

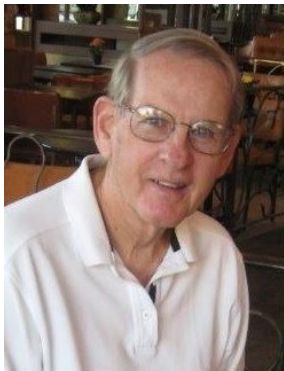


THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF GREATER ATLANTA NEWSLETTER



JULY • AUGUST • 2014

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER: * * * * *



Changes are afoot. The CEO of Friendship Force International, Joy DiBenedetto, is in the midst of developing a new vision and long-range strategy for the organization. That's one of the primary things corporate CEOs do, focus on the longer time frame. She has invited each of you to join in this mission by responding to one or two surveys about the Friendship Force experience. I hope each of you will take time to answer the surveys; it is like voting on the future of the club.

One of the issues that must be addressed is an imbalance between clubs seeking outbound exchanges and those willing to host. This is especially true in the United Kingdom. When our club visited Cornwall in May, 2012, we were not offered a second week of homestays. Fortunately everyone created their own second week of travel in the U. K.

Another alternative to the traditional two foreign homestays formula is the domestic exchange. In June Joyce Mell led 17 of us on an abbreviated exchange to Spokane and Whidbey Island in Washington state. There were hospitable hosts in both eastern and western parts of the state. Lower costs were one advantage. Shorter homestays meant lower fees to FFI. Shorter distances traveled also meant lower costs and fewer time zones for our bodies to adjust to.

With a few exceptions, like parts of NY and NJ, you will find the domestic hosts speak the same language we do. There is not the translation problem you have with South American and European countries. There is no need to exchange your dollars for a different currency either. Be prepared to accept and enjoy domestic exchanges in future years. There are likely many interesting places you have not seen in the United States.

New subject: Near the end of our board of directors meeting on July 13 Kent Vickers announced he is resigning as Newsletter Editor and board member, effective December 31. Kent has stated that he is willing to mentor any volunteer who assumes his job, but thereafter he will just remain as a club member. I figure we will require at least four or five members to volunteer to fill all the roles Kent has served in over the past 10 years. First we will need someone with a voice loud enough to call us to order when it is time to get down to the business at hand. We will need a new editor for our newsletter. Third, we will need a living archive, someone who remembers all those members from the past and why they are no longer club members. We also need someone who can suggest new people to move into leadership roles within the club. We also need to have someone who knows Army time. After all, we need to know whether dinner is at 1745 or 1830. I am accepting applications.

In Friendship,

Harvey

GETTING TO KNOW YOU:



Susan Rawls is an Atlanta native and has resided in this area for many years, although she has also lived in Virginia, Florida and New York on occasion. Susan attended college at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, a prestigious seat of higher learning for women. While she was a student there, she also studied for a year at the famous Sorbonne in Paris, France. Therein lies the reason for her life-long love for that country. That love is also a reason why she recently completed a Friendship Force exchange to France for only those members who were proficient in the spoken French language. Please read an account of her journey in the Exchange Reports section of this newsletter.

Ms. Rawls first learned about the Friendship Force from her long-time friends and neighbors Mary and Harvey Brickley. She has been a member of the Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta for only a few months, but already has shared an experience in home hosting when Cicek Sensan, a member of the FFI Board of Directors from Izmir, Turkey spent two days with Susan while she was in Atlanta for a board meeting. She has also been active in the social scene and was a volunteer with FFGA as they completed their annual stint of community service as docents during the Atlanta Symphony's Decorators' Show House and Gardens. The trip to France was her first FF adventure as an Ambassador during an outbound exchange.

Susan is now retired, but in the past she was a real estate agent selling homes in the Atlanta area for a number of years. She also worked on the staff of the Alumni Office at Emory University and in the office of yet another private institute of learning in Atlanta just prior to her retirement.

She has two adult sons. The eldest son has two daughters, Caroline, who is nine years old, and Allison who is four. The youngest son is not married. Fortunately for her, they both live nearby in Atlanta.

Susan is a docent at the Michael C. Carlos Museum on the Emory University campus. The museum specializes in antiquities from Egypt, Greece, and Rome as well as in objects from ancient America. As she has degrees in art history, it gives her great pleasure to both study and teach about these wonderful things. She also teaches an "English as Second Language" class at a local church to mostly Hispanic women. She is looking forward to sharing many more experiences with the Friendship Force.

