



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2026 FFGDM Calendar
(Dates and activities subject to change)

May 11-18	FF New Mexico OB Journey
June TBD	Iowa Cubs Game
June 8	Board Meeting
June 22-28	FF Southern Oregon IB Journey
June 22	• FFSO Welcome Party
June 27	• FFSO Farewell Party
July 11	All Iowa FF Gathering in Quad-Cities
July 13	Board Meeting
July 14	Bastille Day Fete
July 19	Sundaes on Sundae
Aug 10	Board Meeting
Aug 16-19	FF Lincoln Nebraska IB Journey
Aug TBD	Food Bank of Iowa Tour
Sep 3	Road Trip to Kalona
Sep 14	Board Meeting
Sep 19	Notable Women Cemetery Tour
Oct 12	Board Meeting
Oct TBD	Buddhist Temple Tour
Oct TBD	Annual Meeting & Elections
Nov 9	Board Meeting
Dec 1	Happy Feet Holiday Lunch



Join the fun with a club outing
to an Iowa Cubs game.

Date: Early June
Time: Afternoon

Details coming. . .



**Friendship Force
International**
Building Global Unity

Friendship Force is defined by the words we use, the actions we take, and the commitments we all make every day to advocate for peace through friendship.



President's Message



Dear Friendship Force Members and Friends,
Happy April Showers Bringing May Flowers! It's a great time for the gardeners among us.

It's also the time to start planning **FFGDM's 50th Anniversary Celebration** for spring 2027. Whether you are a long-time member or a newbie, you are invited to help plan this celebration. We are looking for committee members who will brainstorm, think outside the "tried and true", and create a fun and memorable event. All ideas are good ideas.

We added another journey to the list this year, **FF Lincoln Nebraska** will visit our club August 16-19. We hope this will be one of several mini-journeys we plan with Friendship Force clubs that are within a 1-day drive of Des Moines.

Contact me if you can help with either of these activities. Your ideas are always welcome.

In Friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

JOURNEYS

2026 Journeys



FF New Mexico – Ten club members are ready to travel to FF New Mexico, May 11-18, for a 7-night journey. Look for the ambassadors' report in the next newsletter.



FF Southern Oregon will visit our club June 22-28 for 6-nights and co-host coordinators Carol Grimm and Karen Kilpatrick have completed the planning. Stay tuned for an email invitation to several journey activities you'll want to attend.



FF Lincoln Nebraska will visit our club during the State Fair, August 16-19, for a mini-journey of 4 days/3 nights. Planning is underway by co-host coordinators Shelley Bain and Ginny Renda. If you can Dinner Host Tuesday, August 18, or Day Host August 17, 18, or 19, let Shelley know.

2027 Journeys

We received our 2027 matches from FFI but anticipate adding one or two additional domestic journeys. We'll accept Journey Coordinators applications once the dates are confirmed. Watch this space.

- FF Varel Germany outbound
- FF Greater Harrisburg PA outbound
- FF Greater Harrisburg PA inbound

Open World / COIL



Open World/COIL - Belarus

The delegation representing Belarus had a whirlwind week starting with a tour of Living History Farms, where they made molasses cookies, to attending the Drake Relays. In between they learned about local government through conversations with the Director of Polk County Conservation at Jester Park Nature Center, Iowa League of Cities, former City Manager of Johnston, Temp-

President and several department deans of DMACC with lunch at the ICI Bistro, Principal and students of North High School, Superintendent of Johnston Public Schools, a State Rep and State Senator, Assistant Polk County Auditor, a Polk County Supervisor, Polk County Attorney, and Des Moines Waterworks. They also participated in Springfest and engaged with the speakers from Practical Farmers of Iowa. They toured the State Capitol, Central Iowa Shelter and Services, where they served lunch, and the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates. Whew!



A big thank you to the person who made it happen - Open World Coordinator Mike Merritt, with an assist from Sally Merritt and Karen Kilpatrick and potluck cookout hosts Gail and Gene Lucht. Thanks also to the generous and thoughtful people who welcomed the delegates to their homes - Mike and Sally Merritt, Alice Rasmussen, Carol Grimm, Steve and Nancy Lundstrom, and Char Gustafson.

Activities

Iowa Law Museum Tour

Members toured the Iowa Law Museum on March 18 followed by lunch at Palmer's Deli. The museum is a labor of love for attorney Christopher Johnston who built a courtroom, collected legal documents from around the world, found advertising posters and ads featuring courtrooms, and acquired items from all Iowa Courthouses.



