



friendship force
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

March & April 2025 Newsletter



World Friendship Day
Pot Luck & Optional Costumes
Friday, March 14, 12:30 pm
Lou & Cheryle's home
9035 Prosperity Way, Ft Myers

World Friendship Day is officially recognized on March 1 each year around the world. As former US President Jimmy Carter once said, "International friendship is a powerful antidote to war."

Our dear charter members of our club, **Lou & Cheryle**, offer their beautiful home for a Pot Luck luncheon on March 14th to celebrate the occasion. They will provide drinks and paper products. They encourage everyone to bring their favorite country's dish to share and even dress to fit your entree. Please carpool to minimize street parking around their home. It will be a fun event. Let them know if you are

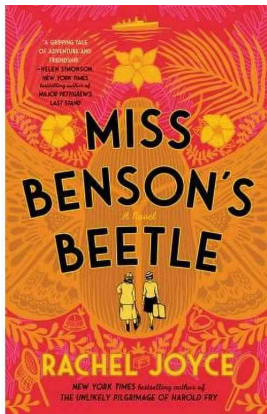
coming by March 12 ([click on Phelps to email](#)) so they have appropriate seating for everyone.

Reciprocal Meeting host Orlando here March 17-20

Michelle Kemp sent a group email with details of social events (St Patrick's Day party on March 17, pizza & games on March 18) and group workshop discussions on March 18 and 19.



This is a great opportunity to learn from one another! Hope to see you there! Questions? [Contact Marci's email](#)

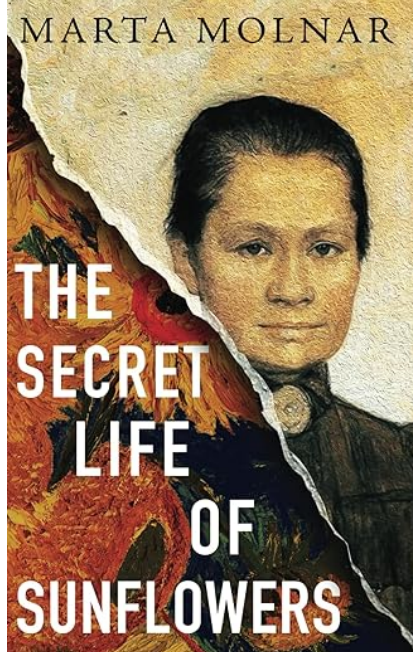


March Book Club Discussion Monday, March 10, 10 AM 257 Lido Drive, Punta Gorda

We rescheduled the book club meeting to discuss a NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER, *Miss Benson's Beetle* by Rachel Joyce. Please join us this time at Joanne Collins' home!

April Book Club Discussion Thursday, April 10, 10 AM 724 Via Tunis, Punta Gorda

We've selected *The Secret Life Of Sunflowers* by Marta Moinar: It is a gripping, inspiring novel based on the true story of Johanna Bonger, Vincent van Gogh's sister-in-law. Maureen Butt will be the leader of the discussion.



General Meeting with Program on Visiting India

Friday, April 11, 10:30 AM
North Fort Myers Library
2001 N Tamiami Trl

Our intrepid travelers, Michelle Kemps and Marci Ellis, are back on the agenda. This time you will be thrilled with their pictures and stories of visiting fabulous India. Afterwards, we will have an optional lunch at a nearby restaurant. Mark your calendar today so that you will be sure to attend!

Outbound Journey to Napa Sonoma Valley FF Club October 3-8, 2025 with pre-trip at Crater Lake National Lodge



Our journey coordinator, **Terese Libby**, advises that the dates have changed for our exciting outbound to California's gorgeous Napa Sonoma Valley to **October 3-8**. The pre-trip to reservation for Crater Lake is okay with **October 1 and 2nd** dates.

From their club's post on FFI, "visits to the Napa and Sonoma wine growing valleys to views of our rugged Pacific Ocean coast, we try to give you a taste of our varied activities and landscape. The Sonoma Mission is the furthest north in California, there are 300+ft redwood trees as well as the World Class Charles M. Schultz museum and fun towns to explore in between. Our farm to table cuisine is a treat and there are beer gardens, olive oil tastings and port makers, too! We are happy to share the bounty of our counties with you!"

The trip is limited to 12 ambassadors and she is now taking "Waiting List" applicants. If you think you want to be on the Waiting List, please click on **Terese's email** and let her know you are interested. Terese has booked rooms at **National Park Lodge at Crater Lake** for those who told her they are interested in the pre-trip and is planning a tour of some of the other sites around the vicinity.



