



friendship force
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

May 2025 Newsletter



Games & Salad Afternoon
Friday, May 3, 11:00 am
Sue & Rob's home
258 Venezia, Punta Gorda
***RSVP Sue at 941-979-6977**
by May 1 (so enough chairs available)

We're gathering for a fun afternoon of salad and games. Sue asks you to bring your favorite salad to share and whatever you like to drink. She will have iced tea and water available - and also croissants and desserts. Afterwards, we'll split up among the tables to play a game of your choice. You may bring a game of your choice, but know that plenty are available.

As you know many of our snowbird members left for northern climates and will be back usually by October. Therefore, our club will not have formal meetings in the summer months. We encourage members who remain here for the summer to get together spontaneously for a lunch, movie, beach day, play or another event. Just send out an email and before you know it, you will have a group get together.

We will have an Ice Cream Social on August 8, 2 pm at Linda Supakoff's home, 1353 San Mateo, Punta Gorda!

- RSVP even if you have already let her know at the meeting

Announcing Club Matches for 2026

Annually Friendship Force International (FFI) requests clubs throughout the world to complete "match forms" for where clubs would like to travel. Recently, we received the following information.

Inbound Clubs who will visit Southwest Florida:

National Capitol Area, USA in February 2026

Banjarmasin, Indonesia in November 2026

Outbound Journeys where our club will travel:

Memphis, USA in March 2026

Cornwall, UK in May 2026

The above dates are for planning purposes and may not be firm yet. We are seeking club members who would like to be Host Coordinators for the two inbound clubs and also members who would like to be the Journey Coordinators for the outbound trips.

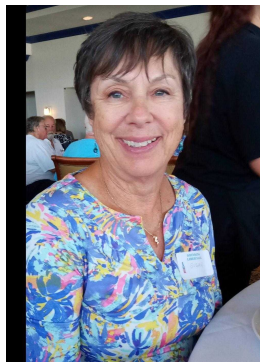
Please click on [Club Bylaws](#) (scroll to page 9) to see how you can be partially reimbursed for your efforts in volunteering to be either a Host Coordinator or Journey Coordinator. Let us know if you have an interest in one of these positions by contacting [Carol's email](#).

Welcome New Members



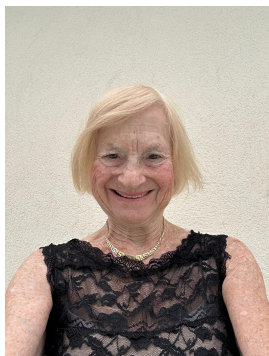
Peggy Jensen

Peggy recently joined our club with her good friend, Susan Hills. They are both widows who like to travel. Peggy lives in Punta Gorda and is a retired administrative assistant.



Susan Hills

Susan also lives in Punta Gorda and is a friend of Sue and Rob Linehan. They both sailed catamarans and enjoyed many journeys on the seas. Her catamaran's name is *Route 66*. She looks forward to traveling with her friend, Peggy Jensen.



Susy Riddle

Susy attended our April meeting and immediately joined the club. She is a resident of Bonita Springs, speaks a little French and loves to swim, dance, read and travel. She is a retired licensed clinical social worker.

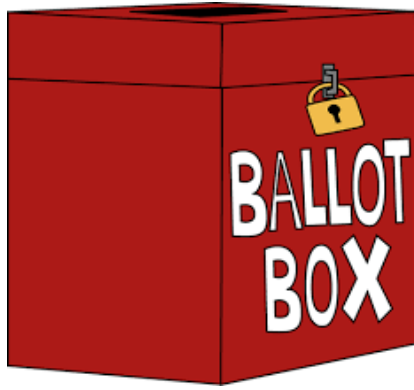
Outbound Journey to Napa Sonoma Valley FF Club
October 3-8, 2025
 with pre-trip at Crater Lake National Lodge



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

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. To apply to go on this journey, please complete the **Journey Ambassador Application & Agreement Form** found at the **FFI Membership Portal** under **Help Center** (left hand side of page), then **Journeys, Club-to-Club Journeys** and send to Terese. Questions? Contact Terese.



