



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2025 FFGDM Calendar (Dates and activities subject to change)	
Nov 4	Annual Dinner Meeting
Nov 5	Lunch Friends
Nov 6	Craft Friends – Button Art
Nov 7	Mahjong Club
Nov 7	Friends Game Night
Nov 10	Board Meeting
Nov 20	Table of Friends
Nov 21	Mahjong Club
Nov 24	Book Friends
Dec 2	Happy Feet Lunch
Dec 3	ChristkindlMart Tree Decorating
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
2026 Journeys	
Mar 25 – Apr 13	FF Saitama & FF Koriyama outbound
April 17-25	Open World from Belarus
April 24-27	North American Regional Conference in Memphis
May TBD	FF New Mexico outbound
June 22-28	FF Southern Oregon inbound
<p>Did You Know? Did you know that any member may attend club board meetings? They are held at 5 pm, the second Monday of the month, usually at the Urbandale library.</p>	

Friendship Force of Greater Des Moines
invites you and your guests

Annual Dinner Meeting
Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Hyperion Field Club
7390 NW Beaver Dr, Johnston, IA 50131

Social Time
6:00 pm

Welcome and Dinner
6:30 pm

followed by
Annual Meeting and Elections to the Board of Directors
Ambassadors to FF Shelby sharing their adventure
Overview of FFI’s “Membership for All” Initiative

Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner
Roasted turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes & gravy, cranberry sauce, green bean casserole, 2 salad choices, dinner rolls & butter, 2 pie choices, coffee, and iced tea.
Cash Bar

\$45 per person (includes meal, tax, and gratuity)

Reservations due October 27

For more information:
Shelley at bainshelley@gmail.com

President's Message



Dear Friendship Force Members and Friends,
September and October had been a rush of activity for our club and then we started hearing rumors about FFI's "Membership for All" Initiative while on a journey to Shelby, NC. By the time we returned to Des Moines, multiple conversations and zoom meetings were scheduled to better understand the initiative.

The MFA Initiative impacts membership for US clubs which is why there is no 2026 Membership Application on the final page of this newsletter. Our club has the following plan to address the FFI changes: 1) Briefly introduce the changes at the Annual Meeting on November 4, 2) Develop a plan for our club at the Board Meeting on November 10, and 3) Roll out the FFGDM plan to the members later this fall.

In the meantime, please read your newsletter, join one or more of the 7 special interest groups, and make your reservation for the Annual Meeting on November 4 and Happy Feet on December 2.

In Friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

JOURNEYS

Shelby NC Outbound Report

Pat Headley, editor

David Motherwell

Friday - We met Jackie at the airport, found Roger at the van, and drove to the Tryon International Equestrian Center, (TIEC) in the Blue Ridge Foothills. We ate lunch at Roger's Diner, with a shiny metallic exterior and authentic 50's vibe. We ate and got well acquainted.



After lunch, Linda Jean Harrill gave us a tour of (TIEC) an impressive riding facility, event venue, and 1,400-acre resort offering an active lifestyle for people with horses. The center hosts top-tier equestrian competitions, attracting Olympic-level riders and spectators. TIEC offers a luxury resort experience with breathtaking mountain views, boutique shopping, live music, dining, trivia contests, line dancing, wine tastings, and sports all year-round.

We drove to Shelby, where we relaxed and had wine and appetizers in the lovely home of Kathryn Hamrick. Claudia Holcomb played several piano classics. We ate a covered dish welcome dinner at the Boiling Springs

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Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, continuing to get acquainted. Ambassadors were given welcome bags and had photos taken with their hosts.

Mike Davis

Saturday am - Day two began with a long, beautiful drive through miles of forests on the way to Grandfather Mountain, seeing dark gray foothills in the distance, light gray taller hills, and mountains behind them. Trees were changing colors, and our ears popped as we rounded the Forrest Gump Curve (where Tom Hanks ran in the movie) to the "Top Shop," with photos and history of Grandfather Mountain. On the top floor, we accessed the walkway and swinging bridge, affording views of the colorful landscape from the valley below to the hills above.