TIME-SENSITIVE NEWS OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN:



It is with great sadness that our friends at The Vinings Club have announced that the club will cease operations effective June 30th, 2014. I personally have great memories of the three Christmas Holiday Parties and numerous Board of Directors meetings that have taken place over the past three years in these luxurious surroundings. Special thanks go to Anne and Donald Clark for arranging for FFGA to use the Vinings Club through the auspices of their membership in that club. Also many thanks go to our long-time Social Chair Ernestine Brazeal for her efforts to insure that the Holiday Parties were memorable affairs, all with great meals and entertainment at a reasonable negotiated price. Now we are tasked with finding a new location for that annual event. If any of our members know of a location that serves meals and seats up to eighty people, (We had 76 attend the 2013 party), it would be greatly appreciated if you would let President Brickley or Social Chair Glenda Wilhelm know of them as soon as possible. Emails: mbrickley@bellsouth.net for Harvey and/or jwainc7@bellsouth.net for Glenda.

THE SOCIAL SCENE:





The FFGA Summer Picnic got underway on a beautiful, warm day around noontime last Saturday, the 26th of July with 31 members and guests in attendance. Fortunately the picnic was held in a shady pavilion with a roof at Kenwood Recreational Park in Fayetteville. Two portable fans and plenty of ice water allowed at least a modicum of comfort. All of those in attendance received their deposits of \$5.00 per person back. They also enjoyed a free extra treat from the folks at "Truett's Luau" in the form of a Pineapple Smoothie for each person.

Truett's Luau is a new one-of-a-kind restaurant in Fayetteville. It is a part of the Chick-fil-A chain and it has a Waterfall patio, loads of orchids and strolling ukulele players. All agreed the smoothies were excellent.

Kent Vickers served as the Master-of-Ceremonies, and with the able assistance of his wife Erika, Faye Evans, John and Glenda Wilhelm and Cynthia Williams, the party was ready to greet FFGA's membership by 11:30 AM. Kent then explained what was to take place for the rest of the day, after a pre-selected box-lunch from Dickey's Barbecue Pit arrived.

Three competitive games were set up; *Horse Frisbee*, which required teams of four to alternatively throw disc-golf Frisbees into their opponent's hula-hoop circles to score points; *Darts*, where teams amassed points by throwing pointed missiles at a target; and *Fishing Hole*, where the teams gained points by snagging tongue depressors with top views of fish depicted upon them. Using dowel rods with a line, lead sinker and paper clip hook to snag the fish, the team members had five minutes to catch all of the fish that they could. Some of the fish were special and counted for more points. An additional *Hula Hooper* contest was open to all comers for a special award. Only two ladies felt that they were limber and agile enough to compete in this event.

When the barbecue lunch arrived, a pre-meal blessing which is used by many Friendship Force clubs was sung by all to the tune of the song *Edelweiss*. Thankfully the singing ability of the club had little effect on the excellent taste of the barbecue, because it was very plentiful and very good. After lunch, undaunted by their previous attempt at harmony, the members were led by Kent and Glenda in a rousing rendition of *Old McDonald's Farm*. In this singing game each member of the audience is given a small card face down with a farm animal's picture on it. They are told not to divulge to anyone what that animal is. The song leader begins singing and when he/she gets to the part: "and on this farm he had a ____", he/she holds up a larger card with a picture of an animal and the sound it makes. At that time the assistant, wearing a mask portraying the animal, makes sounds the animal would make and tries to act as the animal normally behaves. This is also simultaneously performed by all of those having the same smaller card. The song then continues on to the next animal and the process is repeated. This act was first performed in 2008 as our club's contribution to the entertainment at the FF Club of Fukuoka, Japan's 30th Anniversary and our welcome dinner. Please see pictures of that event below:



With aid from a German student of Japanese, Kent Vickers takes an audience of dignified Japanese back to their childhood days.



Jimmy Gardner and cast from FFGA in costume prepare to perform "Old McDonald's Farm" at FF Fukuoka's 30th Anniversary celebration.



Vivian Nickelsen portrays a clucking chicken as she flaps her way across the stage. Fortunately she did not lay any eggs.

At the conclusion of our current FFGA members' performance of *Old McDonald's Farm*, each attendee was asked to reach into a paper bag and withdraw a colored marble. There were five sets of four different colored marbles in the bag, and the marble's colors represented which team that each holder would join to play in the three competitive games during the afternoon. Those folks who did not draw a marble from the bag volunteered to serve as judges and score keepers for the competitors. Please see the next page for pictures of all the activities that took place at this year's free FFGA Summer Picnic.

(Continued)



FFGA members & guests socializing with a Pineapple Smoothie prior to start of picnic.



