



# friendship force

## GREATER ORLANDO

**GENERAL MEETING – June 8, 2025**  
**Location: Maitland Public Library**  
**501 S. Maitland Ave.**  
**Maitland, FL 32751**  
**3:00-3:30 pm Meet, Greet, Socialize**  
**3:30-4:00 pm Business Meeting**  
**4:00-5:00 pm Program**

**Program: Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia & Bosnia**

FFGO member, Jackie Hughes and Jerry Chilik will share their self-designed three-week trip to Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia. They will share logistical arrangements for what to see, where to stay, car rental ramifications, as well as highlights of the trip.

**Program: Apps for Travel by Annie Sanders**

### President's Message

Wanda and I just returned from a Journey/tour to Sri Lanka with The Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati club. Sri Lanka is an island off the tip of India – formally known as Ceylon. While the people there are very friendly and wonderful the country is very poor and living conditions are somewhat less than desirable, unless you are staying in a hotel. We sometimes forget how blessed we are to have air conditioning, window screens, hot water heaters, etc.

However, the purpose of Friendship Force is to experience the culture and share our goodwill with others, so enduring the discomfort for a week was just part of that experience. Now picture this. Our hosts had no automobiles but relied on two motorcycles owned by their sons for transportation. We had lost some of our charging cords at the airport and had run out of the local currency. Therefore this 82-year-old white guy was clinging to the youngest son on the back of his motorcycle as we made a trip to the ATM and a shop for the cables. We got a few odd stares that day from the locals.

Now to more local issues. In September we'll select our officers for 2026. Three positions will need to be filled, Treasurer, Membership Chair, and Web Manager. See page 2 of the newsletter for the details of the Web Manager position. The Treasurer's responsibilities can be found on page 23 of the Membership Directory and the Membership Chair on page 25. Please contact me if you're interested in either of these positions. A newsletter editor will be needed by September 2026. Contact Elaine Henrich for more information.

We have a lot of new and not so new members, so this is your opportunity to jump in and help with club management.

I am looking forward to seeing you at our next general meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup> before we start our summer break.

Lewis Messer  
2025 President

### "THE MARK OF GOOD TRAVEL IS TO EXPERIENCE CULTURE SHOCK"

Travel guru Rick Steves describes how he first stepped outside his comfort zone-and how we can exit ours.

### JOIN US FOR DINNER

Some of our club members go out to dinner after our Meetings. On Sunday, June 8, we will go to El Potro Mexican Restaurant, located at 501 N. Orlando Ave., #217, Winter Park. (Shopping center at corner of Lee Road). 407-795-9132

**CHANGING THE WAY YOU  
SEE THE WORLD**

a world of friends is a world of

## FFGO 2025 Calendar

June 8 – General Meeting: 3-5 PM

Aug 11 - Board Meeting: 1 PM – Mary Jane DeVault's home\*

Aug 14 – Taste Travelers-Pho Vinh, Orlando: 1:30 PM

Sept-Dates TBD: Getting to Know You Dinners

Sep 14 – Annual Meeting: 3-5 PM

Oct 13 – Board Meeting: 1 PM-Joan Flewelling's home\*

Oct 16 – Taste Travelers-Izziban Sushi & BBQ, Orlando: 1:30 PM

Nov 2 –General Meeting: 3-5 PM

Dec 8 - Old/New Board Meeting – Lewis Messer's Home\*

\*All FFGO members are welcome to attend any Board Meeting; however, please RSVP to the host. Time : 1:00 PM

## A Note of Appreciation

★ Fran Burns and Cathy Alphin want to thank all those who  
 ★ helped with delicious refreshments and drinks for the FFGO  
 ★ General Meeting on Sunday, March 9, 2025. Hats off to  
 ★ Carol Lefkov, Susan Carbone, Cathy Farrar and Denise  
 ★ Rusch.  
 ★ Also, special thanks to Mark Kraus from Silver Springs who  
 ★ set up all the chairs single-handedly before the meeting and  
 ★ John Alphin who set up the food table.

★ A big thank you to John Puhek and Alan Farrar who helped  
★ with the clean-up effort! “Many hands make light work!”  
★ Great teamwork everyone!!!  
★

## Help Wanted

Our club is in need of someone to take over management of our web site. No special coding skills or website design experience needed. Training will be provided over the rest of the year with the goal of assuming the position by Jan 2026.

