



friendship force

CENTRAL IOWA

January/February 2026

FFCI Officers

President

Alta Byg

Vice-President

Open

Treasurer

Jerry Byg

Secretary

Cheryl Binzen

Newsletter

Open

Membership

Dennis Dake

Park Woodle

Activity Committee

Charene Starcevic

Marcia Thompson

Dot Dake

Name Badges

Kueier Chung

Carole Magilton

Friendship Committee

Susan Woodle

Add your ideas

We are always open to additional thoughts and ideas.

Happy New Year,

If you attended the FFCI Annual Business meeting or have read the information from Friendship Force International you have heard about the increase in our annual dues. The increase is a large jump, and it has had all of us question our membership. With all the uncertainty in the world, the need for Friendship Force International's mission that our membership becomes Citizen Diplomats is needed now more than ever. Whether we spend time in our neighborhood or as we travel around the world meeting, extending our hand in friendship and getting to know people is so important.

I hope you will find this mission valuable and continue to support Friendship Force International and Friendship Force of Central Iowa! FFCI feels strongly about keeping our club healthy, the board decided that we will not charge any local club dues for this year. If you also feel that Friendship Force International is important, you can fill out a membership form and send a check made out to FFCI and mail it to our treasurer, Jerry Byg, 2127 Coneflower Ct, Ames, IA 50014. If you want, you can mail your FFI dues of \$100 directly to Friendship Force International, sent them to Attn: Payments Friendship Force International 279 W Crogan St Lawrenceville, GA, 30046. Watch for more information about how to pay online, which should be available after the 1st of the year.

It is time for our club to begin planning for the upcoming 2026 year. Our activity committee is already looking into some fun events for the upcoming

year. Hope you will consider becoming involved. The committee needs you to sign up for a month and either host an event, LEO, or something join us for another year of friendship, fun and travel. See the information below and contact Charene at larcha1623@gmail.com to sign up to host an event. We are hoping to have at least one event each month.

FFCI President

Alta Byg

Upcoming FFCI Dates: Contact our Activity to sign up for a month where there are no hosts. Idea listed is only an idea, you can use that idea or come up with your own. **With fewer members, everyone will need to sign up for 2 or more months. It is easier to invite people to join our group if we have events to have them visit.**

January – *Idea: Soup lunch or dinner with card games*

February - *Idea: Chili Cook-off*

March – **International Friendship Day March 7 - 10 to 12-** Hosts: Alta Byg & Charene Starcevic and *Idea: LEO*

April – *Cinco de Mayo/International Lunch* - Host: Marybeth Buchele & Dot Dake

May – *Pella Tulip Festival-day trip* - Host: Susan & Park Woodle

June – *All Iowa FF in Quad Cities (possible overnight)* – Hosts: Alta Byg & Charene Starcevic

July – *Bandshell Concert & Potluck* – Hosts: Lynne VanValin & Co-host needed

August – *Idea: Small dinner groups*

September – *Idea: Your name and ideas are needed*

October – *Idea: Oktoberfest* Hosts: Lynn Avant & Kitty Fisher

November – *Idea: Trivia Afternoon* Hosts: Ginny & Stu Huntington

December – *Holiday Party* – Hosts: Charene S. Alta B., Dot D. & Judy M.

Ideas for more activities:

These could be set up for 1 day each month: Card games such as: Canasta, 3-13, or 500 and Morning Coffee

Ideas for the whole club gatherings: Mexican Party, Soup Party, Card/Game Party, Movie & Popcorn Party, or day at Reiman Gardens.

Contact the committee: Charene Starcevic at larcha1623@gmail.com, Marcia Thompson at Marciat_ames@yahoo.com, or Dot Dake at dotdake42@gmail.com to sign up for a month.

On Saturday March 7th from 10 to 12, our club will be able to help the YWCA put on their International Friendship Fair. The YWCA focuses on eliminating racism and empowering women. This is also an opportunity to celebrate FFI's International Friendship Day. To become part of this event, contact *Charene Starcevic* at larcha1623@gmail.com or *Alta Byg* at altajerbyg@gmail.com.

A Typical Journey with FF Greater Hamilton & Burlington

September 10th to 17th, 2026

A one-week club to club Journey will usually start out with a welcome event. Places which may be visited are, Dundurn Castle, Hamilton or Burlington Art Gallery or the Royal Botanical Gardens. There are several beautiful waterfront parks and several have waterfalls.