Joyce Mell portrays a chicken laying an egg during singing of "Old McDonald's Farm".



Kent Vickers explains rules and scoring before competitions begin.



Cynthia Williams' aim is a bit off as she lets it fly toward the spectators. A skewed sense of direction threatened decapitation.



Bill Darmody's dart appears to be right on target. It helped to win the match, and later, the tournament.



A limber Robin Scott shows she still has it as she spins her Hula Hoop toward victory in the competition. Kent counts revolutions.



(L to R) Bonnie Evans, Catherine Douds, Vivian Nickelsen & Sam Tucker catching several fish from the pond.



Joe Evans, Jay Paape, Ron Scott & Dave Kelley pose with victory awards for winning individual team Horse Frisbee competition.



Steve Douds, Janet & Marin Prado and Bill Darmody pose with their trophy cups for best overall team score for three games.

Editor's note: The Fayette Parks and Recreation Department does not have horseshoe pits at the Kenwood park location and would not allow us to construct one if we could. Therefore using Hula Hoops instead of the iron stakes normally employed and Disc Golf Frisbees instead of horseshoes we made our own version and called it "Horse Frisbee". This was a much safer version anyway. Each team had four members and there were four Disc Frisbees, at least until our beloved President Emeritus Cynthia Williams threw one irretrievably onto the pavilion roof.

All-in-all it was a fairly good turn out and all of the members and guests who attended left in a happy mood by about 3:30 PM. I offer my personal thanks to those of you who were able to make the effort in support of the social events that your club endeavors to provide for you. - Kent

EXCHANGE REPORTS:



Domestic exchange to Spokane and Whidbey Island

By Exchange Director Joyce Mell

In June our Club was hosted by two clubs in the state of Washington – Spokane and Whidbey Island. This was an exchange of firsts for most of us; a first time for most of us to experience a Domestic Exchange, and also a first time to visit either city. Both were wonderful experiences and were enjoyed by all of the Ambassadors and Hosts alike.

By June 5th seventeen of us had arrived aboard various airlines and were met by our Spokane hosts. During the next few days we individually explored the city of Spokane, took a group tour aboard a “Party Bus” to three wineries, relaxed together with our host club on a six-hour dinner cruise on Coeur d’Alene Lake and the St. Joe River in Idaho, and went to the Mount Spokane Ski area where we were met by a club member who happened to be a ski patrol official. She led a very informative tour of the facility.

After sad goodbyes, twelve of us flew on to Seattle on June 10th. There we were met at the airport by Whidbey Island day hosts for lunch and a walking tour of the city. From there we took both a train and ferry to where we were greeted by our island hosts. The next few days were a bustle of activities, exploring the tidal pools, spending a day at the Victorian town of Port Townsend, enjoying a picnic at breathtaking Deception Pass on Puget Sound, and traveling on tours of the island, which included a lavender farm. Again sad goodbyes were said as we made our way to the airport and on to other adventures. All came home with great memories of our hosts and their cities.



The famous Spokane Party Bus, where an easy-to-wash aluminum interior, drink holders and a disc jockey set-up were hidden behind the blacked-out windows.



Sue (Ladybug) James models what the “Très chic” clam digger is wearing this year, while her friend Robin Scott is actually searching for clams in the tidal pools of Whidbey Island.



Los Desperados John Mell & Neil Nickelsen are here at a Mexican Dinner Night to spirit away a beautiful senorita. Eunice Luke has donned a festive serape, in hopes that it will be her.

* Editor’s note: *Please read another point of view below from FFGA’s comedic correspondent.*

FFGA BRINGS PEACE TO NORTHWESTERN U.S.A.

By Anne Earle, Washington State Correspondent



In our ceaseless quest for world peace, an intrepid group of FFGA’s most fearless and cunning members undertook a daring mission to explore and forge friendships in the deep dark usually overcast northwestern corner of the US. Braving the uncertain June weather which some days reached only into the upper 50’s, multiple ferry crossings, towering craggy mountains and subsisting on nothing but a tiny packet of peanuts on the arduous continent-crossing trek, our hardy ambassadors of goodwill survived and thrived! Seventeen courageous souls managed to reach remote Spokane, Washington, and I think they all returned to civilization here in Atlanta relatively unscathed.

Members of our expedition had previously traveled to mysterious foreign locales where they had been forced to ride camels in Morocco, traverse the desert in Uzbekistan while suffering from food poisoning, and endured a massage in Tbilisi, but nothing prepared them for their Washington adventure. We all made our way across this great country to Spokane, encountering various misadventures like missed connections, unplanned layovers, and mechanical malfunctions that could have cost us our club’s president! Much to our relief, the natives proved to be friendly and most spoke fluent English.

