



friendship force
GREATER DES MOINES



2026 FFGDM Calendar
(Dates and activities subject to change)

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 26	Annual Meeting & Elections
Nov 9	Board Meeting
Dec 1	Happy Feet Holiday Lunch
2027 FFGDM Calendar	
TBD	FF Varel Germany outbound
Aug 12-19	FF Greater Harrisburg PA inbound
Sept	FF Greater Harrisburg PA outbound
Sep-Oct	FFI International Conference



Sundaes on Sunday

Sunday, July 19

1:00 – 3:00 pm

Luther Memorial Church
1201 Grandview Ave * Des Moines 50316

Join your Friendship Force friends for a cool summer activity – Sundaes on Sunday. The Activities Committee will provide the ice cream and cake. You bring your favorite topping to share such as caramel sauce, coconut, pecans, strawberries, or other fruit.

The program will feature the ambassadors from the recent Japan and New Mexico journeys.

Especially for members who have not traveled with Friendship Force - come and find out how much fun and learning goes on when you travel with Friendship Force.

Hope to see you there.

RSVP, if attending, by July 15 to Alice at
off4ever@aol.com
to let her know you'll be there.

Bring a friend or two!

President's Message



Dear Friendship Force Members and Friends,

We have several important projects in the next few months, I hope you will share your thoughts . . .

Our #1 project is the 50th Anniversary Celebration. We'll start with a brainstorming session where no ideas are bad ideas. We hope that all members will contribute in some way. Look for your invitation soon.

Our #2 project is finding a Treasurer as Mike Merritt transitions off the Board at the end of the year. Training will be provided. Could that be you?

If you have questions about Friendship Force or suggestions for how we can better serve you, as a member, please contact me or any person on the leadership list for a chat.

In Friendship,
Shelley Bain
FFGDM President

Journeys

2026 Journeys



FF Southern Oregon will visit our club June 22-28. Co-host coordinators Carol Grimm and Karen Kilpatrick have put together an interesting itinerary for the ambassadors.



FF Lincoln Nebraska will visit our club during the State Fair, August 16-19, for a mini-journey of 4 days/3 nights. Co-host coordinators Shelley Bain and Ginny Renda are finishing up the program. Look for your invitation in July.

2027 Journeys

We received our 2027 matches from FFI but anticipate adding one or two domestic journeys such as an outbound mini-journey to FF Lincoln and an FF New Mexico inbound. We'll accept Journey Coordinators applications once the dates are confirmed.

- FF Varel Germany outbound - Journey not confirmed with FF Varel
- FF Greater Harrisburg PA inbound – August, during the State Fair
- FF Greater Harrisburg PA outbound – September, date TBD

Open World / COIL Report

Open World/COIL - Belarus

By Mike Merritt, Open World Coordinator

During the period April 17 – 25, our club had six delegates from Belarus visit. They were participating in the Congressional Office for International Leadership program. Friendship Force of Greater Des Moines was given a grant by the Congressional Office to facilitate this visit. The six delegates were: Alina S, Yauheni Dzmitryievich Karaulau, Pavel Uladzimiravich Maryeuski, Yana Paulauna Latushka, Vadimir Zarankin and Artsion Yauhenavich Praskaiovich. Our home hosts were Mike and Sally Merritt, Steve and Nancy Lundstrom, Alice Rasmussen, Char Gustafson and Carol Grimm. We found out that all six delegates are in exile, three living in Warsaw, Poland and three living in Vilnius, Lithuania. They fear returning to Belarus until the death of the current President Lukashenko.



Why are the delegates in exile? In the 2020 election in Belarus, opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya claimed to have won a decisive first-round victory with at least 60% of the vote, and called on incumbent Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994, to start negotiations. Her campaign subsequently formed the Coordination Council to facilitate a transfer of power and stated that it was ready to organize "long-term protests" against the official results. All seven members of the Coordination Council Presidium were subsequently arrested or went into exile. Our delegates support Ms. Tsikhanouskaya so they cannot return to Belarus.

During their visit to Des Moines, we had discussions with the Mayor of Ankeny, Bobbi Bentz, regarding economic development. Next, we talked to Polk County representatives in the Polk County auditor's office about voting. This was a major concern for the delegates due to the perceived fraud in the 2020 election in Belarus. We also met with Polk County Supervisor Mark Holm and Polk County Attorney Kimberly Graham about their offices. We then visited the Capitol and met with State Senator Jesse Green and State Representative Heather Matson about how the state influences funding of local jurisdictions.



We visited three educational institutions, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), Johnston High School and North High School. The goal of these visits was to show the strength of our educational systems,

and how property tax rates affect the school's delivery of education. Many thanks to Ginny Renda who set up our visit to North High School.



One of our visits was to the homeless shelter at 1420 Mulberry where the delegates served lunch to the people being served. We also were given a tour of the facility showing how the facility is trying to become more self-sufficient by growing their own vegetables.

The reaction of the delegates and the Friendship Force members who interacted with them reinforced our goal of learning about people from other countries and the difficulties they face. Everyone who participated, Americans and Belarussians, greatly enjoyed the visit.