This is a Board position and candidate will be expected to attend six board meetings which are held every two months.

Managing the website only requires a few hours a month. If interested or have questions, contact Kurth Chin Fatt or let any current board member know.

>>>>> NEW FFGO PROCEDURE <<<<<

In 2017, FFI made a commitment to protect member data by becoming compliant. GDPR stands for “General Data Protection Regulation” which is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the European Union and the European Economic Area. It also addresses the transfer of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas. FFI is responsible for meeting these standards. What this means for you as a member is: a) your information will never be shared outside of FF with third parties and, b) FF is committed to handling your data with care.

Going forward email addresses and phone numbers of our members will no longer be published in our newsletter. You will need to use your Membership Directory when you need to contact a member to RSVP for an event, respond to requests for help, or other requests or inquiries to other members.

## Thanks to our volunteers!

## Sunshine

## Thanks to our volunteers!

Thank you to **Joan Flewelling, Lynn VanHorne, and JoAnn Gatlin**, who have volunteered to make calls to members who have missed two general meetings in a row. If you would like to be part of this elite group, please contact Anita Williams, Membership Chair, who will identify who needs a call. We are doing this in an effort to make sure that our members know that we care about them. With several volunteers, this means that you may only have to make a couple of calls in a year.

We are providing a little bit of “Sunshine” to our club members who have become ill, have had surgery, or have had a death in the family. If you know a member who is experiencing any of this, please contact **Joan Flewelling**. Contact information is in the Membership Directory. She will send them a card on behalf of our club.



## Celebrating World Friendship Day 2025

By Maggie Shoemaker

In 2024 our Club had a wonderful Journey to two different clubs in Turkey. We had a fabulous time, enjoyed getting to know the friendly and welcoming people who thoroughly enjoyed sharing their phenomenal culture with us. When the time for celebrating World Friendship Day came around, our Board thought why not introduce the local Turkish people to our club.



We contacted the Istanbul Cultural Center in our city to see how we could meet and make friends. They teach Turkish cooking, folk dance, and have other cultural and charitable events. However, Ramadan was happening in March of this year, so they graciously invited us to individual homes for the "Iftar dinner", which means breaking of the fast. During Ramadan, their holy month, the Muslim people are not permitted to eat and drink from sunrise to sunset. The days are for periods of reflection, strengthening their faith through prayer, and giving charity. After the sun goes down is when they invite family, friends and strangers to share their evening meal.



We arranged to have 5 groups of 4 FFGO members to have dinner with 5 Muslim families. Some spoke wonderful English, others were less fluent, but each of the gatherings were wonderful. The food was delicious, the tables laden with the freshest ingredients, and some even proudly showed off children and grandchildren present. We all made new friends.

Toward the end of Ramadan, groups of people from all walks executives to police to Catholic program explaining the the sun sets all the people are together. Our Club attended ple who were not part of the 80 people present in a warm, environment.



their Cultural Center hosts other of life and faith, from teachers to priests. They have a short importance of Ramadan, and once invited to share the Iftar meal this event with about 15 new peo-hosted dinners. There were over friendly and congenial

The Istanbul Cultural Center is under the aegis of The Atlantic Institute, a non-profit organization which aims to "cultivate fellowship and promote understanding of diverse cultures". It was refreshing to encounter an organization with a parallel path with FFI in objectives and philosophies.



### Taste Travelers Recap Aji Ceviche Bar

On May 14, ten members had lunch today at Aji Ceviche Bar. All enjoyed their food choices.



### New FFGO Store Merchandise

The pins will sell for \$3.00 each and the sports bag, which is made out of nylon will sell for \$4.00.

If you wish to purchase any merchandise before we have an in-person meeting, please use your Membership Directory to contact Maggie Shoemaker.



### **Wanted: Hosts for the Getting to Know You Dinner or Lunches on either Sept. 20th or 27th**

Again, this year we are offering the Getting to Know You Dinner hosts several options:

**Option # 1:** You will prepare the whole meal and charge each person \$15.00 to come to your home.

**Option # 2:** Host will provide the main course and each guest will be assigned to bring: appetizer, vegetable dish, dessert, home-made bread, or wine. No cost to the attendees.

