



# friendship force

## CENTRAL IOWA

March/April 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

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Fair/FFI Friendship World

Friendship Day.

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It has been an eventful and interesting beginning of 2026. FFI rolled out the new global membership dues structure that is fair, sustainable, and aligned with our mission to promote understanding across cultures. This structure aims to balance the financial realities of our members around the world while supporting the long-term growth and operational stability of FFI. This is just the first step with USA leading the way with an increase of dues to \$100. Unfortunately, the increase has reduced the number of members in our club, our club now has 16 FFI members and 12 Associate members. Those who have not paid, will have until March 1<sup>st</sup> to pay the \$100.

#### FF International dues are paid as follows:

1. Go to [https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign\\_in](https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign_in)
2. Either sign in or establish an account
3. Click on add/renew membership
4. Once paid with a credit card, you will receive an email confirmation.

**To become an Associate Member:** Send cash or check made out to FFCI for \$10 to Jerry Byg, 2127 Coneflower Ct., Ames, IA 50014.

**March 1<sup>st</sup> is FF International Friendship Day**, which is observed to commemorate the date that FFI was officially established. Join me to help celebrate the spirit of friendship and power of cultural diversity at Ames Public Library, March 7 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

### ***Your help is needed*** - On **Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup> from 10:30**

**to 12** at Ames Public Library Farwell Brown Auditorium. Our club will be helping the YWCA put on their International Friendship Fair. Thi Minh Sang Nguyen is finding people from other cultures to speak and talk about their homes, but we need people to stand by the tables if she cannot find enough speakers. The YWCA focuses on eliminating racism and empowering women. This is also an opportunity to celebrate FFI's International Friendship Day. To help, contact *Alta Byg* at [altaerbyg@gmail.com](mailto:altaerbyg@gmail.com). **See page 9 for more information and a link to volunteer.**

# Senior Variety Show STARSTRUCK: Stage & Screen

## Be part of our community

FFCI members are invited to audition for the 2026 Senior Variety Show on **March 28** (12:30 to 4:00 PM) at North Minster Presbyterian Church. If you are unable to come on the 28th, another audition will be held on April 11 (between 12:30 and 3:00). You can even come to both, to help support fellow club members. Try to come by 1 o'clock.

The anthem used by FF members throughout the world is "Let There be Peace on Earth". The sentiment seems especially appropriate this year. Words will be projected on the screen so audience members can sing along.

Dennis Dake is ordering beach ball globes of the world for each FFCI member to toss into the audience toward the song's conclusion.

Performances at Ames City Auditorium will be **August 14 and 15th**.

PS. Don't worry if you do not consider yourself a strong singer. We will have piano accompaniment, audience participation, and you can sing softly, if you choose. It is better than a protest sign!

### Let There be Peace on Earth.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God our creator. We are family.  
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, may this be our solemn vow;  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me

**Contact Park Woodle & Dennis Dake to  
confirm your attendance.**



## Celebrate Cinco de Mayo

On **Friday, May 15 at noon** will celebrate Cinco de Mayo, a few days late.

We will gather at Marybeth Buchele's for a potluck lunch. There's ample parking at 4122 Cochrane Parkway or carpool with another FFCI member.

Cinco de Mayo celebrates the Mexican army's unlikely victory over the French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. It symbolizes resilience and unity, serving as a celebration of Mexican heritage and culture, particularly in the United States.

Potluck food items include dishes that feature rice, beans, or corn. There are classics like tacos, enchiladas, and burritos. Think bold flavors like guacamole or salsa with corn chips, tamale pie or quiche with green chilies and cheese.

Try classic desserts like store-bought churros or home-made flan or Tres leches. Mexican desserts are often fruits or fruit salads. Some fruit we import include pineapples, grapefruit, coconuts, strawberries, avocados, limes, and mangoes. If you are not into Mexican cooking, bring fruit or any favorite dish.