Journey Reports

Journey to Saitama and Koriyama, Japan

March 25 to April 23, 2026

Compiled by Mike Davis, Ambassador Coordinator

Ambassadors: Cindy Cauble (coordinator FFMN-TC), Mike Davis (coordinator FFGMD) Ronda Davis, Christine Allen, Ann Besser, Gelina Boyer and Tom Thies, Robin and Peter Knaeble, Terese Libby, Gene Lucht and Gail Sheridan-Lucht, Mary Montagne, Marcia Novak, and Carol Nasby

March 25. Most ambassadors from both clubs were on the same flight to Japan from the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. We were scheduled to arrive the next day, Japan time (14 hours ahead of Central time).

March 26. We landed at Haneda airport and took an airport shuttle to another terminal to meet the hotel shuttle. The day was overcast, damp, and windy. We found that the hotel was



really two separate sister hotels, and some of us were staying in each of them. We met for dinner at Sakiyu, a tiny and very busy counter-service restaurant serving Japanese food, located across from the hotel on a street that had convenience stores, dental clinics, and apartments. After dinner, some of us explored the



street and some stores. Then back to the hotel for an early bedtime after our very long day of flying.

March 27. After breakfast at the hotel, we took the shuttle to the airport. It was an interesting drive through the city on a nice day. We had enough time at the airport to wander and shop. After we gathered again, a few Saitama club members met us and guided us to the airport bus to Omiya train station where our hosts



met us and took us to our home stays. But first many of us went to a food hall—so bright, so much color, it was beautiful!

March 28. We were staying with our hosts in Saitama and traveled by train to the Kitaurawa Cultural Club for our Welcome Party. After casual conversations with our new Japanese friends, the Saitama FF president gave a warm introduction to his club and what we could expect for the coming week. He then introduced the next wonderful activities of flower arranging, calligraphy, and kimono modeling. . . .

To read the entire Journal, visit the FFGDM website.

Journey to FF New Mexico - Albuquerque

May 2026

Compiled by Shelley Bain, Ambassador Coordinator

Monday, May 11--Day 1 - Alice

Ten members from our club were invited to visit the Albuquerque, New Mexico Friendship Force club. Gary and Nan Stubbs drove and 8 members (Ronda and Mike Davis, Claudia Holcomb, Shelley Bain, Anita Lindfield, Pat Headley, Karen Kilpatrick and Alice Rasmussen) flew into Denver, then onto Albuquerque. We saw a lot of information in the airport about Route 66. We were met by our hosts and spent the evening getting acquainted.



Tuesday, May 12 – Day 2 – Claudia & Mike

We visited the “Wheels Museum” on Tuesday morning, May 12. “Wheels” is an acronym for “We Have Everything Everyone Loves Spinning.” The museum is a volunteer run, non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, and creating historic exhibits relating to transportation. It is on the historic site of the Santa Fe Railroad Shops. Originally this area was a repair shop for steam engines. . . .We spent an enjoyable time visiting the museum and learning about Albuquerque history.

After lunch at La Fonda, we visited the National Hispanic Cultural Center, beginning at the Mundos de Mestizaje dome. Painting of this magnificent fresco began in 2003 and was completed in 2010. It references the mix of people and cultures in the history of New Mexico. Ken and Chris Fenner, of the New Mexico club,

described the references in the fresco and how they related to the history of the area. The fresco included Europeans, pre-Colombian meso America, Mexico, Blancos from Santa Fe, and Indians from the area. Then we went to the art museum at the cultural center. We viewed the *Aquí Estamos* (We Are Here) permanent exhibits, along with the Downwinders exhibit of art and photography, documenting the effects of being downwind from the atomic bomb tests from the 60s and 70s. We also viewed an exhibit of art by the staff of the art museum.



Our next stop was at a piñata party at Ginger's home. We had beautiful views of the mountains behind her home and enjoyed guacamole and margaritas. We all took our whacks at a piñata. Gary Stubbs gave the final blow and we collected the candy that spilled out. . . .

More FFNM members joined us at a barbecue dinner at the home of our host, Carolyn. We enjoyed the food, participated in some singing with Ken and Chris, and all had a

good time. The New Mexico members expressed a great deal of pride in their state. . .



To read the entire Journal, visit the FFGDM website.

Activities

Take Me Out to the Ballgame



It was a very good day at the ballpark for members who cheered the Iowa Cubs on June 17. The weather was perfect and the Cubs won in an extra inning 6-5. There was 'no crying in baseball' today!

Thank you to Nancy Lundstrom for making it happen.



Bastille Day Fête Potluck



Tuesday, July 14

5:00 - Doors open
5:30 - Welcome
5:45 - Potluck

Lions Park Shelter
72nd St & Aurora Ave
Urbandale

The celebration will include a pétanque tournament, French accordion music, and plenty of food. Roast pork, baguettes, and tableware will be provided. A prize will be awarded for the best French dish.

We hope you'll bring your enthusiastic selves, your beverage, and a dish to share. You may bring beer or wine in non-glass containers.