**Option # 3:** You would host in your home if you had a co-host to help.

If you would like to host this year, contact Barbara Buchele by email or sign up at the June 8th FFGO General Meeting. Once we know who will host and which date and option you prefer, we will ask you for your menu or the main course you are willing to provide. This information will later be shared with the FFGO members when they sign up to attend a dinner or lunch. It is hoped that if members have dietary restrictions they will sign up to host or they will only sign up for meals that meet their dietary requirements.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

**April 24-27, 2026**

**Memphis, Tennessee**

## **2026 North American Regional Conference**



### **Taste Travelers**

**Thursday, August 14 1:30 PM**

### **Pho Vinh**

657 N. Primrose Dr., Orlando, FL 32803

Host: Cathy Alphin

**RSVP by Tuesday, August 12**

Contact information in your Membership Directory



### **HELP WANTED**

Two or three volunteers to set up some tables and 40-50 chairs prior to our General and Annual Meetings. June 8 is our next meeting of 2025. Time commitment: about 30 minutes (2:30-3:00). Great way to support the club.

### **BENEFIT**

Read "Selection Guidelines for Over-Subscribed Journeys," page 29-31 in your 2025 Membership Directory. Pay particular attention to the first bullet point on page 30.

Contact Lew Messer if you can help on June 8 and/or you would be willing to coordinate this for 2025.



## Where In the World Have You Been?



**Jackie Hughes** took advantage of New Mexico's Journey to Washington DC for the week of March 19-26. Here she is pictured at the Suffragette Museum. There were also visits to these museums: Holocaust, African American, FDR, Martin Luther King, as well as to Old Alexandria and a stroll around the entire Tidal Basin to take in the beautiful Cherry Blossom Festival.

**Jackie Hughes and Jerry Chilik** in front of the City Wall in Zadar, Croatia. The trip, self-planned, with a rental car, also included Slovenia, Montenegro, and Bosnia & Herzegovina.



**Steve and Joan Flewelling** recently tagged along with their daughter and Filipino son-in-law on a trip to the Philippines. They visited two areas that had volcanoes, one on a lake the other, Mount Mayon which is still active.

<— A family dinner with many traditional foods served on banana leaves.      Public transportation in the city of Dalaga, as well as other places. —>



We're standing in front of a church that was left after a volcanic eruption more than 50 years ago. A local posed us for this pic.



**Mary Jane DeVault** said the journey to Xalapa was fabulous and she would like to go on another Mexico journey. Eight ambassadors went, including three other FFGO members: **Vickie Bentham**, **Cesta Newman**, and **Don Trapp**, and former member Leyla Akgerman. The Xalapa club has 15 members but provided a wonderful experience. Some of the highlights were Laguna de Alchichica, the crater of a volcano and Fort San Carlos built in 1770 used until 2007.



Mary Jane at the Teotihuacan Pyramids



Welcome by the Xalapa Club, dancers from the University of Vera Cruz

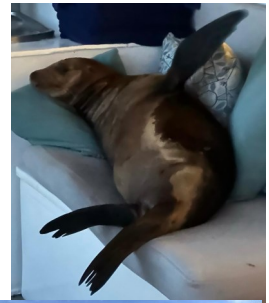


Outside the Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa, Heads made by the Olmec people, earliest known civilization in area 1200-400 BCE (Before Common Era)



## Where In the World Have You Been?

**Susan Carbone** celebrated her milestone birthday in March with a blue-footed boobie and snorkeling with seals on a 10-day boat-based trip to the Galapagos with Adventure Women Tours. They visited several islands with different topographies and different wildlife. Three seals had climbed aboard the platform at the back of the boat from which the Pangas leave. This one boldly climbed two sets of additional steps and got up on the couch by the entry door. *Stowaway* —>



Afterwards a friend joined her for a three-week tour of Peru, which Susan planned. The Peru trip started in Lima in the beautiful Miraflores area. They then took Peru Hop through Paracas to Huachachina, the oasis city on the coast, and ultimately to Nazca to view the Geoglyphs carved into the earth by the pre-Incan civilization of Nazca.



They then flew to Lake Titicaca where they stayed in an Airbnb on one of the famous Uros Islands which are basically homes the indigenous people constructed on floating totora reed beds.



They continued to Machu Picchu and spent the last three days in a lovely wellness retreat in the sacred valley.

The retreat was started 30 years ago by a woman from Santa Barbara, California, whom they were very fortunate to meet.

