



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2026 FFGDM Calendar (Dates and activities subject to change)	
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Feb TBD	Lunch at ICI Bistro
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Monday, January 19

10:00 am

Main Street Café
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In honor of MLK Day and its call to community service, we ask members to bring a cash donation for the DMARC Food Pantry.

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 Mike Merritt - Treasurer
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 Karen Costanzo
purepeacefull@gmail.com
 Pat Headley
headleypatricia651@gmail.com
 Karen Kilpatrick
karenkilpatrick@gmail.com
 Sandy Olson
solson105@msn.com

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

Task & Committee Leaders

Marla Carr – Activities Co-Chair
marlakcarr@yahoo.com
 Nancy Lundstrom – Activities Co-Chair
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janeescobar@yahoo.com
 Sally Merritt – Mahjong Club
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Nomination Chair Karen Kilpatrick presented a slate of Janette House, Sandra Olson, and Karen Costanzo who were elected by acclamation. Thanks and a small pottery bowl from McNider Art Museum was given to outgoing Board member Darlene Blake. We also thanked outgoing Journey Director Mike Davis and outgoing Lunch Friends Coordinator Christine McQuillan.

President Shelley Bain explained FFI's new initiative "Membership for All" and the Board's decision to set a membership fee of \$20 per person in 2026 as we navigate his transition year. The program included several of the ambassadors from the FF Shelby journey who shared thoughts about their adventure in Shelby.

Special Interest Groups

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

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 Jane at janeescobar@yahoo.com to join.

Table of Friends Table of Friends dines the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. Contact Mike and Ronda at mjdavisconsulting@gmail.com to join.

Book Friends Join us on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month from 2:30 to 4:00 pm at Northwest Community Center. Contact coordinator Connie at yourfriendconnie@gmail.com for more information.

Date	Title	Author	About	Host
Jan 26	The Box Car Librarian	Brianna Labuskes	WPA Travel Writer of 'American Guide Series' in Montana	Ronda Davis
Feb 23	Devil in the White City	Erik Larson	1893 Chicago World's Fair	Charlotte Buttin
Mar 23	I Shall Not Hate	Izzeldin Abuelaish	Gazan's Palestinian history	Polly Antonelli
Apr 27	Good Night, Irene	Luis Alberto Urrea	Donut Dollies WWII	Anita Lindfield
Jun 1	Detective Auntie	Uzma Jalaluddin	Muslim in Toronto	Nikki Hubbard
Jun 22	Before Dorothy	Hazel Gaynor	Wizard of Oz	Anita Lindfield
Jul 27	Under the Java Moon	Heather B. Moore	WWII from Dutch perspective	Dee Willemssen
Aug 24	The Day the World Came to Town	Jim Defede	Newfoundland 9/11	Polly Antonelli
Sep 28	Paper Girl	Beth Macy	Social Changes - Ohio	Sally Merritt
Oct 26	Theo of Golden	Allen Levi	Portuguese	Ginny Renda
Nov 23	<i>Select for 2027</i>		<i>World Cultures</i>	<i>ALL</i>
Dec 28	James	Percival Everett	Huck Finn from the Slave's perspective	Connie Walters

Member News

REMINDER:

Thank you to everyone who has paid our local club dues of \$20 for 2026. If you haven't, please use the membership form included with this newsletter. If I don't hear from you by about the middle of January, I will give you a call. Membership Chair Alice Rasmussen at off4ever@aol.com.

2026 FFGDM Leadership

Board Members

Shelley Bain – President
shelleybain@centurylink.net
 Janette House - Secretary
j.house@mediacombb.net
 Mike Merritt - Treasurer
merritt2007@sbcglobal.net
 Karen Costanzo
purepeacefull@gmail.com
 Pat Headley
headleypatricia651@gmail.com
 Karen Kilpatrick
karenkilpatrick@gmail.com
 Sandy Olson
solson105@msn.com

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

Task & Committee Leaders

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

Social Clubs

Jane Escobar – Lunch Friends
janeescobar@yahoo.com
 Sally Merritt – Mahjong Club
merritt69_99@yahoo.com
 Mike & Ronda Davis – Table of Friends
mjdavisconsulting@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 Gene and Gail Lucht? Cruising the Nile!

Gene and Gail Lucht travelled to Egypt and Jordan in November 2025. Highlights included seeing the pyramids, taking a balloon ride over the Valley of the Kings, seeing Petra, and swimming in the Dead Sea.



. . .are Karen and Chuck Kirkpatrick? Cruising the Rhine!

For three weeks in September 2025, Karen and Chuck Kilpatrick cruised the Rhine and Mosel Rivers with 120 other travelers on Grand Circle Cruises. Beginning in Brussels and Antwerp, we traveled through the Netherlands to the Kinderdijk windmills, and then on to the scenic byways of the Rhine and Mosel Rivers through Netherlands, Germany, France, Luxembourg, and ending in Basel, Switzerland. Along the way we encountered lovely villages, castles, museums, magnificent cathedrals, locks, cobblestones, narrow streets, vineyards, Roman ruins, beautiful gardens and palaces and friendly faces. Plus many delicious cheeses, chocolates, pretzels, and pastries!

Extending our journey in Switzerland in the walkable and beautiful city of Lucerne, overlooking the lake and beyond for an extra five days, was an added bonus. Our highlights here were trips into the Alps on a cogwheel train and railways and being serenaded by the alphorn, the traditional Swiss musical instrument, on our way to dinner one evening! Lucerne's fortresses and towers are made for walking and climbing but the Lion Monument commemorating the Swiss Guards massacred during the French Revolution forever remains with us. Mark Twain called this "the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world."