It was a fun and enlightening tour, ending with Cathy questioning a defiant Ronda while Nancy, Ginny and Faith presided. Thank you to Gail Sheridan-Lucht for organizing the activity and Christopher Johnston for the tour.





Members gathered on Sunday, April 19, to share appetizers, meet the Belarus delegates, and hear from Terri and Adam of Practical Farmers of Iowa. The speakers told the history and purpose of PFI and how they advocate for clean water practices and other positive farming techniques. Mostly, we learned how important their work is. Thank you to Alice and Ginny for coordinating.

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 on a Friday at 6pm 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, 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
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 Willemsen
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	Select for 2027		World Cultures	ALL
Dec 28	James	Percival Everett	Huck Finn from Jim’s perspective	Connie Walters

Member News

Our Sympathy
 To the family of former member
 Mary Margaret Bierma
 December 1923 - March 2026



Your guests are always welcome to participate in FFGDM activities.

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>

Invitations From Our Friends



Danish Sisterhood Spring Lunch

Sunday, May 3, 2026, starting at noon | Northwest Senior Center, 5110 Franklin Ave, DM
Join the Sisterhood for their Spring Brunch. The menu includes an egg dish, fresh fruit, breads, pastries, and sparkling punch. Cost is \$12 at the door. Call Sue at 515-707-8836 or Carol at 515-225-2149 to make a reservation.



CelebrAsian 2026

May 22-23 | 11am-10pm | Western Gateway Park, DM
Celebrate Asian cultures at CelebrAsian, Iowa's largest Asian American event!
<https://www.iowaasianalliance.com/celebrasian>



Japan Night at Principal Park

Friday, May 22, 2026, 7:00 PM
Join the Japan America Society of Iowa, Iowa Sister States, and Des Moines - Kofu Sister City Committee for Japan-themed night at the Iowa Cubs game. More information to come at:
<https://www.milb.com/iowa>.

Diamond Diplomacy Documentary - 150 Years of US-Japan Relations through Baseball

Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 7:00 PM | Varsity Theatre, 25th & University, DM
See the Iowa Premier of this film and meet the Filmmaker Yuriko Gamo-Romer.
Ticket sales and more information at:
<https://varsitydesmoines.com/showtimes/diamond-diplomacy-5-27-26-700-pm/>



Dine and Dance with CultureAll

If you have never attended a CultureALL Dine and Dance you are missing out. It's always a celebration with good food and entertainment.
May 11 – Bollywood & Biryani at Bawarchi Indian Grill & Bar
May 18 – Lion Dance and Spring Mountain Dance at China Chef's 30th Anniversary Dinner
June 5 – Jollof & Jive
Menu, Cultural Entertainment and Tickets at <https://www.cultureall.org/events>

Travel News

Starting in Q4 2026, travelers from the US will need **ETIAS**, a new travel authorization, to visit any of the countries in Europe’s Schengen Zone. ETIAS stands for European Travel Information and Authorization System. The European Union (EU) is introducing this new system to improve border control.

Once operational, the ETIAS travel authorization will be digitally linked to your passport and will be valid for up to three years, or until your passport expires, whichever comes first. You apply online before your trip and pay €20 (free for applicants below 18 and above 70 years old). More information can be found at [ETIAS.com](https://etias.com).

Initially, there will be a six-month transitional period during which travelers are encouraged to apply for ETIAS authorization. During this time, if you meet all other entry conditions, you won't be refused entry solely for not having an ETIAS.

Do you know about **EU261**? It’s a 2024 European Union law protecting air passengers, requiring airlines to pay up to €600 in compensation for cancellations, overbooking, or delays of 3+ hours on flights departing from the EU or arriving with an EU carrier. Passengers are also entitled to refreshments, communication, and hotel accommodation. Wikipedia has a comprehensive overview at [Air Passengers Rights Regulation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU261).

“A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart.” Goethe

Where in the World . . .

. . . are Else and Dee? Antarctica!



Dee and I were on a wonderful journey February 20 - March 6.

We flew to Buenos Aires, Argentina and spend a day sightseeing. We then flew to Ushuaia, Argentina, the southern-most habituated city in the world. From there we got on a Viking ship and saw many sights - penguins, seals and birds, but we were surprised at all the whales coming close to the ship.

It was a great adventure. We rode in small zodiac boats and went on excursions almost daily. I have to say the food on the ship was the best. We're happy to be home but so glad we took this journey. --- Else