We may also enjoy views from the Niagara Escarpment, harness race at the Mohawk Racetrack may be in the running or seeing a reconstructed Iroquoian Village.

There may even be an opportunity to spend the day in Niagara Falls and the historic and beautiful town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. A trip to Toronto or a performance at The Stratford Festival may also be in store for our group.



To join our group, be the first to send your application form (click on the following link): <https://helpcenter.friendshipforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2025-Ambassador-Application-and-Agreement-for-Print-v.2.27.docx> and a \$25 non-refundable application fee made out to FFCI and send it to Alta Byg, 2127 Coneflower Court, Ames IA 50014. Our club will have first chance, although we will open this opportunity to other members of Friendship Force. The total amount of this journey has not been determined.

Questions: Contact Alta at altajerbyg@gmail.com or 515-450-8397

It is time to renew your membership

Beginning in January, you will be able to pay your dues on-line through Friendship Force Int., at <https://my.friendshipforce.org/> On the home page there is a link to **Add/Renew membership** and follow the steps. You can also pay your dues by completing the attached membership form and submitting your check or cash to FFCI, 2127 Coneflower Ct. The annual fees for FFI are \$100, there are no club dues for 2026.



Coffee Club on Friday, 1/2

Meet your FFCI friends for coffee Friday, **January 2nd** at 10 am at **60 Forward, 205 S. Walnut, Ames, IA**

February date will be decided at the January coffee! Invite your friends to join us!

SAVE THE DATE!

April 24-27, 2026
Memphis, Tennessee

**2026
North American
Regional
Conference**



Journeys with a purpose

Club to Club: Chicago to Mundo Maya de Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico – MX #326078 (MyFF)

February 13 to 19, 2026

Contact Information:

Larisa Sorkin

✉ sork8@aol.com

☎ +1 312-861-0250 or apply on the following link:

<https://forms.gle/d17j1K66oFfzqw4H8Ave>

Special Journey: Niigata, Japan JP and Taipei, Taiwan TW #26061 (MyFF)

April 5 to April 19

Contact Information:

Clarisse Petric

✉ clarisse.petric@yahoo.com.br

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeD5MiT6RL6jkC5RiNrE5PP2czDOG41Uw16x3mNNx8Vwvr3aw/viewform>

Special Journey: Javanese Culture Festival #26016 (MyFF)

August 16 to 25, 2026

Contact Information:

Ismi Fajarsih

✉ ismifajarsih69@gmail.com

<https://forms.gle/Kr5xEq1MqkCAWKs19>

For more journeys, check out <https://my.friendshipforce.org/> for more journeys.

2025 Annual Meeting at Northcrest Great Room



On November 22nd, FFCI held the Annual Meeting. Eighteen members attended: Judy Mongin, Carole Magilton, Joan Mathews, Margaret Epplin, Diane Oppedal, Charene Starcevic, Peggy Faden, Kueier Chung, Marcia Thompson, Lynn Avent, Park Woodle, Cheryl Binzen, Marybeth Buchele, Lynne Van Valen, Dorothy & Dennis Dake, Alta & Jerry Byg.

Our members will be able to join Friendship Force International for \$100. There will be NO club dues for 2026. You can become an associate member (FFCI Club only) for \$10. You must have full FFI membership to travel. After January 1st, you will be able to pay your \$100 FFI dues on-line at <https://my.friendshipforce.org/> or you can



Carole Magilton and Alta Byg enjoying some pizza.

send a \$100 check made out to FFCI to Jerry Byg, 2127 Coneflower Ct. Ames, 50014

After the annual meeting, everyone enjoyed pizza, vegetable tray, dessert, soda provided by FFCI.



Charene Starcevic and Marybeth Buchele



Lynn Avent, Dot Dake Alta Byg, Lynne Van Valin and Diane Oppedal



Joan Mathews and Judy Mongin

Holiday Potluck, December 6th at Village Cooperative



Kueier Chung, Bob Strahan, Dot Dake, Carole Magilton, and Marybeth Buchele



Diane Oppedal, Sedahlia Crase, Peggy Faden, Cheryl Binzen,
Lynne Van Valin, and Jerry Byg



Charene Starcevic, Kitty Fisher, Joan Mathews, and Lynn Avant



Judy Mongin, Stu Huntington, Ginny Huntington, and Dennis Dake

The Holiday Party is a great way to connect with our members. There were a large variety of food which everyone enjoyed, there was not much food left at the end of the meal. Kitty, Peggy, and Dot led us in some Christmas Carols and then Stu took on the challenge of keeping our group in line as we opened the White Elephant Gifts. There was some stealing going on, and those who had their gifts stolen seemed happy with their second gift. Sometimes "One man's junk is another man's (or woman's) treasurers"