We stopped at the gift shop, we drove down to the Nature Discovery Center and picnic area. We watched a movie about Mildred the Bear and her cubs and the animals in the habitats. A few of us walked down to the habitats to see the animals and listen to the information about the otter. After our picnic lunch, we drove back down the mountain and saw a huge line of cars creeping slowly up the mountain; it was a beautiful day and hundreds of people decided to enjoy it as we had.

Anita Lindfield

Saturday pm - After lunch on Grandfather Mountain, we headed to the Mass general store in Boone, home of Appalachian State University. Roger said they have everything you can't live without. Since it was a beautiful warm fall day everyone in North Carolina was out enjoying the afternoon. The store was quite an experience with everything you'd find in an old Sears and Roebuck catalog except no waiting for it to be shipped. We drove home on the Blue Ridge Parkway, passing over Linn Cove Viaduct, an architectural achievement that was built from the top down. Fall colors were brilliant and everyone, including families and pets were out enjoying the sunshine. That evening my host Deb and I enjoyed time and a meal with host Gail and her ambassadors Alice and Claudia, and host Kathryn and ambassadors Pat and Ginny. Then it was home to bed after a wonderful but long day.

Sharon Dunkin

Sunday am – Today was to be a tour of Kings Mountain, where a decisive battle was fought during the Revolutionary war. Being a national monument, it was closed. Instead, we followed the maxim "The secret to a worthwhile experience is FLEXIBILITY," so we had a real southern breakfast at the home of Kathryn Hamrick, host to Pat and Ginny. Our meal consisted of egg sausage casserole, homemade biscuits, Kathryn's fig jam, grits, livermush, pecan rolls, and more.

Note: Livermush is a pork product made from pig liver, pig cheeks, and cornmeal, heavily seasoned with spices like sage and pepper, and typically formed into a loaf. It is a specialty in western North Carolina, often thinly sliced and fried until crispy and served for breakfast with eggs or grits, or as a lunch sandwich. It is high in protein and iron and can also be incorporated into other dishes like pizza or omelets.



Alice Rasmussen

Sunday pm - After that fulfilling brunch, we drove to Charlotte and toured the Sullenberger Aviation Museum. We saw wonderful pictures, stories, and planes involved in the history of the Charlotte airport which opened in 1937. Most interesting was the actual plane that Sully was forced to land in the Hudson River in 2009 after both engines caught fire from a flock of birds hitting them. The movie and documentary, recounting personal stories of

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passengers, was shown on the big screen about the crash, and was incredibly moving. The rest of day three was used as free time in the afternoon, and small group dinners in the evening, where there were lots of talking and laughing with our new friends.

Ronda Davis

Monday am – We visited the opulent 250 room, French Renaissance Biltmore Mansion in Asheville, built during the years 1889 – 1897, and still privately owned and operated by fourth and fifth generation Vanderbilts. Audio guides provided much information about each room. It's a very complete tour of 3 floors and the basement. The mansion was decorated for the Holidays.



Pat Headley - The

mansion, the largest private home in America, has a music room, four sitting rooms, a Tapestry Gallery, a library, two dining rooms, a gym, a bowling alley, a swimming pool, thirty-five bedrooms, forty-three bathrooms, and sixty-five fireplaces. Hundreds of staff members were needed to run the place. It now boasts 8,000 acres, with seventy-five acres of formal and informal gardens designed by Fredrick Law Olmstead. Costing about five million dollars to build and is said to be worth hundreds of millions today.

Ginny Renda

Monday pm – After a picnic lunch, we saw the King Tut display. In 1922, archaeologist, Howard Carter, discovered the tomb of King Tutankhamen, commonly known as King Tut; a most remarkable archaeological discovery. King Tut was the 13th pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt. He became king at the age of nine, ruled from 1333 to 1324, and died at age eighteen. He instituted the restoration of the traditional Polytheistic form of the ancient Egyptian Religion. He also moved the capital from Amarna to Memphis.