We need a President for 2026 - 2027

In preparation for a change in leadership beginning in 2026, our Vice Presidents, **Terese Libby and Judy Carson (per our Bylaws)** are chairing the nominating committee.

Our [Club Bylaws](#) beginning on page 4, outline the duties of all our club officers. Generally club officers serve a two-year term, but we have some (e.g., Carol Nasby) who have held their positions for 3 years. For your information, current members who have been past presidents are Lou Rizek, Merline (Luvvy) Kovacik, Joanne Collins, Sue Linehan, Michelle Kemps, Maureen Butt with Linda Supakoff (shared role), and of course, Carol Nasby.

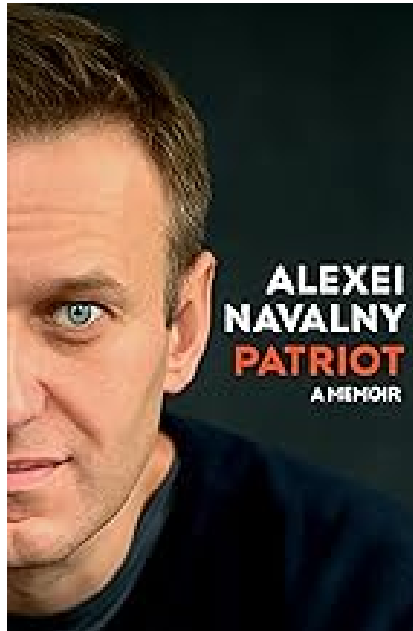
Our Vice Presidents are seeking a volunteer (*or it can be a shared office with two volunteers*) for President. You don't have to have experience because there are many past mentors who can help you lead the club.

We are so pleased and grateful to hear from Terese and Judy that Jane McDonald has agreed to assume the role of Treasurer. Candis Penley will take over the newsletter and membership chair (not a voting member). Diane Gooding will be our social chairperson (not a voting member). **Jane, Candis and Diane** are new members who are stepping up to help. We so appreciate you!

The two current vice presidents, Terese and Judy, and secretary Marci Ellis, have agreed to continue on next year. They are all board voting members. We appreciate you, too!

In order for the club to continue we [must find a new President or two to share the Presidency](#). Please consider helping your club by agreeing to be President. Election of all new club officers will occur at the Holiday Party on December 14, 2025.

Book Club Selection for November



November 18, Tuesday at 10 AM
Carol's home
2509 Deborah Dr, Punta Gorda

The powerful and moving memoir of a fearless political opposition leader who paid the ultimate price for his beliefs.

Please join our book club for discussion of this interesting memoir.



June - July - Summer Break - No activities scheduled, why not get those in Florida together?

August 8, Friday at 2 pm - Free Ice Cream Social at Linda's, 1353 San Mateo Dr, Punta Gorda RSVP required by August 4.

September - to be determined

October 3-8 - Club Outbound Journey to **Napa Valley** with pre-trip to **Crater Lake, Oregon**

October 17 - General Meeting and Program on *Visiting Italy and how it has changed throughout the years* - Margie Kang, presenter, at North Fort Myers Library with luncheon to follow.

November 8 - 13 - Inbound from Baku, Azerbaijan. 6 ambassadors have their visas. Marci & Michelle are Host Coordinators. *Will you host? Do a group dinner? Drive them around?*

November 18 - Book Club Discussion, 10 am, Carol's home, 2509 Deborah Dr, Punta Gorda

November 21 - Exploring the Antarctic from cruise ships - Judy Carson, Joanne & Richard Collins, presenters at North Fort Myers Library with luncheon to follow

December 14 - Holiday Party at the Lake Fairways Clubhouse, North Fort Myers. This will be a potluck and gift exchange with the annual meeting to vote for next year's officers



Visit from Baku, Azerbaijan November 8-13, 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 expect to send 6 ambassadors here. Many have already received their visas!

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!