Call Marybeth (515-231-9113 C 515-233-6068 H) or Dot Dake (515-292-1145 H 515-291-9145 C) for questions or recipes.



# FFCI Outgoing Journey for 2026

## A Typical Journey with FF Greater Hamilton & Burlington

**September 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

A one-week club to club Journey will start with a welcome party on Thursday evening. The estimated cost of the journey will be \$515. \$25 non-refundable application fee submitted with your application, \$300 for FFGH&B + \$190 FFI Fees. With approximately \$50 for incidentals (such as self-pay meals). This does not include airline/travel fees.



Friday we will be visiting the Niagara Falls area and Saturday we will spend the day at a Country Festival in a lovely rural area of Ontario. Sunday is a free day to spend with our hosts families. Monday we will stroll around one of their community areas followed by a dinner party with club members.

Tuesday will be a day in Toronto, the capital of Ontario as well as the largest city in Canada. On Wednesday, we will tour Hamilton & Burlington area. We will be wishing our new friends farewell on Thursday.

Incoming Journey Coordinator Neil Stephenson, and his team are working on the itinerary for our journey so things may change slightly.



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. The estimated cost of the journey is \$300 for FFGH&B + \$190 FFI Fees (There may be about \$50 of incidentals). This does not include airline/travel fees.

Our club will have first chance, although we will open this opportunity to other members of Friendship Force. Return your completed form and application form by **March 15**.

**Questions: Contact Alta at [altajerbyg@gmail.com](mailto:altajerbyg@gmail.com) or 515-450-8397**



## Coffee and Chat

Twelve FFCI members gathered to have coffee on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 60 Forward at 10 a.m. in the Behren room. Dot Dake, Park Woodle, Stu Huntington, Susan Woodle, Joan Mathews, Judy Mongin, Carole Magilton, Jerry & Alta Byg. We also had 2 guest Ronnie & Dennis Lindeman. Topics discussed: Journey to Canada, Senior Variety Show, Senior Expo on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, blue FFCI shirts available and many, many more topics.

Join us for the next coffee and chat. Invite your friends to join us! Check out the Calendar of Events for our next dates. Watch emails for reminders or any changes.



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

January: 13<sup>th</sup> – Sedahlia Crase, Carole Magilton & Leland Molgaard; 16<sup>th</sup> – Park Woodle

February: 23<sup>rd</sup>- Peggy Faden; 25<sup>th</sup>- Kueier Chung

March: 9<sup>th</sup> – Alta Byg

April: 9<sup>th</sup> – Dennis Dake; 24<sup>th</sup> - Dorothy Dake  
Anniversary: March 4<sup>th</sup> - Alta & Jerry Byg;  
April 27<sup>th</sup> - Dorothy & Dennis Dake

If your birthday or anniversary was missed, please send your information to Susan Woodle [woodle.sue@gmail.com](mailto:woodle.sue@gmail.com).

## \$100 Scholarship towards Conference Ticket!



Interested in attending the 2026 conference? The FFCI board has approved a **\$100 scholarship** towards the \$320 Conference Ticket. Just complete your online registration for North American Regional Conference by clicking on the following link: <https://www.eventleaf.com/e/ffiNA26>

Save your receipt and after attending the conference, send a copy to Jerry Byg, 2127 Coneflower Court, Ames IA 50014 to receive your \$100 scholarship.

# Witchcraft and Skepticism

By Lynn Avant

In October, FFCI members had a virtual journey back to Salem in Colonial times, thanks to a program presented by the Ames Historical Museum (AHM). Ten members of FFCI arrived at AHM on a cool October evening. We were directed to the second floor and into the gathering room, where we were greeted with beverage selections, popcorn, and peanuts. We were seated at tables with other Ame's folk to hear an interesting talk by Dr. Michael Bailey. Dr Bailey is a history professor at Iowa State University. One of his primary interests is in folklore and witchcraft in Europe and their colonies during the late Middle Ages. He talked primarily about

witchcraft in the New England colonies during this time. I was rather surprised to learn that there was also a great deal of skepticism in the

colonies as well as belief. Many of the New England towns reputed the witchcraft of other towns, which is not what Hollywood films tell us. Following the talk we had a lively question-and-answer session, followed by more beverages and snacks.