Shelley Bain

Monday pm - We visited the Biltmore Garden with its beautiful terraces, jammed conservatory, and lots of roses. The roses were labeled and I found several Buck Roses from ISU and David Austin English roses.

Shelley Bain

Tuesday am – We gathered at the Cleaveland County commissioners' board room where two commissioners awarded the ambassadors honorary citizenship and gave us certificates to commemorate the honor. Although they weren't able to answer what they were



going to do about the kudzu, we learned how proud they are of their county. Now that we were honorary citizens, discovering it would neither raise nor lower our taxes, we stopped by the excellent Earl Scruggs Museum, housed in the former county courthouse in the center of the town square. The square itself is surrounded by small businesses and restaurants - a very charming place.



Scruggs was a visionary banjo player and a favorite of mine. My parents listened to the crooners like Como, Sinatra, and Bennet but our neighbor Beverly liked bluegrass. I'd go to her house, sit in a rocking chair, and listen to Johnny Cash, the Carter Family, Flatt & Scruggs and other grand old Opry performers. That developed my love for bluegrass and Americana music. Afterwards, some ambassadors visited the county arts council gallery, across the street from the museum, finding treasures to purchase.

Claudia Holcomb

Tuesday pm – We were treated to a private visit to The Carrousel, operated by Shelby Parks & Rec. The young man in charge shared the history of the carousel and let ambassadors and hosts take a ride. The Carrousel was built in 1919 by the Herschell-Spillman Company. In the early 1950s, it was purchased for \$6,500 and brought to Shelby from Florida. It began operation at Shelby City Park in 1952 and was open for three decades. In the 1980s, the carousel was restored and reopened in October 1998 in the beautiful Anne Dover Bailey Carrousel Pavilion.

The Farewell Dinner was a potluck held at a wedding venue. We sat under a pergola and enjoyed the home cooked food and being entertained by a banjo player who is the son and nephew of hosts Dianne and Ellen. Sisters Dianne, Ellen, and Teri are all very active in the Shelby club.



Activities

Join us for a festive and fun holiday lunch!



Happy Feet Holiday Lunch

Tuesday, December 2
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 or 515-278-4491 by November 28.



Day Trip to Cumming, Iowa

Seventeen members and friends enjoyed a day trip to Cumming on September 11. The day started with a tour of Ted Lare Gardening Center, followed by lunch on the patio at Wilson's Ciderhouse Restaurant, and then a wagon-lead tour of Middlebrook Farm and conversation with Mosa, the farm manager.



It was a very enjoyable day – perfect weather, learning about Ted Lare's history and operation, lunch in a beautiful setting, and even a little shopping at the gift shops of both establishments. Thanks to Marla for arranging the day.

Recycled art at Ted Lare - layered ceramic plates with stems and flowers made from garden hoses.



Department of the Blind Tour

On Friday, October 3rd, 12 of us were given a wonderful tour of the Iowa Department for the Blind. This year is their 100th birthday which they celebrated in April.

Connie Mendenhall spoke to us--gave us the history of the organization, told of her background, explained all the different programs they provide, showed us the tools the blind need and use in their daily life, explained the braille letters and how they learn to read and write it. We toured the kitchen, recording studios, 2 libraries and the shop (where everyone makes a frame for their graduation certificate and then also build furniture!) We were in awe at the accomplishments of the students and staff there. We also enjoyed the artwork in the halls which were done in 3D and had explanation papers attached which were in braille.

We all went away so impressed by the staff, the old but beautiful building built in the early 1900's, and the service provided by the department.

