



friendship force
COLUMBIA-CASCADE

Friendship Force Flyer Columbia Cascade



Presidents' Corner

Bill Turner
KC Sarr

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Dear FFCC Members,

It has been a challenging start to our new year with Friendship Force, but we are working out the kinks. To begin with, Mary Taylor had to resign as Co-President for personal reasons, but Bill Turner stepped into the breach to replace her. We have made this Co-President arrangement because K.C. Sarr wanted to contribute to the Club's leadership, but she spends about half the year in Senegal, sometimes without access to the internet. She really appreciates Bill valiantly stepping in to help share the workload with her from stateside.

We have several exciting upcoming Journeys scheduled, both incoming and outbound. We also have a number of activities like meals in local restaurants and other activities planned—all of which strengthen our

friendship with other club members here in the Portland-Vancouver community. For details on these local events, please check out the rest of this newsletter.

Bill and K.C. would like to thank all who renewed their membership online with FFI.

In friendship,
KC & Bill



New Payment Methods for Membership Renewal and FFI Journey Fees

by KC Sarr, FFCC Co-President

As you all know by now, FFI, our international headquarters, has had to change how a number of things were done in the past, primarily for financial reasons. This has resulted in our members having to make **membership renewal payments** directly online. FFI has also increased its annual fee by a considerable amount. While this has come as a shock to some, we would like to reassure you that, in addition to helping our international headquarters function more efficiently in trying financial times, this increased fee in the US also helps equalize the financial burden to club members in other countries, many of who may see their annual fees decreased. One goal of the increase is to assure that Friendship Force continues to operate in a time when world friendship and connections between people are more important than ever.

In addition to paying membership fees online to FFI at my.friendshipforce.org **Journey fees** will also be paid directly to FFI online going forward. FFI charges \$25 a night for a Journey homestay, and this fee will also now be paid directly by each Ambassador for any upcoming Journey. If you need help making membership renewal payments online, please contact Bill Turner bturnerbb@icloud.com (or any other Board Member), to walk you through the necessary steps. If and when you are selected to be an Ambassador on an upcoming Journey, your Journey Coordinator will walk you through the steps you need to take to pay the FFI fee online.

Jeremi Snook, the CEO of Friendship Force International, has written a letter to our club explaining some of the reasons for these changes. Please see a copy of his letter to our club at the end of this newsletter.



Columbia Cascade Calendar



2026

17 March 2026 Taste Travelers Chang's Mongolian Grill 11:30am
 1935 NW 157th Place, Beaverton changsmongqoliangrill.com
 RSVP: MBDinOR@gmail.com by March 16th

22-28 May 2026 Western Kentucky Inbound
 Co-HC*: Larry Spiegel laurencespiegel@gmail.com
 Gwen White gwenmwhite@msn.com
 Contact Larry & Gwen now to help plan this journey.

18 June - 2 July 2026 Mongolia Outbound
 AC*: Emily Smith contact for applications epsmithot@msn.com

14-29 October 2026 Connecticut & Greater Harrisburg Outbound
 AC*: Mary Dickson MBDinOR@gmail.com
 Contact Mary if you are interested.

Journey Coordinators Are Needed!

Contact Larry Spiegel for information or if you wish to volunteer!
laurencespiegel@gmail.com

*Ambassador Coordinator Outbound /*Host Coordinator Inbound

For general information email: ffcc.events@gmail.com



Officers

Bill Turner
 Co-President

KC Sarr
 Co-President

Gwen White
 Secretary

Corinne Spiegel
 Treasurer

Nadine Hayden
 Member-at-Large

Laural Engeman
 Past President

Board Committee

Sharon Dawson
 Membership

(TBD)
 Historian

Mary Dickson
 Activities

Emily Smith
 Parliamentarian

(TBD)
 Communications/Webmaster

Larry Spiegel
 Journey Director

Laural Engeman
 Journey Treasurer

Coordinators

Bill Turner
 Email

Newsletter
Marty Muncie
 Graphic Design & Layout

PAST EVENTS

Taste Travelers at Proud Mary Cafe

by Mary Dickson, Activities

Opening the new year of Taste Travelers, nine hungry members ate an Australian-inspired lunch at Proud Mary Cafe, 2021 NE Alberta St, Portland on January 20. The name comes from the Creedence Clearwater Revival song from 1969. We welcomed two new members, Nadine and James Hayden. Our talk centered around upcoming journeys, especially Mongolia.