The local food was palatable, even tasty. We were treated to a local specialty, "huckleberries" which grow wild in the nearby mountains and must be wrested away from fearsome bears that also enjoy them. Fortunately, no huckleberry-picking expeditions were on the schedule, because undoubtedly, brave as we are and interested in the local wildlife, most of us draw the line at bear encounters. The berries were served in pies and jams and even martinis!

We were escorted around the attractive downtown riverfront through which cascaded the mighty Spokane River and was the site of what the natives claimed was the famous "Expo '74." Most of us were too young to remember 1974, but we feigned interest. We went on a wine-tasting tour on the "Spokane Party Bus," but there was a large sign inside the bus that stated "What happens on the Party Bus stays on the Party Bus," so I can say no more. We also had a delightful journey into exotic Idaho for a day-long boat ride on Lake Coeur D'Alene. We saw ospreys and eagles and they had a make-your-own Bloody Mary bar which was enjoyed by some expedition members.



The first of three wine tasting stops of the day. FFGA Ambassadors raise their glasses high in salute to their Spokane hosts.



Too much sampling of the grape? OR maybe just too much excitement for these two guys, who were missing their afternoon naps.



Whidbey Island hostess Nelani Copeland tries to teach both clubs' members how to dance the Hula – without much success.

After five glorious days, we said goodbye to our hosts and to our own **Kent and Erika Vickers, Harvey and Mary Brickley, and Joan Sankey** who went off on their own further adventures. The rest of us flew Alaska Air to Seattle for the next part of our mission of peace. A motley crew from the Whidbey Island Friendship Force, our next hosts, greeted us at SeaTac Airport, whisked away our luggage (we did see it again) and showed us around downtown Seattle.

We were led to a walk-up seafood restaurant on the waterfront and experienced the local custom of dining al fresco all the while battling aggressive seagulls over who got to eat the French fries. After a grueling march through Seattle after which my hostess' pedometer said we had walked 6 miles and climbed the equivalent of 14 flights of stairs, we boarded a train and then a ferry to reach secluded Whidbey Island by nightfall.

The next morning we went on a guided beach walk along the shores of Useless Bay in which we encountered moon snails both dead and alive, gigantic pieces of seaweed, a large sand dollar bed, a breathtaking view of Mount Rainier, which is 85 miles away, and several busloads of sixth-graders on a field trip which did not seem to be nearly as educational as ours. Other adventures included a ferry trip to picturesque Port Townsend, full of Victorian houses, a tour of a lavender field, and general exploration of the island culture.

While the fortitude of our ambassadors hardly ever failed, there is one area that I am forced to admit where we embarrassed ourselves and we are in dire need of improvement. I am hereby proposing to the Board of Directors that we set aside sufficient funds for dance instruction for all future exchanges. The Whidbey Island Club attempted to teach us two Mexican dances at the welcome party at which we revealed that we could neither tell our right from our left nor tell men from women (in our defense, pairing Ron Scott and John Mell as partners did not help matters). Then at the farewell party they tried to teach us the hula, which I believe is from Hawaii, not Washington, but we were in no position to quibble. Disaster struck once again. We couldn't coordinate our feet with our hand movements. FFGA pride dictates that we must not make international laughingstocks of ourselves again!

The bold adventurers/terrible dancers who journeyed to Whidbey Island were **Neil and Vivian Nickelsen, Barbara Shields, Eunice Luke, Judy Hausmann, Ladybug James, Ron and Robin Scott, John and ED Joyce Mell and Joe and Anne Earle.**



“Parlez en francais’ in France”: (Speak French in France)

The Friendship Force Launches an Initiative to Speak the Native Language of the Host Country.

Susan Rawls went to France in June with a truly international group of Ambassadors to visit Hosts in the cities of Bordeaux and Toulouse, which are in the southwest part of the country. The fourteen members came from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Wales, England and several states in the USA. They met in Paris before taking the train south to meet their host families in Bordeaux. Susan, who is a confirmed Francophile, was excited to again visit France, as she had studied at the Sorbonne in Paris while in college. Although she had been fluent enough in the language to take courses and pass exams in French, that was many years ago, and she was somewhat nervous at the prospect of speaking “French only” for two weeks!

This trip to France was organized by long-time FF members Eileen Howell and Andrew Stirling, of Ottawa, Ontario. The goal of the exchanges was to recruit newcomers to Friendship Force among people who wanted to speak French because it is their first or second language, and to help build Friendship Force clubs in France. Eileen and Andrew also believe that it will be easier to recruit hosts in the future in other countries if they do not always have to be bilingual, which usually means speaking English.

