zoos across the country. We were able to interact with Giraffes, Lemurs, Rhinos, Penguins, Goats, Turtles and Birds. Some of us had Lemurs sit on their laps and then let them take feed from our hands. The



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Lemur’s hands are very soft and look just like a human one complete with fingernails. They are one of the world’s best pollinators.

Monday 8/26/24 Afternoon/Evening,

After a group lunch we all headed off for a free afternoon to shop at the stores or places that were not on the itinerary. Some visited the Sculpture-Keeper of the Plains, the Nifty Nut House and Artists Workroom. That evening we took our home hosts to dinner. Meddy’s was a favorite spot featuring Mediterranean Food in a casual environment. A chain, the closes one to Des Moines is in Kansas City.



Tuesday 8/27/24 Final Day and Farewell

The morning was a free one with some visiting the Spice Merchant, the Rally House, Historic Old Town, and River City Brewing Co.

We gathered again at the Sedgwick County Historical Museum. The museum has been housed in Wichita’s original City Hall, a landmark building designed by Proudfoot & Bird and constructed in 1890. A wide variety of the museum’s exhibits showcase life in Wichita over the centuries, from the Wichita Indian tribe, whose name the town adopted to the cowboys who drove their cattle here to the dawn of aviation and the City’s role as the Air Capital of the world.

Farewell Dinner

Our Farewell dinner was held near Yoder, population 25, on an Amish/Mennonite Farm. The family of 8 children of which 6 participate in the maintenance of the farm. Our host told us of their lifestyle and that some of her children have left the faith for a less-strict non-denominational church. Our dinner was Wedding Chicken, meatloaf, green beans, corn, mashed potatoes and gravy and wonderful homemade rolls. Dessert of pie and ice cream finished the meal. It was a nice ending to a fun-filled week.



## FF North American Conference

### FF North American Conference Highlights

*Ginny Renda and Wendy Johnston (FF Tallahassee) →*

The conference opened on Tuesday morning with a plenary session that included a speech by FFI CEO and President Jeremi Snook. He humorously spoke about “Six Things I Wish I’d Known Before I Joined Friendship Force”.

1. The name of Friendship Force is so-80’s and reminds people of Power Rangers and “the force”.
2. Technology can suck.
3. “Make new friends and keep they old” is real because the Golden members help save FFI during the pandemic with their donations.
4. Foreign policy and politically posturing is a challenge. The US’s Peace Index is 2.6/5 and we rank 132/163 countries.
5. Making friends is bittersweet when you are much younger than your friends and they pass.
6. Internal peace makes the greatest impact on world peace.



After a break for lunch, the workshops started.

#### Session 1:

- Diversity Locally: The Globe At Your Doorstep
- Trending To The Future: Six Things to Know About FFI's Evolution
- Discover key trends shaping FFI's future. Learn about innovative programs, digital transformations, and strategic initiatives driving our mission forward in a changing world.
- Climate Change and Why It Matters to Friendship Force

#### Session 2:

- Climate Change and Why It Matters to Friendship Force
- Unscripted: A Live Q&A With The FFI Board of Directors

#### Session 3:

- Diversity Locally: The Globe At Your Doorstep
- The Open World Program
- International Assembly of Leaders

#### Session 4:

- International Assembly of Leaders
- Trending To The Future: Six Things to Know About FFI's Evolution
- Be A Better Global Citizen

The first workshop I attended was Trending To The Future: Six Things to Know About FFI's Evolution. It started with Jeremi Snook’s “Six Things I Know About the Future”:

1. Technology is here to stay. One of the biggest issues FFI has had with the website is language adaption.
2. Sustainability and ethical travel are increasingly a consideration in traveling.
3. Diversity is going to be important for clubs in the future, however you define diversity - age, ethnicity, religion, income - because people will come to Friendship Force meetings and when they don't see their community reflected, they will not join.
4. FFI should move from being a voice in the crowd to known SMEs on citizen diplomacy.