On February 11, Taste Travelers met for a Japanese buffet at Makoto, 1119 SE 173rd Place, Vancouver.



To get primed for our journey to Mongolia, the next Taste Travelers will meet on 17 March at **Chang's Mongolian Grill** 11:30am at 1935 NW 157th Place, Beaverton. Join us!!

RSVP to MBDinOR@gmail.com by March 16th.

Planning is Underway for Journey to See the Fall Colors in Two State Capitals on the East Coast

by Mary Dickson, Ambassador Coordinator Harrisburg and New Haven



FFCC will travel to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and New Haven, Connecticut from October 14-29, 2026. The clubs are planning events emphasizing the unique history of the area. We are looking forward to seeing the brilliant fall colors for which the East Coast is famous.

In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, here are some possible sites:

- Meet a first person interpreter of John Harris Jr at the Harris Mansion.
- Make your own chocolate candy at Hershey Story Museum's Chocolate Lab.
- Hear a talk about the lady in purple, Violet Oakley, who painted the murals at the State Capitol.
- Visit Harrisburg's oldest park, Wildwood, with a Dauphin County Parks & Recreation ranger.
- Meet my cousins, who live in a mill built in 1837.
- See a farm that was a site on the Underground Railroad.
- Visit Meadowbrooke Gourd Farm where you can decorate your own gourd and take a wagon ride thru the fields.

Potential activities in New Haven, Connecticut:

- Visit Yale and its Peabody Museum in New Haven, the state capitol building and the Mark Twain House in Hartford.
- Take a short cruise among the islands on Long Island Sound.
- Visit a trolley museum and take a ride.
- Visit the Mystic Seaport Museum.
- Visit Essex, a river museum, and take a steam train ride.
- See all the beautiful fall colors.

Members have received an email with details about costs.

**I am looking forward to receiving applications from
potential Ambassadors ASAP!**

MBDinOR@gmail.com

WESTERN KENTUCKY IS COMING TO FFCC MAY 22-28

by Larry Spiegel, Co-Host Coordinator Western Kentucky

Our club will be hosting ambassadors from the Western Kentucky Friendship Force club May 22 to 28, 2026. At present we have 3 couples and 3 single women scheduled to visit. We have club members interested in home hosting this group. This is the only club visiting us this year, as a previously matched Japanese club backed out.

May will be a great time for activities in Oregon/Washington. To make it more fun for our members, I hope to include activities that we have not done in recent years.

Gwen White and Larry Spiegel will be coordinating this visit. We would like club members to assist in the planning. We need your help to make this journey a great experience for all of us.

If interested, please contact Gwen at gwenmwhite@msn.com or Larry at laurencespiegel@gmail.com.

FF Friends in Morocco in 2025

by Sharon Dawson



In October 2025, Larry and Corinne Spiegel, Linda Strom, Carol Wire and I toured Morocco by bus with a FFI guide and a local guide. It was a wonderful two weeks with Friendship Force travelers from different parts of the United States. We all enjoyed the majesty, history and diversity of exotic Morocco.



Our tour took us from Casablanca north to the beautiful blue city of Chefchaouen where Larry celebrated his birthday and was presented with a birthday cake.

We spent two nights in the Sahara dessert in a tent camp. This stop allowed us to go on

a camel ride on the dunes at sunset. NONE of us fell off when the camels stood up or knelt down. However, we did hang on for dear life! And they didn't spit at us!!