Susan was warmly greeted at the station in Bordeaux by her host, Guy Batifoix. His wife Chrystiane was at home cooking a special welcome lunch of pheasant for her! The Batifoix live a few miles outside Bordeaux in the little village of Tabanac. The Friendship Force in Bordeaux had been recently formed with the help of Eileen Howell and Andrew Stirling, and Susan’s group was their first hosting experience. The hosts were great friends with one another, and all of them went out of their way to show off “la belle vie bordelaise”, (Bordeaux the beautiful life.) One of her favorite days of the visit was a picnic at a small chateau and winery owned by a friend of one of the hosts. Each host family brought food and wine (lots of wine!) to the picnic. the trees for a leisurely afternoon of eating, getting to know one another, a walk to an old church, and a visit to the “cave” where the host stores all his bottled wine. Susan admits she could not follow all of his technical explanations in French of how the vines are cultivated, harvested, and the wine is made.



Enjoying a picnic at a small chateau-winery



Basilica of St. Sernin

After a week in Bordeaux, the group took a two-hour train ride to Toulouse, which like the city of Bordeaux, is also on the Garonne River. While Bordeaux is built of beautiful limestone, she says that Toulouse is a “pink city”, built almost entirely of pink brick. This time her hosts were still in the workforce, so they took turns taking their guests sightseeing. Susan stayed with Annie and Pascal Duvert. Annie is a judge, and Pascal works in IT with Air France. In the city, the group visited the beautiful Basilica of St. Sernin, built in the 12th and 13th centuries. It is the largest Romanesque cathedral in France. Susan was especially thrilled to see this wonderful building, because as a student she focused on medieval art and architecture for her art history degrees. Their hosts also twice drove them outside the city. They visited the medieval walled city of Carcassonne, and a “village Gaulois”, a reconstructed Celtic village featuring thatched roofs, to see demonstrations of crafts done in the manner of the Celts, 2000 years ago.

One particularly fun evening the group experienced “Franglish” at one of the home of one of the hosts. This is a meeting of French speakers who want to improve their English and English speakers who want to improve their French. One person from each group is partnered with another from the other group for 15 minutes in which they speak only French for half the time, and English for half the time. Then they switch partners! Sort of like speed dating, but with a glass of wine in hand as one moves around the room, all with the purpose of helping the other’s language skill. Besides their ambassadors, the group included French business people, students, and those looking to travel abroad.

Susan reports that this was such a successful FF experience that while riding through the beautiful French countryside she thought, “After this trip I can die happy!” Oh, and how did she manage speaking French for two weeks? She said, “Although I could read and understand most of what I came across, my French conversation had slipped to only ‘passable’ after so many years. I need more work on those pesky verbs!”



Malawi: The Warm Heart of Africa Welcomes the Friendship Force!

Eight ambassadors participated in the very first Friendship Force Discovery Exchange to Malawi, known as the "warm heart of Africa", from June 26 through July 2. Five FFGA members: Bertha Dhillon, Wilma Kirchhofer, Glenda and John Wilhelm, and Cynthia Williams along with Tahirah Asim-Ali, a friend of Wilma's from Boulder, Colorado, were welcomed by their hosts in Zomba, Malawi. Two additional ladies, one from Pennsylvania and one from Massachusetts, traveled with us.



Ms. Asim-Ali, Bertha Dhillon and Wilma Kirchhofer await boarding.

Our main purpose was to help the people in Zomba form a Friendship Force club. They did an excellent job of preparing an interesting program for us, during which we were able to learn about the culture and natural beauty of Malawi. This is a very young country, having been granted its independence from the British Commonwealth in 1964. There are stark contrasts between the "rich" and the poor, but one can readily see the great efforts that are being made to improve the infrastructure, health care and education.



Wilma stands beside a termite mound.

Malawi is a country of great natural beauty. Lake Malawi, home of fish found only there, and the splendid views from the Zomba Plateau will be seen in everyone's photographs. Several ambassadors found lovely souvenirs at the Dedza Pottery. The fascinating history and culture of Malawi were beautifully displayed at the Mua Cultural Center, where we had one of the most animated and knowledgeable guides I have seen anywhere. The food was delicious and plentiful. Rice and nsima (rather like polenta) are basic to most meals, with meat and lots of fresh vegetables. Fresh fruits and fruit juices were also abundant. Some of us tried baobab juice, which is an acquired taste, much like the Beverly brand of drink at the World of Coca-Cola! Tea is one of the main crops of Malawi and is served more often than coffee.