**Joan Kromolicki & Annie Sanders** visited Kyoto, Japan with the New Hampshire Seacoast FF.



*Annie at the Shinto Shrine*

*Joan & Annie in Bamboo Forest*



*Annie and Joan with Japanese host*



While on a Brazil journey with FF Western Michigan Club, **Cesta Newman** enjoyed a full day tour to the city of Petropolis outside of Rio. Three English speakers on this wonderful tour!



*Lembrança de Petrópolis*

*Guia de Turismo Rafael Robaina 26/05/2025*

**Lynn VanHorne and Kurth Chin Fatt** visited Spanish Wells and Eleuthera in the Bahamas. Swings were popular when the tide was in or out.



Each morning we'd walk the pink sand beach and swim.

Island time!





## Sail Through the Soul of the South FESTIVAL ON THE MISSISSIPPI

April 28 – May 6, 2026 | Memphis to New Orleans

**Reserve your spot today!**



Please Join Us!

April 28 – May 6, 2026

Friendship Force International sailing on the Mississippi River from Memphis to New Orleans on the American Splendor Paddle-wheeler.

Including one night pre-cruise hotel at Graceland!

Festival price: Your chosen cabin fare (see below) plus \$250 FFI program fee.

**\*\*Premium 2 night pre-cruise package available for an additional cost through American Cruise Lines.**

Friendship Force is offering a special post cruise extension for this journey!

Join us and let the magic of New Orleans linger long after your journey ends.

Cost: \$695 per person, based on two sharing. Please inquire if you'd like to be matched with a roommate. Single occupancy is available for an additional \$100 per night.

Included in the cost: Transfer from cruise port to hotel; 4 nights hotel (double occupancy); lunch and art museum on May 6; breakfast and full-day tour of the French Quarter on May 7; group dinner on May 8; cooking workshop and lunch on May 9.

Questions? Contact Louisiana Journey Coordinator Bob Duncan at [mardigrasbob@hotmail.com](mailto:mardigrasbob@hotmail.com)



### Festival on the Mekong #25308

October 6–13, 2025

Discover Southeast Asia on the "Festival on the Mekong" Cruise!

Embark on an unforgettable journey through **Vietnam** and **Cambodia**

#### Ports of Call

VN Ho Chi Minh City – Cai Be – Tan Chau

KH Phnom Penh – Oudong – Oknhatey Village – Angkor Ban – Kampong Cham

#### What's Included

Balcony cabin accommodations

All meals on board (plus beer & wine!)

Excursions at every stop in Vietnam & Cambodia

FFI gift bag and exclusive "Festival on the Mekong" shirt

Friendship Force International (FFI) sessions on board

Wi-Fi, fitness center, swimming pool, specialty restaurant

Shipboard entertainment

Port taxes

#### Why Join Us?

From the lush forests and bustling streets of **Vietnam** to the stunning temples and vibrant markets of **Cambodia**, this is your chance to immerse yourself in Southeast Asia's rich culture and traditions. Create lifelong memories and connections with fellow FF members.



**Reserve your spot today!**

For cabin choices, pricing, full itinerary, and booking details, please log in to your account on [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org)

## FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF GREATER ORLANDO BOARD OF DIRECTORS for 2025

President: Lewis Messer

Treasurer: Cesta Newman

Vice President: Sue Easton

Secretary: Erica Johnson

Director: Cathy Farrar

Director: Maggie Shoemaker

Web Manager: Kurth Chin Fatt

Newsletter Editor: Elaine Henrich

2025 Xalapa, Mexico Outgoing, Ambassador Coordinator: Mary Jane DeVault

2025 SW Florida Outgoing, Ambassador Coordinator: Deb Martel

2025 Oklahoma City, OK Outgoing, Ambassador Coordinators: Cesta Newman & Mary Jane DeVault

2025 Baku, Azerbaijan Incoming Host Coordinator: Lynn VanHorne

### Chair people:

Membership: Anita Williams

Programs: Annie Sanders

Communications: Deborah Martel

Activities: Fran Burns

For more information about Friendship Force of Greater Orlando, visit our website at [www.friendshipforceorlando.org](http://www.friendshipforceorlando.org) or contact us at [ffgomail@gmail.com](mailto:ffgomail@gmail.com)

Members should consult their FFGO Membership Directory for contact information of any Board Member or Chair Person.

---

Elaine Henrich, Editor



a world of friends is a world of peace

**TO:**

**CHANGING THE WAY YOU  
SEE THE WORLD**  
thefriendshipforce.org