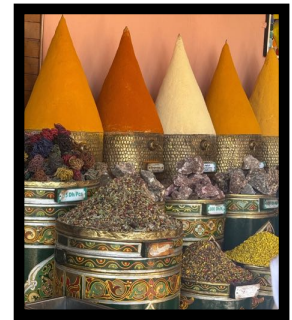


Then we traveled through the Atlas mountains and back through Marrakech to Casablanca. We had a two night home stay and took a cooking class where we learned to prepare Tagine, a delicious, traditional dish of meat and veggies cooked in a special pottery pot. We also learned to make amazing sweets and breads.



We enjoyed delightful meals along the way.

Linda and I were hosted by a multigenerational family in Fes. The grandma lived on the lower floor in a large apartment while the daughter and her family lived two floors up in another large apartment. The daughter was a professional chef who coached us in the art of tagine.



She then took us to the market at night with the help of her granddaughter, 20, who was an interpreter. The spice markets were fragrant and enticing.

We visited the large cities of Casablanca, Fes, and Marrakesh, and also stayed two nights in a Berber village with a family. Berbers are traditional nomads but some have settled and some were coerced into more permanent housing. They are known for their lovely carpets. Carol has one now in her dining room!



Carol was triumphant in the judged tea tasting competition where the more sugar, the better. Pouring the tea from high above the tea cup was an art that we all got to practice.

A stop at an authentic fossil site had us loading up on beautiful ammonites and trilobites.

So many experiences, so much to learn, and so much fun!!



Adventures in Tanzania

by Gwen White

Five of our club members went on a trip to Tanzania in January 2026: Sharon Dawson, Linda Strom, Mary Jane Bartlett, Gwen White and Jim Arnoux. Gwen and Jim have been to Africa many times and love it so much they keep returning. Sharon, Linda and Mary Jane had never been. It was fun to watch their excitement and reactions as first time visitors. The experience of Africa is hard to put into words but I recently read a book by Jodi Picoult called "Leaving Time". She so eloquently describes Africa that I wanted to share it as I share those same feelings.



"You have to understand there is a romance to Africa. You can see a sunset and believe you have witnessed the hand of God. You watch the slow lope of a lioness and forget to breathe. You marvel at the tripod of a giraffe bent to water. In Africa there are iridescent blues on the wings of birds that you do not see anywhere else in nature. In Africa in the midday heat, you can see blisters in the atmosphere. When you are in Africa, you feel primordial, rocked in the cradle of the world."



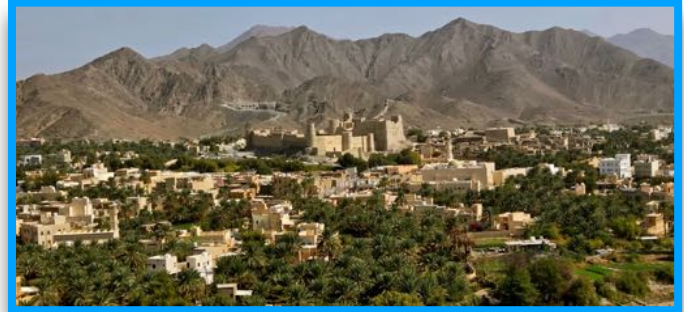
As with any trip where you are experiencing nature, there are no guarantees of what you will see, but we were fortunate to see many animals and have new experiences. We sat in the middle of this massive savannah and in a 360 degree circle there were wildebeests as far as the eye could see. They say there are 1.5 million wildebeests in the migration and 500,000 zebras and a good share of them were resting there in the south of the Serengeti for their summer. There were lots of babies as it was birthing season for the animals. It was also mating season for other animals. We had mating lions 100 feet in front of

our tent and another pair behind the tent which kept us up at night as they mate every 15 minutes for several days. We needed guides to take us to our tents. We saw massive herds of elephants. If you get a chance, ask Sharon to show her video of a line of them walking in front of her vehicle. We enjoyed giraffes strolling past our encampment while we were eating breakfast. We watched cheetahs and leopards hunting. And of course, there were the most amazing, beautiful and colorful birds that you only experience in Africa. It was an incredible and unique experience.



