



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2025 FFGDM Calendar (Dates and activities subject to change)	
Sep 3	Lunch Friends
Sep 5	Mahjong Club
Sep 5	Friends Game Night
Sep 8	Board Meeting
Sep 11	Day Trip to Cumming
Sep 18	Table of Friends
Sep 19	Mahjong Club
Sep 22	Book Friends
Oct 1	Lunch Friends
Oct 3	Dept of the Blind Tour
Oct TBD	Mahjong Club
Oct 10-15	Journey to FF Shelby, NC
Oct 16	Table of Friends
Oct TBD	Friends Game Night
Oct 21-22	Road Trip to Mason City area
Oct TBD	Mahjong Club
Oct 27	Book Friends
Nov 4	Annual Dinner Meeting
Nov 5	Lunch Friends
Nov 10	Board Meeting
Nov TBD	Mahjong Club
Nov 20	Table of Friends
Nov TBD	Mahjong Club
Nov TBD	Friends Game Night
Nov 24	Book Friends
Dec 2	Happy Feet Lunch
Dec 8	Board Meeting
Dec TBD	Mahjong Club
Dec 18	Table of Friends
Dec TBD	Mahjong Club
Dec TBD	Friends Game Night
Dec 29	Book Friends

All members and their guests are invited to a

Day Trip to Cumming, Iowa



Thursday, September 11

Enjoy a day away from the city and have the opportunity to get up close and personal with nature and make new Friendship Force friends! Get a carpool together and invite a friend to join you.



10:45 — meet at Ted Lare Garden Center and Design
2701 Cumming Ave

We will have a tour of the business.

11:45 — lunch at Wilson’s Ciderhouse Restaurant and Bar
3201 15th Ave

1:00 — Tour of Middlebrook Farm
4300 Cummings Ave

with a conversation with Mosa, the Farm Manager

1:45 — Stop at the Middlebrook Mercantile
4125 Cummings Ave

for a cup of coffee or a cold drink and a little shopping.

Reservations:

Call or text Marla by Thursday, September 4,
at 515-238-6372

President's Message



Dear Friendship Force Members and Friends,

My message this month is brief – 1) read the newsletter, note the activities you wish to participate in, and make your reservation by the deadline and 2) consider running for a board position at the annual meeting on November 4. If you have questions, please contact any board member.

In Friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

JOURNEYS

Journey Directory Report for 2026 Journeys

by Mike Davis



JAPAN - We received from FFI a match with two Japanese clubs. Joining us on this journey is Friendship Force of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Because there will be two clubs, the number of ambassadors from each club will be limited. The first club we will visit is FF Saitama, the club that visited us and FFM-TC last year. It will be exciting to see again the friends we met when they were here. Saitama Prefecture is outside Tokyo. Then we will have an excursion to several interesting places before traveling to the second club, FF Koriyama for a shorter visit. Our Lake Simcoe friends were there last year and said they had a wonderful time. Tentative dates: March 25 (depart DSM) thru April 13 (return to DSM). This is right during cherry blossom season, a great time to be there. More information will be sent when the date is finalized and we know more about itinerary and cost. Mike Davis is ambassador coordinator.



Our club will travel to FF New Mexico, tentatively planned for early May. Members of our club have asked me about trying to get a match with that club for a long time. We got lucky to get matched this year. Shelley Bain is ambassador coordinator.



FF Southern Oregon will come here on an inbound journey June 22-28. Carol Grimm is host coordinator.



We've been working with FF Cedar Rapids to organize a Special Journey on Quilting. The idea is for the ambassadors to visit the Cedar Rapids area, travel to Hamilton, MO, a quilting town about an hour from Kansas City, and then visit our club July 18-22 (4 nights). We are looking for a host coordinator (or two) with a quilting background to coordinate this journey. Let me know if you are interested.

FF Kansas (Wichita) Inbound Journey Report

by Alice Rasmussen and Nancy Lundstrom, Co-Host Coordinators

The journey, August 11-17, started with the Welcome Party at the Methodist Church in Ankeny. 24 of our members welcomed the 12 ambassadors from Wichita. We had a great potluck and caught up on news that happened during the year since we had journeyed to Wichita. The decorations and program were all about the fair-- which was the main attraction they came to see. There was lots of talk and laughing while discussing Iowa Trivia.



Tuesday we all met on the porch of the administration building to hear the fair CEO welcome us to the fair. The Wichita ambassadors all got a big pin that said "1st Time Fairgoer". After the talk everyone went to visit whatever their interests were. I am sure everyone visited the butter cow! Many stayed over 6,7 hours. From the comments, everyone had a good time seeing the attractions and eating the food.

On Wednesday we started out by having a tour of The Hall of Laureates. That building never ceases to impress not only our club members but definitely our visitors. For lunch Tasty Tacos on Grand or the Botanical Center was the choice of most everyone. In the afternoon, Nikki gathered all of us for the tour of the capitol building. We had a great guide and some of us who have done the tour several times even learned some new facts about that wonderful treasure.