March 14 - World Friendship Force Pot Luck - Lovely home of Cheryle Phelps & Lou Rizk, 9035 Prosperity Way, Ft Myers, FL 33913

March 17 - 20 - Part 2 of Reciprocal Visit, this time we host and welcome Orlando Club members.

April 11 - General Meeting and Program on Visiting Fabulous India - Marci Ellis & Michelle Kemps, presenters, at North Fort Myers Library with luncheon to follow.

May Game Day - Date & location to be determined by Terese and Kim.



Possible Visit from Baku, Azerbaijan November 9-13, 2025

FYI - Some members of our club visited Baku, Azerbaijan a few years ago. Now, the Baku Club would like us to host them in November and hope to send 4 to 6 guests here. Many may not get visas to come, but still, we hope some will.

Just where is Baku? It is located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It is known for the still waters of the Caspian Sea and its historic Inner city that reminds tourists of Dubai and Paris in equal parts!

What an opportunity for us to know fellow Friendship Force members from this intriguing city!

Sue's Wrap-up Report on Inbound Winnipeg Journey

Pictured Below is a Beach Group Shot at the Farewell Party, Ponce Park



What a great group of 10 ambassadors we enjoyed on this most recent journey. I think the reputation of Canadians as being one of the most friendly people in the world has been supported! The feedback from the group on the activities has been very good. What stands out though is any time when they are with our club members. People, more than places, seems to be the most rewarding part of any journey and in the case of our club members who supported this event, that was especially the case!

So many of you went out of your way, hosting extra days, which required more food and driving. We hosted an amazing pot luck welcome brunch with such a wonderful variety of tasty dishes. Michelle's location for the brunch was lovey on the water and the pontoon boat ride always seems to be the biggest hit of the trip.





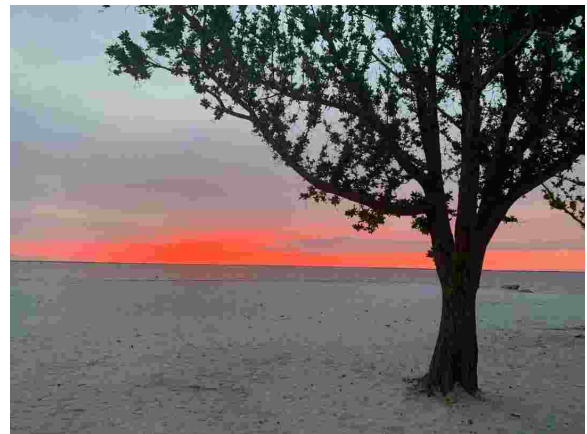
We did attend the play at the Florida Reperatory Theater in Ft. Myers called "BOCA". It was not only funny but spoke to the life style of retired people in Florida. I know I enjoyed it!

Going out with the ambassadors as hosts always seems a problem for me because in season, it is always so busy and crowded that even if you find a place, it is so loud that it is hard to share a conversation. I don't know the solution for this but it might be something to think about.



Our ambassadors loved the Bus Tour at Babcock! Not too crowded with lunch afterwards...gator bites?

Thanks to efforts from our Farewell Party team, they self-catered a delicious Mexican themed picnic. We used the shelter at Ponce for the event and were able to enjoy spreading out to play games and visit with each other. Sunset was a good way to call an end to the evening.



Here are a few more thoughts and some very special thank you's.

When in Orlando, we were given the cost cutting and ecological suggestion that when we have a group event that required plates, etc. that each member *brings their own service for themselves and their ambassadors if they are hosting*. Many put the items in a bag or basket, washed and ready for the next event. Carol is already on this by asking people to bring their own service to our next event.

By self-catering with either pot luck or a few people putting together a meal as we did with the

welcome and farewell, we can really cut costs. Yes, our members prepare and pay for the food but if catered from a restaurant, and the cost divided by the participants, it could come to paying much more by our ambassadors and those members participating. As long as we have the skill and willingness to do this, I think it is worth looking in to. It is rare that this happens more than twice during a season so it is not a constant demand on our talented cooks!

It takes the full club to participate in a journey and so many of our members participated, even by just attending events and showing our club's friendship.

Hosts who do the heavy lifting of any inbound are:

Sue and Rob Linehan

Joanne and Richard Collins

Marci and Roy Ellis

Carol and Chris Nasby

Terese Libby

Michelle Kempes

Candis Penley (Candis is a first time host and was so helpful, even providing extra days for the ambassadors)

Pictured below is Candis with her Canadian ambassador, Carol



Small group dinner hosts who give a break from the hosts having to prepare a meal, also give our ambassadors a chance to visit with some of our other members personally. They also get in to another home, which is all a part of the journey so that they can see how we live in our area.