JOURNEY TO OMAN

by Corinne & Larry Spiegel



Little known Oman, at the far end of the Arabian peninsula, was our destination in January. It proved a most rewarding trip.

We traveled with a commercial tour company out of London that does authentic travel to seldom-visited places. We were in a group with 8 British and 4 American tourists and 3 local guide/drivers, using 3 Jeeps.

While Oman has its timeless-appearing remote areas, it has been thoroughly modernized in the last half century. In 1970, it had but 10 miles of paved roads, now it has a well-developed, modern highway system. It is an Islamic country, respecting traditional values, but without fanaticism. The people are most friendly and gracious. We felt totally safe there.



Beginning in Muscat, the capital and largest city, we toured the new and magnificent Qaboos Mosque. We found the old market area and exterior of the sultan's palace fascinating.



Observing the people was interesting; most men wear long white robes that reach to the ground. Women wear black, with varied degrees of face covering, though under their robes they may sport elegant, gold-trimmed attire. Many people look like they have some African blood, which is because Oman has been a sea-faring country which ruled Zanzibar for a few centuries. Their ships, called dhows, traveled as far as





Mozambique and China. We saw where, if you have a few million dollars, you can get one built just for you. To get the feel for any country, one must venture out of the main city and into the interior. We saw beautiful desert scenery, hiking up wadis (canyons) and having the opportunity to swim in streams. We went to a sand dune area, climbing up a

dune so steep that a rope was installed to help climb up the approximate 200 feet.



We visited an encampment looking like something from centuries past, where the eldest daughter had a degree in electrical engineering but was content to live there until she found a job.

We drove up into the mountains and descended on the most rough, windy road that was navigable only by trained drivers such as our guides. We were intrigued by the ancient irrigation systems that are still in use.

We loved our visit to Oman, and would recommend it to fellow Friendship Force members.

Celebrate Members Birthdays!!

Pat Stryker Mar 18

Mary Jane Bartlett Mar 24

Ingrid Donnerstag April 1

Betty Miller April 4

Jim Arnoux April 15

Pam Brown April 26

Carol Higgins May 14

Georgie Buckler May 19

KC Sarr May 31

Kathie Kimmey May 31

Sharon Dawson June 5

Wayne Potter June 11

In keeping with the spirit of friendship and getting to know our fellow members we would like to acknowledge everyone's birthday.

**Happy Birthday Pat, Mary Jane,
Ingrid, Betty, Jim, Pam, Carol,
Georgie, KC, Kathie, Sharon and
Wayne**

Please send an email to Ingrid Donnerstag at silvershoes100@yahoo.com letting her know the month and date of your birth. We will add you to the birthday celebration in the club's newsletter.



FFI CEO Jeremi Snook's letter to the FF Columbia Cascade Club

As mentioned in the Presidents' message in this newsletter, Jeremi Snook, the CEO of Friendship Force International, has written to our club in an effort to assuage concerns we expressed to him about the sudden increase in fees for club membership renewal. Some of our members found the fee increase excessive, while others questioned why we had such a large fee increase without proper notification of why such an increase was needed at this time and what the monies were going to be spent on. Here is Jeremi's response.

"Dear FFCC,

I hope this message finds you well and rested as we begin the new year. 2026 is already unfolding as a complex and consequential year globally, and I am deeply aware of how these broader dynamics shape the way we experience Friendship Force at the local level. As we prepare for our 50th anniversary in 2027, I look forward to seeing how Friendship Force International continues to evolve and respond to a world marked by new divisions and challenges.

I want to be candid in sharing that I was concerned by the tone and content of the recent correspondence received – not because concerns they raised, but because they clearly reflect disappointment, frustration, and a sense of feeling unheard. Those feelings matter, and I want to acknowledge them directly.