Road Trip to Clear Lake & Mason City October 21-22



What a road trip to beautiful Clear Lake and eclectic Mason City ten members and Marla's Mom Mardyll experienced! We toured The Surf Ballroom, strolled River City Streets at Music Man Square, toured Meredith Willson's boyhood home, enjoyed the treasures of the MacNider Art Museum, and toured the Historic Park Inn Hotel, the last standing Frank Lloyd Wright-designed hotel. We also shopped, enjoyed ice cream, and found gourmet popcorn at a candy store. The highlight may have been visiting with Richie Valens' two sisters who were at The Surf. *Claudia is standing between the sisters in the photo above.*

Thanks to Alice, Claudia, and Polly who organized the trip and Alice's brother Al who was our Clear Lake guide.

Member News

Welcome New Member

Karen Costanzo
purepeacefull@gmail.com

Member Directory Change

Cathy Jensen's email is now
skyhicalthy@myctl.net.
Please update your directory.



Our Sympathy to the family of former member

Marvin Krause
Jan 6, 1924 -
Sept 23, 2025

"The more I traveled the more I realized that fear makes strangers of people who should be friends."
- Shirley MacLaine

Special Interest Groups

Friends Game Night Friends Game Night meets monthly at the home of a member. Gail is coordinating the club so let her know if you are interested at gail.lucht@gmail.com.

Mahjong Club Mahjong Club meets twice a month on Friday at 1:00 pm, 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 atrendaginny@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.

Craft Friends *New Club!* Pat Headley is organizing the first workshop. The crafters will decide when and where they will meet. We need a coordinator for the club, if that is you, let Shelley know.



Button Art

Do you still have all those old buttons from your mother or grandmother? Bring them to the Button Art evening. Attached are some samples of projects you might attempt.

When: November 6, 2025

Where: Urbandale Library – room B

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Cost: \$5.00 for the glue and Artists Canvases or buy them yourself at Dollar Tree

Deadline for registering: October 30, 2025



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
marlakcarr@yahoo.com
Nancy Lundstrom – Activities Co-Chair
nancy.lundstrom@reesassociates.com;
Facebook Coordinator – *open*

Social Clubs

Christine McQuillen – Lunch Friends
lordmco@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
yourfriendconnie@gmail.com
Craft Friends Coordinator - *open*

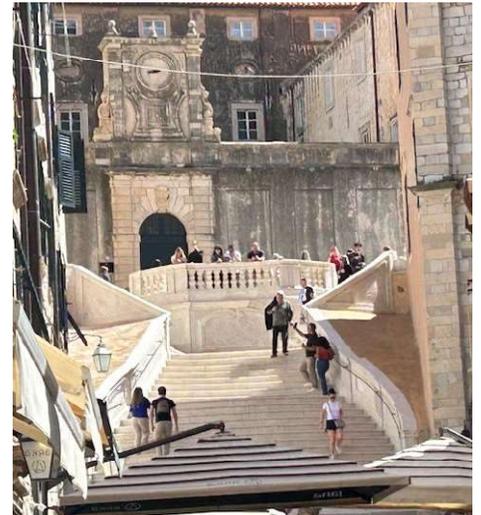
Where in the World . . .

. . .are Mike and Sally Merritt? On a cruise of the Adriatic Sea!



Mike and Sally Merritt returned from an Adriatic Sea cruise April 14 - 24 on a Viking boat. The cruise started in Venice and finished in Athens. The Adriatic coast scenery is breathtaking!

Ports of call were in Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Greece. Highlights were the Skocjan Cave in Slovenia, Game of Thrones tour in Dubrovnik, Croatia (the King's Landing sequences were filmed there, *pictured to the right are the steps Cersei took on her walk of shame*), and the beautiful views of Santorini, Greece.



We finished in Athens and while there, toured the National Archaeological Museum. One of their most prized artifacts (*picture left*) – the death mask of King Agamemnon which is believed to be from the 16th century BC.

We love to hear about members' travel adventures. If you'd like to share your trip, send a couple of paragraphs and 5-6 photos to shelleybain@gmail.com.