



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2026 FFGDM Calendar (Dates and activities subject to change)	
Mar 9	Board Meeting
Mar 18	The Iowa Law Museum Tour
Mar 25- Apr 13	FF Saitama & FF Koriyama OB Journey
Apr 13	Board Meeting
Apr 17-25	Open World from Belarus
Apr 19	Springfest
Apr 24-27	NA Regional Conference
May 11-18	FF New Mexico OB Journey
May TBD	Woodland Cemetery Tour
June 8	Board Meeting
June 22-28	FF Southern Oregon IB Journey
July 11	All Iowa FF Picnic
July 13	Board Meeting
July 14	Bastille Day Fete
July 19	Sundaes on Sundae
Aug 10	Board Meeting
Aug TBD	Food Bank of Iowa Tour
Sep 14	Board Meeting
Sep TBD	Road Trip to Kalona
Sep TBD	National Weather Service Tour
Oct 12	Board Meeting
Oct TBD	Buddhist Temple Tour
Nov TBD	Annual Meeting & Elections
Nov 9	Board Meeting
Dec 1	Happy Feet Holiday Lunch

THANK YOU

Thank you to all of you who sent in your memberships. We have 64 club members to start 2026.

- Alice Rasmussen,
Membership Chair

Iowa Law Museum Tour

The only museum in the world focused on the constitutional right to trial by jury.



March 18

11:00 am

Law Group of Iowa
7900 Hickman Road, Windsor Heights 50324

Lunch (*optional*) to follow
Palmer's Deli & Market
3719 86th St, Urbandale 50322

Reservations by 3/14 to Gail at
gail.lucht@gmail.com or phone/text 515-210-0301

President's Message



Dear Friendship Force Members and Friends,

Thank you to everyone who paid their FFGDM club membership for 2026. Now, to show your support for FFI's goal of creating peace one person at a time, consider paying membership to FFI thru the member portal at <https://friendshipforce.org/>. You can pay by credit card, debit card, or checking account routing numbers. FFI membership is required of people who participate in journeys. If you need help, email me to schedule a time when we can walk through the process together.



Friendship Force's World Friendship Day (not to be confused with the United Nations' International Day of Friendship in July) is observed by FFI each year on March 1st. It marks the date the organization was officially established. Now, every March 1st is an opportunity to honor the connections that enrich our lives.

Due to our packed calendar of activities, our club will not formally celebrate FFI's World Friendship Day this year but we would like all our members to reflect on the importance of world friendship and how it serves our club, our nation, and our world.

There is still time for members to make a celebration of World Friendship Day their own. Two ideas - host an international dinner for friendship and ask your guests to bring dishes from diverse cultures or send emails to old Friendship Force friends from around the world. Both are simple activities that will embody the spirit of friendship and highlight the power of cultural exchange.

In Friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

Open World / COIL

Open World/COIL - Рэспубліка Беларусь

We received the biographical and professional information from the Belarus Open World/COIL delegates who arrive April 17. They are an interesting and impressive group including 2 women, 4 men, 4 singles, 1 married, 1 vegan, and all on their first visit to the US. Most are fluent in Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian or Belarussian, with one fluent in Polish only.



Mike Merritt is coordinating this program and is looking for home hosts, please contact him at merritt2007@sbcglobal.net to discuss.

Activities

Spring into Spring with Springfest!



Sunday, April 19

Luther Memorial Church
1201 Grandview Ave, Des Moines, IA 50316

Doors open at 1:00 pm

Appetizer Potluck

Members are asked to bring an appetizer to share.

Speaker

Terri Mork Speirs

Development Director, Practical Farmers of Iowa

Nitrates and Food and Water, Oh, My!

Iowa has some of the richest soils in the world, yet we import 90 % of our food. Plus, DSM Water Works operates one of the biggest water filtration systems in the world, yet our drinking water contains dangerous levels of nitrates. There is hope! Practical Farmers of Iowa is a farmer-led organization that promotes conservation measures such as wetlands, cover crops, and buffer strips. PFI's mission of farm and community resilience is good for everyone!

This is a terrific opportunity to bring friends who may be interested in Friendship Force and our activities.

RSVP, if attending, by **April 14** to Ginny at rendaginny@gmail.com or text 515-778-8506



Martin Luther King Day Winter Brunch

Sixteen members and one guest braved the 0° weather to gather in honor of Martin Luther King’s call to community service on January 19 . They enjoyed lively conversation and good food while participating in a MLK Day bingo game with prizes!