*Over the final months of 2025, Friendship Force International conducted multiple meetings, produced detailed documents, and made recordings available to club leaders specifically to address questions related to the **Membership for All** initiative. I believe it is important to ask whether these materials and opportunities were fully shared with the broader club membership.*

Based on feedback from across our global network, I can say with near certainty that where these resources were shared and discussed openly, members left those conversations feeling informed, included, and better able to understand the rationale, context, and necessity behind this shift. If your club did not feel adequately included or supported through that process, that is something we need to address – not dismiss.

First and foremost, I would like to extend an invitation for us to meet together. I -and a member of our Board of Directors, along with staff – would be more than willing to join your club on a Zoom call to answer questions and provide clarity around the Membership for All initiative. Much like our mission to promote understanding across the barriers that separate people, it is essential that we approach this moment with the same spirit—seeking to

understand, before passing judgement, and engaging with the full context behind decisions that shape our shared future.

I would also like to address the concerns raised regarding transparency and budgeting. I understand how decisions related to marketing investments – particularly when viewed alongside staffing constraints – can feel confusing or misaligned from the outside. Of which I am happy to talk about.

Friendship Force International is governed by a volunteer international Board of Directors composed of members from around the world. As part of their fiduciary responsibilities, the Finance Committee reviews detailed financial reports monthly, challenges assumptions, evaluates projected expenses, and assesses the broader global financial landscape to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization. Investments in marketing and infrastructure are not made lightly; they are intended to strengthen the organization's long-term viability so that clubs themselves are supported by a stable and growing global network.

That said, I hear clearly the concern that clubs may feel they are being asked to carry more while receiving less. This is not the experience we want any club or member to have, and it is something we must continue to examine and correct where needed.

Whether members are actively traveling, hosting, or participating in inbound or outbound journeys – or not – our mission has continued to evolve over the past year. At the same time, I recognize that the value proposition of Friendship Force may feel different today than it did a decade or more ago, particularly in a world with many travel and cultural exchange options. That reality challenges us – not to retreat – but to be clearer, more intentional and more responsive in how we support our members and clubs.

As we move toward our 50th anniversary and intentionally position Friendship Force as a global movement, the values we uphold – fostering peace, understanding, and human connection – are more vital now than ever. At a time when politics and global divisions seem to be pulling people apart, our role as members and clubs becomes clearer, not less relevant.

In closing, I want to reassure you that Friendship Force staff, leadership, and our global network remain focused on one core purpose: advancing global unity at a time when it is most needed. I again extend an open invitation for an informal conversation – one where I, along with others, can join your club directly, share where we are as an organization, where we are headed, and answer any questions you may have.

In friendship,

*Jeremi Snook
President/CEO*

COVID GUIDELINES

COVID is still with us and is likely to be an ongoing concern. We encourage all participants in FFCC activities to stay vaccinated and to follow precaution guidelines such as mask wearing in crowded situations and frequent hand washing. If you are feeling sick even in the slightest of ways or have been exposed to someone with covid, please do not come to FFCC events. We need to all protect ourselves and each other as best we can. Let's all stay healthy.

“The Power of Unity in Difficult Times”:

https://friendshipforce.org/changing-times/?utm_source=Klaviyo&utm_medium=campaign&kx=kwMeIDrGJW_ELFnbcE8qQI9yes2lg_nYR8eiRMHuKBcl.RaH2Qb

“In Uncertain Times, Connection Matters More than Ever”:

<https://manage.kmail-lists.com/subscriptions/web-view?a=RaH2Qb&c=01HZFABT5N42S5W40M3AT7RK61&k=861c8b4e922ba5a7415e76f48380da90&m=01JNERJ6F192881MJH8BGXGPZN&r=01JNGNZ0S7AWHN1BZJ70J1X2RS>

**CHANGING THE WAY YOU
SEE THE WORLD**



PLEDGE

As a member of The Friendship Force, I recognize that I can make a difference. I recognize that I have a mission. That mission is to be a friend to the people of the world. As I embark upon this adventure, I know that others will be watching me. I know that through my example to my own fellow citizens and the people of other nations, the cause of friendship, love and peace will be furthered.