5. Enhancing cultural understanding locally is as important as it is internationally. Connect with international communities in your local area. Partner with local government that want to be an internationally welcoming city.
6. We don't have enough paid staff to lead FFI into the future. We had 18 FTE 10 years ago and now there are eight FTE. Hosting capacity dropped from 20 to the current average of 12 causing fewer opportunities to visit clubs when the clubs accept fewer ambassadors. This is due to downsizing and aging out. We'll need to rely more on our volunteer leaders in the "International Assembly of Leaders" which recently launched.

Jeremi's talk was followed by small breakout groups to discuss "You're the Chair of FFI".

1. What is the one thing you will do to ensure you leave no member behind as FFI evolves its technology?
2. How will you address sustainability and ethical travel with your members?
3. What is one thing you can do to encourage diverse growth within existing clubs and in new clubs?
4. What will you do to project global leadership in the area of citizen diplomacy?
5. How will you bridge our mission of international cultural understanding to within our communities?
6. How will you integrate more volunteer leaders into the governance structure of FFI?
7. Bonus: What is the one thing you would do to keep everyone reminded of the mission during journeys/cultural exchanges?

Then I attended Unscripted: A Live Q&A With The FFI Board of Directors. After the directors introduced themselves, they took questions from the audience that ranged from how to recruit newer members, to why the FFI website is so difficult to use, to the Board of Directors strategic plan. The strategic initiatives develop by the board include:

- Assembly of Leaders
- Standardized member orientation
- Technology advancements
- A membership model

On Wednesday, the delegates broke into regional meetings to discuss regional issues. We (Midwest) met with delegates from Rocky Mountain States, Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies, and the West Coast. The leaders did a fine job with the topics Journey Coordinator Basics and Membership Recruitment, but the interest among the delegates for more information was high and other topics deserved their own workshop timeslot.

--- Shelley Bain

## Member News

Welcome

Josephine Fenu  
9985 Alexander Circle  
West Des Moines, IA 50266  
805-280-1137  
[gifenu@outlook.com](mailto:gifenu@outlook.com)



We're looking for a few good people to . . .

Join the **Activities Committee** and help plan our monthly activities.

Manage the **FFGDM Facebook Page** and post updates on our activities.

Contact Shelley at [bainshelley@gmail.com](mailto:bainshelley@gmail.com) for more information.

IT'S TIME!



DON'T DELAY. RENEW  
YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
TODAY!



## Activities

### Annual Dinner Meeting

The club gathered on October 28 at Machine Shed Restaurant to share dinner, stories, accomplishments of the year, and our 2025 journeys. We also elected three members to the Board



of Directors – Alice Rasmussen, Karen Kilpatrick, and Ginny Renda - and thanked outgoing Board members – Mike Davis, Anita Lindfield, and Nikki Hubbard.



Thank you to the members who brought souvenirs of their travels to display and shared how the items evoked fond, funny, or thoughtful memories.

*Outgoing Board members Mike, Mikki, and Anita (above).  
Incoming board members Karem Ginny, and Alice (right).*

## Special Interest Groups

**Mahjong Club** Our newest club is well underway and challenging but Sally Merritt's lessons have been an excellent introduction to the game. The Mahjong Club (we need a clever rename) meets twice a month on Friday at 1:00 pm at Sally's clubhouse. If you are interested in learning this intriguing game or joining the club, contact Sally at [merritt69\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:merritt69_99@yahoo.com).

**Friends of the Arts** Friends of the Arts is a group of members who attend concerts, art galleries, art festivals, dance, opera, and plays by inviting each other to join them. Typically, two to eight members attend each performance they are invited to. If you are interested in joining the club and inviting members to activities you wish to attend, contact Pat at [WestphalP@central.edu](mailto:WestphalP@central.edu).

**Lunch Friends** Our gatherings are open to anyone who enjoys delicious food, engaging conversations, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. We meet at 11:30am on alternating first Tuesday or first Wednesday of the month. If you would like to join our lunch group, please email Christine at [1ordmco@gmail.com](mailto:1ordmco@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 Ginny know if you would like to join the group at [rendaginny@gmail.com](mailto:rendaginny@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](mailto:yourfriendconnie@gmail.com) for more information.