On Thursday, we visited Terrace Hill, making note the "Carriage House" would be closed due to repairs/construction. Not being able to view the "history film" nor viewing the historic information in the "gathering room", the 23 attendees met at the gate where an officer checked us off. All Ambassadors were very impressed by the historic residence and how well maintained it is. They appreciated the tour as they all had a "welcome" from the Governor on Tuesday at the Fair!

A new opportunity for Des Moines members and Kansas ambassadors was to explore the Wesley Life Hydroponic Farm. The farm produces "greens" for the Meals on Wheels distributed in the Des Moines area. The business is located at 3200 University Avenue. The front of the building houses Hugo's Wood-Fire Kitchen. We gathered on the 2nd floor in "Polk County Generations Hall" for lunch provided by "Meals on Wheels" which consisted of a choice of either a Southwest Salad or California Club sandwich including drinks.

After the lunch, Tawnya Fields, Volunteer Coordinator, explained the "Meals on Wheels" program and how it helps those in need in the DSM area. Amanda Kanehl, Hydroponic Farmer, then spoke in detail how the "Farm" began, what it produces, how innovative it is and will become in the future and then the group toured the

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“working farm” in the lower level of the building. In addition to providing greens for Meals on Wheels, the farm has expanded to local grocery stores. Thirty people attended the lunch, speaker and tour! The actual cost of the lunch was \$16 so we made the excess \$4 per person. \$120 total, a donation to Meals on Wheels.

In the evening, we attended the Ankeny Community Theater production of “The Perfect Rendezvous”, a musical in two acts using eight actors. A delightful production with lots of laughs and talented actors!

Friday was a free day with many of the group toured around Des Moines while others toured Winterset, Pella, Ames. Others enjoyed a leisurely day with their hosts and other friends.

On Saturday, many of the hosts and ambassadors toured the Downtown Farmer’s Market and purchased Iowa products to take home. That evening, the Farewell Dinner was at the Henry Wallace Farm near Orient. Due to the heat, most did not tour the outdoor areas and met at the “Gathering Barn” which was air-conditioned!!! Deb Houghtaling, CEO and Wallace Foundation Board Member, spoke to the group prior to dinner about the history of the Wallace Farm and family. Dinner was Pork Loin with apple butter glaze, potatoes with seasonal vegetables, salad, drinks and apple crisp. Most items grown on the farm.

With dinner completed, the Wichita Journey Coordinator, Diana Gjerstad, was asked to share words from the club prior to having each Ambassador & Host share a special event/time with their family and then receive their photo. Nancy and Alice each made comments of the weeks activities and thanked the Kansas ambassadors for coming to Des Moines as a “true reciprocal” journey. A fun “Question/Answer program” was shared with the group. Before saying farewell, Pat Headley explained the “Quilted Heart Story” and asked the Ambassadors to take a heart, read the story, and “pass it on”! All activities were completed by 7:40 pm, plenty of time to get people home before dark!

COIL Open World

North Macedonia

by Mike Merritt, COIL Coordinator

During July 25 – August 1 the Friendship Force of Greater Des Moines hosted a delegation of North Macedonians. The purpose of their visit was to learn about Public administration as it is practiced in the United States.

These were the delegates that attended and their home hosts:

Delegates	Home Host
Milena Andonovska	Alice Rasmussen
Argjend Veliu	Gene and Gail Lucht
Faton Pollozhani	Gene and Gail Lucht
Georgi Trajchez	Nancy and Stephen Lundstrom
Gligorije Djilvidjiev	Mike and Sally Merritt
Aleksandar Kiteski	Mike and Sally Merritt



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They were a diverse group that were all members of local governments in North Macedonia to include mayors, city managers, and divisional department supervisors.



They arrived on Friday July 25 and they were picked up at Des Moines Airport. Over the weekend, we went to the Des Moines Farmer's Market, visited the Griffieon's Farm in

Ankeny, attended a potluck at Gene and Gail Lucht's house, and had a welcoming reception for the Board, home hosts and delegates at the Hyperion Club. The overall goal was to show them life in Iowa at its finest.

Monday and Tuesday, with assistance from Congressman Nunn's office, we discussed American Public Administration and how we work to have neutral competency in the government. We had the Iowa League of Cities and City Managers from Johnston and Ankeny discuss how their communities developed, how funding is handled in these municipalities.

We gave the delegates of taste of the Iowa State Fair by attending an Iowa PBS documentary about the Fair. Their takeaway – what about that Butter Cow!

On Wednesday we had various speakers from State Representative Heather Matson, Polk County Supervisor Mark Holm, and Iowa District Court Chief Judge Mary Tabor. These speakers outlined the relationships between federal, state, county and local governments. We discussed enforcement of various laws at the county and city levels. We also had a discussion of US ethical standards and how they are applied. After lunch, we toured



the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates. Dinner was a pizza party featuring Iowa beer and wine.



The final two days were spent exploring the Des Moines Water Works, the Iowa State Capital, the best barbeque at Whatcha Smokin' in Luther, Iowa, and finally Boone, Iowa featuring a Ride on the Rails. The delegates went to the John Wayne Museum in Winterset, the covered bridges of Madison County, and our farewell dinner at Nick's Bar in Grill in West Des Moines.