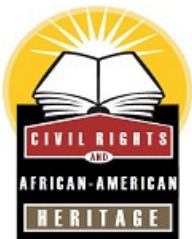
John Wilhelm is surrounded by a group of curious children at the combined school / feeding station.

We were able to visit two "feeding stations", run by Mary Mangwiza, who was one of our host Exchange Directors. They serve children whose parents may be deceased or unable to care for them who are living with other relatives. They receive a basic pre-K education and two meals a day. It was so rewarding to see their eager little faces as they participated in their lessons, generally in classes of up to forty children. But it was also sad to realize that there are thousands and thousands of children who don't get even these basic elements of life.



Glenda Wilhelm acts out a part, as she relates a scary story to the school children.

Our hosts all spoke excellent English, which made conversation easy and rewarding. I think the ambassadors came home with a much greater understanding of this small African country that many only know from Madonna's adoption of her sons and her charitable work there. We were also reminded that everyone loves and is proud of his/her home country, no matter how large or small, rich or poor.



Cancellation of Global Inbound Exchange:

The global inbound exchange, *Walk the Pathways to Freedom: Discover African American History in the USA*, scheduled for September 21 - 27, 2014, is cancelled because registration does not meet a minimum for a meaningful exchange.

We hope this notice will lessen any inconvenience caused by this cancellation. Thank you for your willingness to volunteer your services.

Wilma Ardine Kirchhofer, MPH, PhD • Exchange Director • Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta



Open World Exchange: Mr. John Wilhelm has volunteered to be the exchange director for an Open World Leadership delegation arriving from Serbia September 12th and departing on the 20th. There will be 5 delegates, a facilitator to act as a bilingual guide and an interpreter. The subject of interest is to be Financial Crimes. This exchange will be visiting interesting places such as the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the U. S. Attorney's Office (to talk about white-collar crime), the FBI, the Georgia Dept. of Revenue, and the Veterans Administration. All hosts for this exchange will be able to go to these offices with their guests. The genders of the group are not yet known. If you would be interested in being a host during this exchange, please contact Mr. Wilhelm to volunteer at: jwainc7@bellsouth.net.

To learn more about Open World please see the following web site: <http://openworld.gov/about/overview.php>.

For an example of a typical Open World exchange, see the March-April 2013 Issue of the Newsletter by clicking on the following link: <http://sdrv.ms/11DJ4QW>.



2015 Inbound Exchange: The FFGA Board of Directors has accepted an exchange request from Trujillo, Peru to tentatively take place during the month of March 2015. President Brickley is seeking a member of our club who will volunteer to be the Exchange Director for this inbound exchange as soon as possible so that planning can begin. Timing is the key to having a great Friendship Force exchange, and given the lead time that we have with this group it should not be difficult to set-up and conduct an excellent visit for the Peruvians.

Experienced mentors are willing to provide guidance and assistance to any member who volunteers. If you are willing to please contact President Harvey Brickley at 404-351-2033 or by e-mail at: mbrickley@bellsouth.net.

ODDS & ENDS: * * * * *



Friendship Force International Messages

Note: The next few subjects are extracted from recently received emails from FFI



1 Friendship Force Builds a Bridge for the Future: (Atlanta, Georgia - 6.23.14)

Today, FFI's President and CEO, Joy DiBenedetto announced the launch of the organization's NextGen Initiative, an exciting opportunity to help shape the future of Friendship Force International. For some time members have been pressing to include younger, working people. This new initiative will retain the pillars of home hosting and hospitality that are the hallmark of Friendship Force, yet make it possible for working people to discover the Friendship Force experience.

The NextGen Initiative will introduce several new travel/home hosting opportunities especially designed to appeal to the interests and energy of the Next Generation.

"We cannot build this bridge alone, nor can we build it without modern tools," said DiBenedetto. New web-based tools will be introduced to make communication easier and faster. The organization is also exploring new, shorter models for home hosting. *"I have gathered some of the most dynamic people I know to help with their vision, talent, and creativity,"* DiBenedetto noted. *"I am proud to announce these two groups today."*

The NextGen Council - Young leaders from 17 countries will constitute an advisory body reporting directly to the CEO. These leaders from various cultural backgrounds are ideally suited to adapt current exchange models to the interests of Next Generation travelers. They may also help connect Friendship Force to their own social networks, create and lead exchanges, as well as generate interest in Next Generation travel, home hosting, and hospitality.

