
Making Friends Around the World

Friendship Force Brings People Together

By Gwen White,
Friendship Force,
Columbia-Cascade



If you have traveled and seen the sights, but wished you could have met the local people,

stayed in their houses, and learned more about their culture, customs and traditions, you may be interested in Friendship Force. Perhaps you have wished that you could host people from all parts of the world.

Friendship Force is a nonprofit international organization with a mission to promote cultural understanding.

It does this through intercultural activities at home, as well as international and domestic travel that includes home stays, and hosting people from other parts of the world and the United States.

The organization began in the 1970's during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, who wanted to give citizens an opportunity to participate as good-will hosts and ambassadors worldwide. Over sixty countries and forty-one states currently have Friendship Force clubs.

Friendship Force Columbia Cascade includes people who live in both the Portland and the Vancouver area, and was one of the first Friendship Force clubs

in the world with several of its founding members participating in the first overseas journey to South Korea. Currently, the club has two outbound journeys a year, one international and one within the United States. People from Portland visit another club in a different part of the country, or in a different part of the world,



Photo provided by Marty Muncie

Auditor **Marty Muncie** and her host **Wendy Smith** from Queanbeyan, New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

stay in members' homes and participate in planned activities.

The Portland group also typically has two inbound journeys a

year, in which people from other clubs come to Portland and stay in the homes of members of the local club. With the inbound journeys, not everyone is required to host overnight guests. There are many other ways to participate. Even if not hosting a visitor, there are many opportunities to be involved with the activities and to meet the visitors. One can host a dinner, offer to drive people, or come along at one of the activities.

Members may also apply to participate in journeys of clubs in other cities and states. Individual hosting and visits are also a possibility.

In addition to journeys, the Portland area club has activities to promote cultural understanding in the local community. In the past few years Friendship Force Columbia Cascade has been to services at a mosque, taken a Jewish history tour of Portland, attended a lecture by a Japanese-American woman who was in an internment camp as a child during World War II, participated in Oktoberfest and the Greek Festival, and learned African drumming.

Members learn about cultures through food with visits to different ethnic restaurants. Two of its local members are avid quilters and have made presentations on travel inspired fabric art.

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Upcoming activities include a club visiting from Ohio July 13-19 with events that are open to visitors, monthly lunches at restaurants featuring food from different cultures, and the annual picnic in August. In 2024 the local club plans to visit Austria and Pikes Peak, Colorado; and to host visitors from Japan and Montreal.

Through Friendship Force, I have learned that when local hosts open their homes to visitors from other countries and cultures, true understanding can develop through sharing meals, conversation and the routines of daily life. Through home hospitality, members become friends, seeing beyond governments and borders into the heart of a country and its people.

In addition to having developed friendships around the world and making friends in my own community among people with similar interests, I feel like I am doing a tiny part toward world peace. Another favorite feature of Friendship Force is that in sharing our area with visitors, it helps me appreciate my own city and state.

“One of my most memorable FFCC trips was to Canberra and Perth, Australia,” said senior auditor Marty Muncie, who is a member of Friendship Force. “The Aussies welcomed us into their lives and introduced us to the The Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra, New

South Wales, Australia, Parliament, sheep shearing, Kookaburras, kangaroos and life in the

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outback. We had tea with the mayor of Perth and I learned to

speaking a bit of Aussie. The warm friendships I made in Australia and in our club have continued to enrich my life,” she said.

As members of Friendship Force, we would love to share our experiences with you.

If you are interested in learning more, visit <http://ffcc-portlandvancouver.org>

Or you can visit Friendship Force International at www.friendshipforce.org.

If you would like to talk with a member or attend an event, you can contact, Gwen White at 503-869-6270 or gwenmwhite@msn.com



At left, **Jim Arnoux** and **Gwen White** in the buggy, with driver **Clive Hamrick**.



Above, **KC Sarr, Keith Schubert, Saaku Sarr, Joe Frost, and Gwen White**

Photos provided by Gwen White