Following our time together, everyone was able to view the excellent exhibits of the history of Ames and central Iowa that AHM has put

together. It is a comprehensive story of Story County, everyone agreed that it was a job well done. Ginny Huntington remarked that "In addition to greeting some of the Friendship Force gang, we loved having a scary photo taken by the witches caldron." A nice way to end a witchcraft evening.



**Cheryl Binzen (above) posed for a picture for her grandson, over a bubbling caldron, showing him how scary she could be.**



**Charene Starcevic and daughter Susie.**

*Save the Date!*  
**SENIOR EXPO**  
PRESENTED BY *Seniors in Story*  
**FRIDAY, MAY 8TH, 2026**  
**9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.**  
**GATEWAY HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER**  
2100 GREEN HILLS DR, AMES  
**SENIORSINSTORY.ORG**

## FFCI at Senior Expo

FFCI is planning on having a table at the Senior Expo on May 8. We need people to sign up to take an hour so that no one person needs to stay for the whole day. Watch your emails to sign up for your time to tell the guests about your experience with Friendship Force International. Contact Dennis Dake or Park Woodle to sign up for a time to help out.

# FFCI Calendar of Events

Contact the committee: Charene Starcevic at [larcha1623@gmail.com](mailto:larcha1623@gmail.com), Marcia Thompson at [Marciat\\_ames@yahoo.com](mailto:Marciat_ames@yahoo.com), or Dot Dake at [dotdake42@gmail.com](mailto:dotdake42@gmail.com) to sign up for a month. Idea listed are 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 and have them visit.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 7</b></p> <p><b>International Friendship Day Ames Public Library – 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon &amp; 1 p.m. LEO to celebrate St Paddy’s Day at Dublin Bay Irish Pub &amp; Grill. 320 S 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Ames IA 50010 Hosts: Alta Byg &amp; Charene Starcevic</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 17</b></p> <p><b>Board Meeting – 4 to 6 p.m. 2127 Coneflower Ct.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 28</b></p> <p><b>Senior Variety Show Auditions 12:30 – 4 Northminster Presbyterian Church – 20<sup>th</sup> St., Ames – Watch email for more information.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 24 – 27</b></p> <p><b>2026 North American Regional Conference, Memphis, TN - Online Registration</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>April 30</b></p> <p><b>Pella Tulip Festival-day trip - Diane Oppendal and Park Woodle, are hosting a day trip to Pella, Iowa, for pre-Tulip Time viewing. Watch emails for more information.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 8</b></p> <p><b>Senior Expo– 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Volunteers needed to help at the table</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>May 15</b></p> <p><b>Cinco de Mayo/International Lunch - 12 Noon - Host: Marybeth Buchele &amp; Dot Dake 4122 Cochrane Parkway</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>June 11</b></p> <p><b>Actors (Footloose) – Ames Community Theater – Get your tickets at following link: <a href="https://www.actorsinc.org/shows">https://www.actorsinc.org/shows</a></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>June 16</b></p> <p><b>Board Meeting - 4 to 6 p.m. 2127 Coneflower Ct.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>June 27</b></p> <p><b>All Iowa FF in Quad Cities (possible overnight) – Hosts: Alta Byg &amp; Charene Starcevic</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>July</b></p> <p><b>Bandshell Concert &amp; Potluck – Hosts: Lynne VanValin &amp; Co-host needed</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>August 18</b></p> <p><b>Board Meeting - 4 to 6 p.m. 2127 Coneflower Ct.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>August</b></p> <p><b>LEO – Hosts: Cheryl Binzen &amp; Marcia Thompson</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>September 18</b></p> <p><b>Idea: Trivia Afternoon Hosts: Ginny &amp; Stu Huntington</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>October</b></p> <p><b>Idea: October Fest - Hosts: Lynn Avant &amp; Kitty Fisher</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>November 7</b></p> <p><b>Annual meeting at 10 a.m.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>December 5</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Party – Hosts: Charene S. Alta B., Dot D. &amp; Judy M.</b></p>
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## FFI Workshops for March & April