The NextGen Mentors – A team of experienced leaders, from clubs in every major region of the world, who will work with Field Representatives and club executives to attract clusters of young participants from local communities, and shape travel and home hosting around their interests. Mentors are already at work preparing the launch of an information campaign. Their role is to anticipate needs, provide training, promote best

practices, and hands-on guidance to clubs and leaders as this new initiative is introduced.

Jack Mullen, Chair of the Friendship Force International Board of Directors, agrees: *"Connecting people for the purpose of growing international friendships and peace is essential in today's world. It is worth every ounce of energy we have. Every age is suited for that purpose and every station in life is made richer by changing the way we see and experience the world."*

Members of both the NextGen Council and the NextGen Mentors may be viewed by clicking on the following link: <http://1drv.ms/1oconfq>

Find out more about Friendship Force International by visiting our website: www.friendshipforce.org
Follow us on twitter: [@FriendshipForce](https://twitter.com/FriendshipForce) / **Facebook:** [Friendship Force](https://www.facebook.com/FriendshipForce)

2 Friendship Force International Global Membership Survey: The following has been extracted and condensed from previously received communications from the office of Joy DiBenedetto, President & CEO of Friendship Force International.

Hello Friendship Force members around the world:

Previously, we've said we want to hear from you. Your concerns and your ideas - as we develop the next phase of our amazing organization. By completing this global survey, we hope you'll share your voice with us in order to grow smarter and stronger, together - for now, for the future, and for the next generation. This survey is meant to help us understand your interests in what you want out of Friendship Force. Your timely response will aid us in completing our work on the 2015 strategic plan. Beyond just finishing the survey, we ask that you please complete it by a deadline of August 10, 2014. From there we will finalize the plan, and present it for discussion and approval to the International Board of Directors at their meeting in September. We'll then release a report this October at the World Conference in Auckland, New Zealand; as well as to the worldwide Friendship Force membership on line.

Our goal is to strengthen FFI into a vibrant organization for decades to come, and as members of Friendship Force yourself, we need your help. Without you, our important global work could not be done, and your input matters. Here is the general membership survey link:

<http://www.friendshipforcesurvey.org/inquisite/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.cgi?idx=JDY84Z>

I thank you all so very much for your service and commitment to our collective mission. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

With friendship,
Joy

Joy E. DiBenedetto, President/CEO
Friendship Force International

3 Special fares from AIR NEW ZEALAND
An FF members' exclusive!

We are thrilled to announce that Air New Zealand is an official supporter of the 2014 World Conference.

Any Friendship Force member traveling to New Zealand for the conference or to a Friendship Force exchange surrounding the conference is eligible for special reduced airfares.

To take advantage of this special, write to the FFI liaison at Air New Zealand, Lupe Maake lupe.maake@airnz.co.nz, with the subject line "Friendship Force". Give her your dates of travel, your home airport, your destination airport and your name as it appears on your passport. She'll respond to you with a quote for your discounted fares.

Check Air New Zealand fares on any other travel booking website to compare. We think you'll find the FFI special airfare gives you the best rates out there.





Friendship Force Connected International Cruises

In the last edition of the FFGA Newsletter you were told about the end of the partnership between FFI and the Enrichment Voyages program run by the Institute for Shipboard Education. Their "Iron and Ice" voyage was very popular with FF members and regrettably it was the last one that FFI sponsored. At that time we were told that the FFI staff would soon begin looking for similar cruise lines that offered international educational forums and opportunities to learn about other cultures.

In that vein the FFI staff has been successful and has already designated a contact person to coordinate with the Grand Circle Cruise Line, in the person of Laura Romero. With her assistance Friendship Force members may be able to obtain favorable considerations on rates and other amenities available to group travelers. Ms. Romero's contact information is: (1) 404-965-4353 by telephone or laura@thefriendshipforce.org by email.

Please read the following message from the President and CEO of the Friendship Force International:

A Message from Joy-

Over recent years, we've seen that cruises can be a great vessel for international friendship. When a cruise line shares our priorities of cultural discovery, personal encounters and friendly onboard communities, it can be a good match for Friendship Force.

Grand Circle shares those priorities. Their goal is that their passengers discover "a profound awareness of the life-changing joy of cultural connections." Their resident Program Directors are just one of the ways they facilitate authentic people-to-people experiences. You can find out more about the Grand Circle difference on their [website](#).

I hope you'll consider joining us on one of these new adventures in global friendship.