The delegates were very satisfied with the presentations and the overall Iowa experiences. We plan to keep in contact with these delegates in the future to further our relationships with them. Both Iowans and North Macedonians had a great learning experience, and along with the educational aspect, we had lots of fun.

Activities

Department of the Blind Tour October 3

The rescheduled tour of the Department for the Blind, 524 Fourth St at Watson Powell Pkwy, is October 3. It will start at 1:00. There is metered street parking and a ramp at 4th and Grand. Maybe we can go for ice cream following the tour?

Reservations due by September 25 to Alice at off4ever@aol.com.



Road Trip to Mason City Area October 21-22

A road trip to Clear Lake and Mason city is planned for October 21-22. In Clear Lake we will visit the Surf Ballroom, shop--there is a new candy store, view Central Garden and the Freedom Rock. We'll stay at the Frank Lloyd Wright Park Hotel in Mason City. In Mason City we'll have a walking tour of Frank Lloyd Wright homes, tour Music Man Square, and visit Birdsall's--an ice cream store. There will be other things added, but this gives you a good idea of what will be planned. Alice's brother and wife from Clear Lake will be out tour guides!

If you are interested, please give your name to Polly Antonelli, (pollyantonelli54@gmail.com), Claudia Holcomb (cjfolcomb@gmail.com) or Alice Rasmussen (off4ever@aol.com). Let us know if you can drive. We will provide more information as time gets closer.

Sundaes on Sunday



On Sunday, July 13, 33 members and guests gathered to eat a lot of ice cream, toppings, cookies, and brownies and hear about the Lake Simcoe journey experience. The ambassadors had a great time with the Lake Simcoe members and they thought that meeting their hosts and spending time with them was the highlight of a wonderful journey.



Thank you to the Sundaes on Sunday coordinators – Karen Kilpatrick and Alice Rasmussen; volunteers – Beverly, Ruthie, Gail, and Gene; and speakers – Ginny, Polly, Darlene, Mike, and Ronda.

Stuffing Sensory-Friendly Bags at the Iowa Fairgrounds



Cathy Jensen and Nancy Lundstrom coordinated an easy community service project at the Iowa State Fair Administration Building on July 30. The team stuffed bags for the Sensory-Friendly Morning on August 13.

Sensory-Friendly Morning offers a welcoming and accessible Fair experience for individuals and families. Thoughtful adjustments are made across the Fairgrounds to reduce

sensory overload, including lower sound levels, limited flashing lights, clearly marked directional signage, designated educational areas and trained volunteers throughout the morning. Thanks to vounteers Cathy Jensen, Mike Davis, Nancy Lundstrom, Karen Sol, Shelley Bain, Carol Grimm, and Janette House.

Member News

*Welcome
New Member*

Donna Schreier
schreierd1@aol.com

SAVE THE DATE
November 4

Annual Dinner Meeting and Election of Board Members

Have you considered joining the Board of Directors? The membership will vote on up to 3 candidates for the Board at the Annual Dinner Meeting. Please contact Shelley at bainshelley@gmail.com to discuss the possibilities.

Special Interest Groups

Friends Game Night We launched our newest social club – Friends Game Night. Gail is coordinating the club so let her know if you are interested at gail.lucht@gmail.com.

Mahjong Club The Mahjong Club meets twice a month on Friday at 1:00 pm, usually at Sally's clubhouse. If you are interested in learning this intriguing game, contact Sally at merritt69_99@yahoo.com.

Friends of the Arts Friends of the Arts is a group of members who attend concerts, art festivals, dance, opera, and plays by inviting each other to join them. If you are interested, contact Pat at WestphalP@central.edu.

Lunch Friends Lunch Friends meets the first Wednesday of every month at 11:30 AM. Contact Christine at 1ordmco@gmail.com.

Table of Friends Table of Friends dines the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. Let Ginny know if you would like to join the group at 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. Contact coordinator Connie Walters at yourfriendconnie@gmail.com for more information.

2025 FFGDM Leadership

Board Members

Shelley Bain – President
shelleybain@centurylink.net
Darlene Blake Beers - Veep
darleneblake@hotmail.com
Janette House - Secretary
j.house@mediacombb.net
Mike Merritt - Treasurer
merritt2007@sbcglobal.net
Pat Headley
headleypatricia651@gmail.com
Karen Kilpatrick
karenkilpatrick@gmail.com

Alice Rasmussen - Membership
off4ever@aol.com
Ginny Renda
rendaginny@gmail.com

Task & Committee Leaders

Mike Davis – Journey Director
mjdavisconsulting@gmail.com
Marla Carr – Activities Co-Chair
marlakarr@yahoo.com
Nancy Lundstrom – Activities Co-Chair
nancy.lundstrom@reesassociates.com;

Social Clubs

Christine McQuillen – Lunch Friends
1ordmco@gmail.com
Sally Merritt – Mahjong Club
merritt69_99@yahoo.com
Ginny Renda – Table of Friends
rendaginny@gmail.com
Gail Sheridan Lucht – Friends Game Night
gail.lucht@gmail.com
Pat Westphal – Friends of the Arts
WestphalP@central.edu
Connie Walters – Book Friends
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