To check out the workshops, log into: [https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign\\_in](https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign_in)

March	April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Member Orientation – March 12, 11:00 AM</li> <li>• Independent Journeys – March 23, 1:30 PM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journey Coordinator Training – April 6, 1:00 PM</li> <li>• New Member Orientation – April 9, 2:00 PM</li> <li>• General Club &amp; Journey Q&amp;A – April 13, 1:00 PM</li> </ul>

# Alta & Jerry's Journey to Mt. Barker and Perth, Australia

By Jerry Byg - Friendship Force Journey Columbia Cascade, USA to Perth, Western Australia and to Mt. Barker and Districts, South Australia. Jerry and Alta went on Friendship Force Journey to Perth and Mt. Baker in Australia from October 26, 2025 through November 12, 2025. We went with the Columbia Cascade, USA Friendship Force Club.

There were 13 ambassadors on this Journey. 8 were members of Columbia Cascade, 2 members from Taos New Mexico, 1 member from Denver Colorado and Jerry and Alta Byg.



Ambassadors were welcomed at the Adelaide airport on Sunday October 26. There are different airport security regulations in Australia. People are allowed to pass through security screening with valid ID and go to the arrival gates to meet passengers before baggage claim. All the ambassadors met their hosts and were taken to their homes. That evening we had the welcome dinner and learned more about other members of the Mt. Barker club.

On Monday, October 27 we went to a local Botanic Garden and visited Mount Baldy to get a panoramic view of the area and Adelaide. After these activities, we had to pack for a bus trip to visit the Australian

outback leaving on Tuesday October 28.

From October 28 to October to Friday October 31 we saw many different sites and marveled at the scenery. We went through wine country and noticed the new vineyards that were being developed. We went through farm land that was arable and producing small grains such as wheat, oats, barley and rye and some hay ground. We went on through grazing area and farther on we got to Flinders area



which is rock outcroppings with sparse trees and stopped at Hawker for 3 days. While driving around, we saw kangaroos and emus in areas near the roads.

We were based in Hawker, a very small dot on the map in the Outback and stayed at a motel that reminded us motels that we used in the 1970's. While in the Flinders, we went on different road trips to view the scenic areas around Hawker.

On Friday, October 31 we left Hawker and returned to Mt. Barker. On Saturday, November 1 we went with our hosts to a farmer's market along with ambassadors and their hosts. Sunday, November 2 was a free day to visit events around Mt. Barker.

Next, we went Gorge Wildlife Park the morning of Monday, November 3 where we were able to see Australian animals such as



kangaroos, emus, wallabies, native birds, and koalas. We all got our picture taken holding a koala. In the afternoon we were at a local winery.

On Tuesday November 4, we visited The Cedars which is a Historic site maintained to exhibit the Heysen Home and Hans Heysen



Studio as well the Artist Walk, Artist's Garden, and coach house. Artist Hans Heysen loved the Flinders and traveled to them in the early 1900's to mid-1950's to capture their native beauty in pencil, charcoal, and paint. Hans would stay weeks in the Flinders using his homemade camper. After returning from The Cedars, we went to the Farewell dinner at a member's dairy farm.

Wednesday, November 5, it was time to leave Mt. Barker and travel to Perth to our next adventure planned by the Friendship Force Club in Perth. We met

our host at the Perth Airport and went to Kings Park for our welcome dinner. Ambassadors and hosts enjoyed conversation and getting to know friends. After the welcome dinner, we went to our host home for the next 7 days.