In Friendship,

Joy DiBenedetto

See three upcoming voyages below: (Ctrl + click to follow the links)

1) Trip name/code: ***Christmas Markets Along the Rhine/RXS***
The Netherlands • Germany • France • Switzerland

Departure date: December 12, 2014

Information: **11 Days**

http://www2.thefriendshipforce.org/downloads/Christmas_Markets_Along_the_Rhine_itinerary.pdf

Please mention this code when booking: **G4-25992**

*** NOTE: Registration for savings on the above cruise has been extended until August 7, 2014!**

2) Trip name/code: ***Eastern Europe to the Black Sea/LBS***
Romania: Bucharest, Constanta • Bulgaria: Ruse, Vidin • Belgrade, Serbia • Osijek, Croatia • Hungary: Kalocsa, Budapest

Departure date: May 2, 2015

Information: **12 Days** http://www2.thefriendshipforce.org/downloads/Eastern_Europe_cruise.pdf

Please mention this code when booking: **G5-25992**

3) Trip name/code: ***Hidden Gems of the Dalmatian Coast & Greece/DAS***
Zagreb, Croatia • Plitvice Lakes • Split • Hvar • Korcula • Dubrovnik • Bay of Kotor, Montenegro • Butrint, Albania • Corfu, Greece • Delphi • Corinth Canal • Athens

Departure date: May 2, 2015

Information: **15 Days** http://www2.thefriendshipforce.org/downloads/Dalmation_Coast_Cruise.pdf

Please mention this code when booking: **G5-25992**



Minutes of the FFGA Board of Directors Meeting: Due to the outbound exchanges to Malawi and to the state of Washington there was no board meeting in June. To review the FFGA Board of Directors Minutes from the July 13th, 2014 board meeting, please remember to depress and hold down the "Ctrl" key on your keyboard while clicking on this link: <http://1drv.ms/1pGeKOi>. If the link does not open the minutes for you, copy the link individually into the address bar of your internet browser to open it. Please allow time for the link to open.



FFI World Conference October 14 – 16, 2014; There is still time to register. Everything you may need to know about the conference and/or registration may be found on the FFI website at: <http://www.thefriendshipforce.org> and then clicking on the View Event Details located in the blue block at the upper right of the page. A list of contacts is provided should you have any questions after reviewing the event details. You might enjoy viewing the YouTube video about New Zealand that the leaders of their conference presented at the 2013 conference at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PiCFrpZgyw&list=UUEvOevzZ83doX68TO-cvJKA>.

Should you decide to go, don't forget to give Air New Zealand a call when making your flight arrangements in order to get the special Friendship Force fare quote. (See details in block 3, above.)

Be aware there is a 17 hour time difference. For example, when it is noon on Friday in Atlanta, it is already 5:00 AM Saturday in Auckland. The current exchange rate is \$1.00 USD = \$1.17 NZD or \$1.00 NZD = \$0.85 USD.

The next Friendship Force World Conference will take place from the 29th – 31st of August, 2015 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. More information on this conference will be disseminated shortly after the current one.



Travel as a Political Act:

While we do not normally publish book reviews in the FFGA Newsletter, John and Glenda Wilhelm and I (Cynthia Williams) feel that this wonderful book by the well-known Rick Steves deserves special attention. It so clearly states the mission of the Friendship Force that one could easily imagine that Steves wrote it especially for the organization that we all love. If you have trouble explaining to your "American Express tour" friends why you choose to be an ambassador rather than a tour client, suggest that they read this book (and read it yourself!). What sets the Friendship Force apart from most travel clubs and tour operators is the emphasis on face-to-face, people-to-people contact with other cultures and countries. Rick Steves strongly believes in these life-changing experiences. Meaningful travel is not just seeing sites, buying souvenirs and taking photographs.

A quote from the back cover: "Americans who "travel as a political act" can have the time of their lives and come home smarter---with a better understanding of the interconnectedness of today's world and just how our nation fits in." From page 205: "In this Global Age the world's problems are our problems. It'll be all hands on deck. We need to address these challenges honestly and wisely. Lessons learned from our travels can better equip us to address and help resolve the challenges facing our world. We travelers are both America's ambassadors to the world...and the world's ambassadors to America."

The Wilhelms and I are planning to ask FFI to have Rick Steves be the main speaker at the conference in Vancouver in August of 2015. He would be a wonderful inspiration to all Friendship Force ambassadors and hosts around the world! Read the book and let us know what you think! Please Check out Rick Steves' website as well: www.ricksteves.com/politicalact.

_____ T H E E N D _____

In Friendship,

Kent G. Vickers
FFGA News Editor

FOR THOSE MEMBERS WHO COULD NOT OR DID NOT ATTEND THE FFGA 2014 SUMMER PICNIC, WE ARE SORRY, BUT . . .
WE HAD A GREAT TIME