Ginny had her first gift stolen



Bob got to keep his gift



Charene gets to read



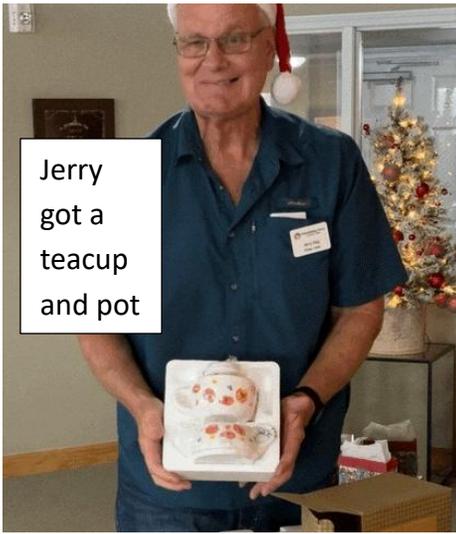
Marybeth needs to find her VCR



Lynn got a candy dish and candy



Dot got tea and a teacup



Jerry got a teacup and pot



Peggy looking for a clue



Stu got a warm and cuddle



Lynne will be ready for Thanksgiving



Kueier needs a large cup for her tea



Cheryl's 2nd gift is silver & gold



Dennis looks puzzled



Joan needs a big pot for the big fish that got away



Sedahlia's gift was over the top



Kitty Fisher, Peggy Faden, and Dot Dake led us in singing of Christmas Carols. With their help, they make our group sound great.



Upcoming Dates for 2026

2026 Board meetings are open to all members, please feel free to attend either in person or via Zoom, to join us, contact Alta.

(put these dates in your calendar):

Board meeting – January 20, 2026 at 4 pm. Zoom only

Board meeting - March 17, 2026 at 4 pm.

Board meeting - June 16, 2026 at 4 pm.

Board meeting - August 18, 2026 at 4 pm.

FFCI Annual Meeting: November 7, 2026 at 10 am

2026 North American Regional Conference: April 24-26 Memphis, TN

Friendship Force of Central Iowa wishes everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Below are the people who attended the totally awesome Holiday Party on December 6, 2025. Back row: Judy Mongin, Dot Dake, Dennis Dake, Diane Oppedal, Cheryl Binzen, Stu Huntington, Jerry Byg, Bob Strahan.

Middle row: Marybeth Buchele, Joan Mathews, Ginny Huntington, Kueier Chung, Peggy Faden, Charene Starcevic. Front row: Lynne Van Valin, Kitty Fisher, Carole Magilton, Sedahlia Crase, Alta Byg & Lynn Avent.

Do not miss the holiday party next year! You to could go home with something special!





friendship force

CENTRAL IOWA

a world of friends is a world of peace

2026 Friendship Force of Central Iowa Membership Form

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

Street

City

State

Zip Code

New member _____ Renewing member _____ Birthday: _____ Anniversary: _____

If you are NEW to FFCI or have a CHANGE in email or phone please complete:

E-mail Address: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Telephone (H) _____ (C) _____

Telephone (H) _____ (C) _____

2026 Membership (FFI dues): \$100.00 per person, # _____ (FFCI dues): \$0 for 2026

Associate members: \$10.00 _____ Donation: _____

If you are new or would like a new name tag. Name on tag _____

Total Enclosed: _____ Make checks payable to: The Friendship Force of Central Iowa
and send along with this form to: Jerry Byg, Treasurers 2127 Coneflower Ct Ames, IA 50014

We correspond mainly via email including journey information and club activities.

The club needs your help, please circle all that you are interested in being involvement with, write in any ideas you thing would be enjoyable:

Officer Publicity Inbound Journey Outbound Journey Membership	Transportation Activity Planning Hosting Monthly Club Activities Home Hosting Photography	Newsletter Music Food Other:
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Photo/Video Disclaimer Consent

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Since anyone can download an image from the internet or make copies from printed materials, I agree that Friendship Force International is not responsible for unauthorized use of the images. I am aware that I am not entitled to any compensation and that the images may appear with or without my or my club's name.

*If you do NOT want your picture taken, please make sure to step out of the photo, better yet offer to take the picture.

By signing below, I acknowledge I have read and understand this release.

Current FFCI year Club name

Print name

Complete mailing address

Signature Date