On Thursday, November 6, we were treated to a walking tour of historic areas in downtown Perth via the train from our Host home. After the walking tour, we had lunch at a senior center. After lunch we were taken to the Perth state parliament buildings to learn about how local government works.

On Friday, November 7, the ambassadors visited Good Samaritan industries plant where disadvantaged people are trained and employed in sorting all donations to facilitate resale or recycling those items and generating income. In the afternoon, we visited the Western Australia Wildlife hospital.



On Saturday, November 8, hosts and ambassadors met for breakfast at Optus Stadium. After breakfast we went across the Matagarup bridge over the Swan River to visit Australia's Friendship Force wall. After the obligatory group photo, our

group proceeded to the Perth mint. This mint is where individuals can buy gold bullion, gold jewelry, diamonds, and other types of jewelry. We also watched a demonstration melting a gold bar and pouring the melted gold back to an ingot. Other fun things were getting to lift a gold bar and getting a souvenir coin stamped, not gold of course.

Sunday November 9, we visited a studio to make our own Mosaic tile. After this activity we went to a local park on the Indian Ocean for a picnic. The rest of the day was walking through beach side shops and then going to a member's home for a home hosted dinner.

Monday, November 10, was a Leisure Day with our hosts Yvette and Terry Hill. Terry took us around their neighborhood to look a Bunnings store (Menards) and to the local beaches near their home. For dinner our hosts prepared pizza using canned cream corn instead of tomato sauce. Surprisingly, it works.

On Tuesday morning, November 11, Ambassadors and hosts went to a mini golf course. After lunch, we visited local, wineries, chocolate shops, a honey shop and exhibition, gin distillery, and other attractions. Today was our farewell dinner night.



Wednesday, November 12, Alta and Jerry left for home and some of the other ambassadors went on to visit Tasmania.

## Upcoming Journey

### *Iowa Quilt Shop Hop Adventure - Cedar Rapids-Iowa City #26414 (MyFF)*

 **Dates:** July 12-19, 2026

 **Spots Available:** 20

 **Cost:** \$950 (includes FFI fees and host club costs). \$400 deposit to reserve your spot. **Costs may be reduced.**

**Find out more about this journey, click on the link:** <https://friendshipforce.myshopify.com/products/the-ultimate-iowa-quilt-shop-hop-adventure-cedar-rapids-iowa-city-26414-myff>

**Deadline to apply: May 1, 2026**

 **Contact Information:** Patty Potter  [pattyspotter1001@gmail.com](mailto:pattyspotter1001@gmail.com)

## YWCA – International Friendship Fair

Friendship Force and ISUWC Culture Sharing: are both about finding out more about other cultures. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, I heard Thi Minh “Sang” Nguyen’s story about growing up in Vietnam. Sang is a Graduate Student in Finance at Iowa State University. Sang also works part-time for the YWCA getting international students and their spouses involved and acclimated to their new home. She helps to organize 4 to 5 International Friendship Fairs each year. International Friendship Fairs help dispel stereotypes and help gain intercultural understanding. The next International Fair will be March 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 to 12 noon. FFCI working with Sang to celebrate Friendship Force International World Friendship Day. Please complete the [IFF Volunteer](#) form to help out.

Let Sang know if you would like to bring some food, man a table if she cannot find someone or if you would like to speak about your experience of traveling to a different country.



Join  
Friendship Force Central Iowa  
To Help  
Celebrate  
St. Patrick's Day (early)  
with lunch at



**Dublin Bay Irish  
Pub & Grill  
March 7<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m.  
320 South 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Ames IA**

Join us right after the International Friendship Fair and Friendship Force International World Friendship Force Day at Ames Public Library.

***Please RSVP to Alta at [altajerbyg@gmail.com](mailto:altajerbyg@gmail.com)  
to reserve your space for lunch by March 2<sup>nd</sup>.***