Thanks goes to:

Priscilla and Hugh McShane

Margie and Clyde Kang

Jo and Jack Cooley

Joanne MacPeek

Maureen and Hank Butt



Even though Margie & Clyde did not rejoin our club, they hosted a meal with an amazing paella above! Thank you!



Maureen & Hank served a delicious chicken marsala !

We had two committees for the welcome and farewell parties. Thanks goes to the following members, many who are doing this for the first time.

Jane McDonald
Beverly Haggerty
Michelle Kempes
Dianne Gooding
Linda Supakoff
Kim Cullinan
Maureen Butt

Special Thanks goes to **Carol and Chris Nasby** who put together the lunch at Edison Ford before the play and helped as an advisor in so many ways. We have been so blessed with Carol as our president!

I was also impressed with the members who just showed up to spend time with the ambassadors and the ones who stayed and helped with set up or clean up who were not on the committees. Thanks to those who stepped up and provided food for the brunch. We also appreciate **Mary Montagne**, an associate member from Minneapolis, who helped with so many of the events and with driving an ambassador. I am so grateful that we have a membership that steps up and puts on a friendly, personal journey experience.

Thank you. I could not have done this without such a great club by my side!



Our 10 Winnipeg Canada Club ambassadors meet Thomas Edison

Missed meeting? Need to Keep Up with our Club?

If you've missed a meeting and want to know what happened, check out club MINUTES found on our FF Website under Membership Tab. Click [minutes](#). Go to minutes and read all about it. So easy!

**CHANGING THE WAY YOU
SEE THE WORLD**

My FFI

The members-only portal, my.friendshipforce.org, is the go-to place for news, journey opportunities, payments, virtual experiences and all other member-relevant information. If you have not yet signed up, please do so.

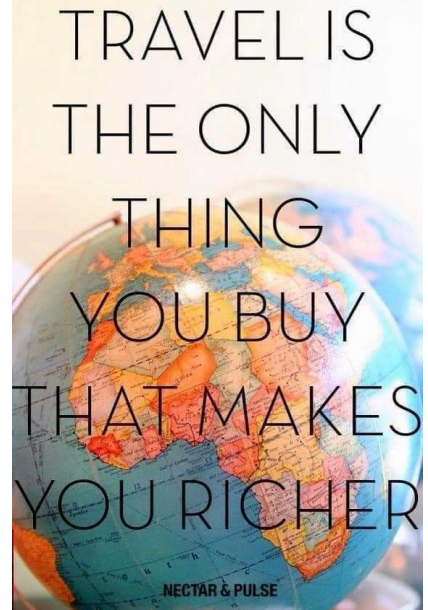
More Travel Opportunities

FFI has posted all club journeys throughout the world for 2025!

Click the link below to review a catalog of Special Journeys that are currently being offered by other FFI clubs. Perhaps there is a journey that interests you

[2024-2025 CLUB GROUP JOURNEYS](#)

[2024-2025 INDEPENDENT JOURNEYS](#)



President's Comments



World Friendship, a Wonderful Thing!

Take a minute to think about the friendships we made last week with our Canadian friends!

Take a minute to think about our friendships made as we traveled to Orlando!

Take a minute to think about the friendships we have made within our Southwest Florida club by participating in the Valentine's Day Wine Tasting Party!

And lastly, but not least, I think about the friendships I have made in Australia, in Indonesia, in Germany, in Brazil, and in many other countries.

Our nation has identified loneliness as a crisis in our culture. Too many people feel left out, not rooted into a community of friends. So we can feel blessed that we have a way to reach out, to connect with each other and to connect with so many people.

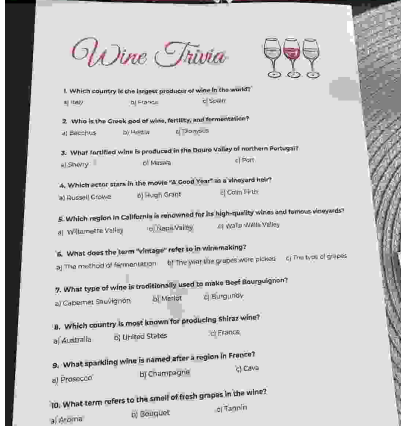
See you on World Friendship Day, March 14th for our club.

Peace and Friendship,

Parting Shots



Oh, what a fun time we had at the Valentine Wine Tasting with treats!



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of
Southwest Florida

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above!

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