The members also donated \$290 to the DMARC Food Pantry. Thank you to Shelley Bain, Charlotte Buttin, Marla Carr, Karen Costanzo, Pat Headley, Janette House, Nikki Hubbard, Ronni Kahn, Barb Ferrera (guest), Karen Kilpatrick, Gail Lucht, Gene Lucht, Nancy Lundstrom, Mike Merritt, Sally Merritt, Alice Rasmussen, and Pat Westphal for their generosity.



ICI Bistro Lunch

On February 18, sixteen lucky members filled two tables at the ICI Bistro to enjoy the entrees prepared by the ICI students. Favorites were the Griller Beef Tenderloin with root beer demi-glace, shaved Brussel sprouts salad, and Sea Bass En Papillote. The foodies in the group were well pleased.

After lunch, Cyrilla Barmato, an international student from Nigeria, spoke about her journey to the US and DMACC, her goals as a student, and life in Nigeria. Thank you to Nancy Lundstrom for coordinating this always popular activity.



← Nancy and Cyrilla



Pat, Gail, Pat, Gene, Donna, and Claudia

Invitations from our Friends



Spring Æbleskiver Brunch

Sunday, March 22
10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Enjoy Æbleskiver, sausage, apple sauce, fruit salad and drinks. Tickets: \$10 or donation to the Danish Brotherhood. Luther Memorial Lykke Hall
1201 Grandview Avenue, Des Moines 50316



Single Malt Scotch Tasting

Saturday, March 21, 2026
7:15 pm – 9:30 pm

Five whiskies and appetizers will be offered. Tickets are \$40 per person/ \$35 per SHSI member. Contact Isabella at imhurless@aol.com for more information.

Special Interest Groups

Craft Friends At our second craft session we made mosaic hearts and they turned out great! Next up – tabletop standing mobiles. We need a coordinator for the club, if that is you, let Shelley know at bainshelley@gmail.com.

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 Ronda and Mike 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
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 Jim’s perspective	Connie Walters

Member News

**Welcome
New Members**

Ronni Kahn
drshrinkrap@yahoo.com

Jean Larson
jeanlm4931@gmail.com

Some Book Friends members at their
December social

Connie, Sally, Anita, Polly, and Nikki



Our Sympathy
to the family of former member and
Iowa First Lady



Billie Ray
May 16, 1928 — Feb 18, 2026

2026 FFGDM Leadership

Board Members		Social Clubs
Shelley Bain – President shelleybain@centurylink.net	Alice Rasmussen - Membership off4ever@aol.com	Jane Escobar – Lunch Friends janeescobar@yahoo.com
Janette House - Secretary j.house@mediacombb.net	Ginny Renda – Journey Director rendaginny@gmail.com	Sally Merritt – Mahjong Club merritt69_99@yahoo.com
Mike Merritt - Treasurer merritt2007@sbcglobal.net		Mike & Ronda Davis – Table of Friends mjdavisconsulting@gmail.com
Karen Costanzo purepeacefull@gmail.com	Task & Committee Leaders	Gail Sheridan Lucht – Friends Game Night gail.lucht@gmail.com
Pat Headley headleypatricia651@gmail.com	Marla Carr – Activities Co-Chair marlakcarr@yahoo.com	Pat Westphal – Friends of the Arts WestphalP@central.edu
Karen Kilpatrick karenkilpatrick@gmail.com	Nancy Lundstrom – Activities Co-Chair nancy.lundstrom@reesassociates.com	Connie Walters – Book Friends yourfriendconnie@gmail.com
Sandy Olson solson105@msn.com	Facebook Coordinator – <i>open</i>	Craft Friends Coordinator - <i>open</i>

JOURNEYS

2026 Journeys

by Ginny Renda, Journey Director



JAPAN – This journey to two Japan clubs – FF Saitama and FF Koriyama, with an independent tour between, is scheduled for March 25-April 13. The journey is ready to go. Mike Davis is ambassador coordinator.



NEW MEXICO - Our club will travel to FF New Mexico, May 11-18, for a 7-night journey. This journey has a waitlist. Shelley Bain is ambassador coordinator.



FF Southern Oregon will visit our club June 22-28 for 6-nights before traveling to FF Long Island for a few days. Planning is underway by co-host coordinators Carol Grimm and Karen Kilpatrick.

Where in the World . . .

were Darlene, Shelley, Mike, Ronda, Mike, Marla, Claudia, and Alice in 2025?

-- Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Montreal, Salt Lake City, and Iceland.





Travel is a quiet rebellion.

It says, “I won’t be spoon-fed fear and fed lies about people I’ve never met. I’ll see for myself”.

And when I do – I find mothers, fathers, dreamers, and survivors. Not enemies.

Just humans. Loving their kids. Trying to live in peace. It’s the kind of truth that dismantles hate.

- michellebaumgard