No reservations required.

Questions? Pat at WestphalP@central.edu



Day Trip to Kalona

Pat Headley has put together a one-day road trip to Kalona on Thursday, September 3 and you are invited.

Enjoy a day in the Amish/Mennonite community

Date: September 3, 2026

Cost: \$40 (includes meal and gas money for drivers)

Reservation deadline: August 14, 2026

Schedule:

- 7:30 am Depart Des Moines area
 - 9:30 am Arrive in Kalona
 - 9:30 am Visit the Golden Delight Bakery
 - 10:15 am Drive to the Kalona Historical Museum and Village
 - 10:25 am Visit the gift shop
 - 11:00 am Listen to local historian about the Amish/Mennonites
 - 11:45 am Drive to lunch site at a Mennonite home
 - 12:00 pm Mennonite Lunch
 - 1:00 pm Drive to String Town Grocery – lots of bulk items
 - 2:30 pm Free time
- Chocolate shop, Willow Creek quilt shop, Ice cream shop, Kalona Creamery, JK Creative Woodshop, General Store, Community Country Store, Kalona Historical Village (\$12), and more.

Mennonite Lunch Menu

Turkey
Mashed Potatoes/gravy
Noodles
Green Beans
Coleslaw
Tapioca Salad
Bread
Water/tea/coffee

Kalona Reservation

Name(s) _____ Email _____

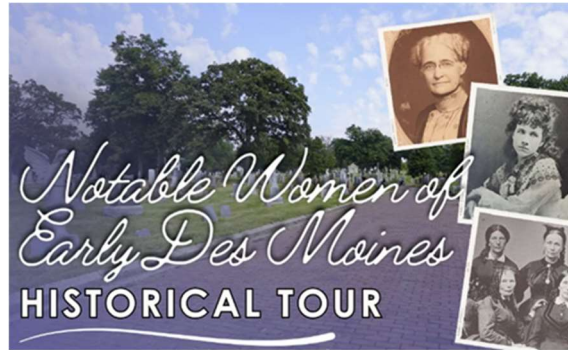
Number of people going _____ x \$40.00 = \$ _____ Phone _____

I will drive: ☐ Yes ☐ No Dietary Concerns: _____

Make check payable to FFGDM and send to: Pat Headley at 6821 Mill Pond Dr, Urbandale, IA 50322

Payment due by August 14, 2026

Woodland Cemetery Walking Tour: Notable Women of Early Des Moines



Saturday, September 19, 2026, 1-3 PM

Woodland Cemetery
2019 Woodland Ave, Des Moines

Des Moines' history is filled with stories of strong, adventurous pioneer women who settled, labored, and shaped the city's history and culture a multitude of ways. Visit the final resting place of these resilient women who were dedicated to improving their community. They lobbied for worthwhile projects and worked for many Des Moines community betterment organizations, including the Home of the Aged, the first preschools, the first public art gallery, the first orphanage, the first free public library, and the first city plan. In addition, many of these women were suffragists and accomplished all these projects while fighting for the right to vote.

A notable woman you may have known: Louise Frankel Rosenfield Noun, 1908 -2002 - feminist, social activist, philanthropist, and civil libertarian – rests in the Frankel Mausoleum, Emanuel Cemetery Old, Lot 54.

The 1 ½ mile walking tour will be led by Lorna Truck or Kat Rinken and is approximately two hours. Be aware that you will need to stand and walk over uneven terrain.

Woodland Cemetery Reservation

Name(s) _____ Email _____

Number of people attending _____ x \$10.00 = \$ _____ Phone _____

Make check payable to FFGDM and send to: Pat Westphal, 4425 Kingman Blvd, Des Moines, IA 50311

Payment due by August 4, 2026

No refunds after August 4, your payment will be a contribution to Woodland Cemetery.

2026 FFGDM Leadership

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

Special Interest Clubs

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 at rondamike@msn.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 Connie at yourfriendconnie@gmail.com for more information.

Date	Title	Author	About	Host
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>	ALL
Dec 28	James	Percival Everett	Huck Finn from Jim's perspective	Connie Walters

This form is to pay FFGDM-only annual (Jan 1 – Dec 31) membership of \$20.

FFI membership of \$100, required to travel on FF Journeys, can be paid on the FFI website.

Name _____

Street

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Cell Phone _____ Landline (if no cell phone) _____

Email

[illegible]

☐ Activities Committee	☐ Membership Committee	<u>Inbound Journey activities:</u>
☐ Board Member	☐ Newsletter Committee	☐ Journey Coordinator
☐ Board Treasurer	☐ Photography Committee	☐ Journey Planning Team
☐ Facebook Coordinator	☐ Help at Activities	☐ Home Host
☐ Website Coordinator		☐ Small Group Dinner Host
☐ Financial Review (annual)	<u>Outbound Journey activities:</u>	☐ Day Host
☐ Journey Director	☐ Journey Coordinator	☐ Welcome or Farewell Party

Please list a skill or interest you have, not listed above, that you are willing to share.

Your contribution may be tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.