Marci Ellis and Michelle Kemps are the host coordinators who will be managing their visit here. They will need volunteers to host in your home, be a day host, cook a small group dinner and coordinate Welcome and Farewell Events. Will you help them? Contact them today on what you are willing to do.

[Email Marci](#) or [Email Michelle](#). What an opportunity for us to know fellow Friendship Force members from this intriguing city!

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.

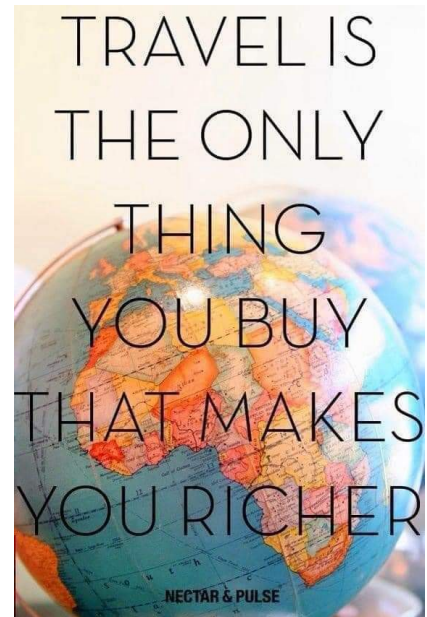
More Travel Opportunities

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



The PASSWORD to JOY is GRATITUDE.

Nothing lifts up the heart more than counting one's blessings. And we certainly have a lot to be grateful for as a Friendship Force club.

We are grateful for the **strong leadership** for the past 34 years of our club's existence. We are grateful for the continued growth of our club as we look to the future.

We are grateful for the **friendships** we have made through the years, here in our corner of the world and around the globe. Many of us continue to keep in touch with friends we have met along the way. (Example: I am meeting in London this May a friend, Roswitha, who was on our trip to Morocco last October)

We are so grateful for the **new people who are stepping into leadership roles**, as time moves on, this is so important.

I have prioritized two things in my time as president. One thing was to **increase social activities** to strengthen the friendship here, and now. Two, was to **increase our membership** and **to train up the new people**. In that direction, we have had two new member orientations, one last December when we did the **Christmas coffee** at my house. And now, recently we had another new membership orientation gathering at the **Tiki Hut** to share information and to welcome our latest new members.

I hope that we can continue to do these gatherings twice a year, and we can continue to use the **New Member Orientation booklet** that we have put together to prepare new people to participate in our fun.

I am so grateful for the **teams who help with welcoming ambassadors** from abroad, with hosting them, and feeding them. It takes a lot of organization! And I am grateful for **Journey Coordinators who take on planning and coordinating our journeys** here in the US and abroad.

And I am very grateful for the **opportunities ahead of us** as we prepare for the Incoming visits and the outgoing journeys ahead. Let us continue to find the joy in these challenges.

Peace and Friendship, Carol



Parting Shot - Letter from FFI

Dear Friendship Force Family,

In a world that sometimes feels more divided than united, our mission—to promote world peace and understanding by creating an environment where individual friendships can be established across the barriers that separate people—has never been more important.

We are living in times of political tension. But we must remember: our work is

not political. It is personal. It is human. It is about meeting face to face, heart to heart, and building understanding where it may not have existed before. Let's be clear—Friendship Force does not exist to take sides in any conflict. We exist to bring people together in spite of conflict. Political challenges may arise. Borders may grow tense. But those are precisely the moments when our work is most vital.

As we continue this work, we carry with us the legacy of our organization's founder, Wayne Smith, and our long-time supporter, President Jimmy Carter. They believed deeply in the power of citizen diplomacy—that individuals, not just governments, could bring peace and build bridges across cultural and political divides. Their vision still guides us today. Their lives remind us that just one person's commitment to peace and understanding can cause ripples across the world. We cannot let political challenges distract us from our purpose. Instead, let them strengthen our resolve.

Now is the time to lean into our mission—to continue opening our homes, sharing our lives, and extending our hands in friendship. This is how understanding grows. This is how peace begins.

Thank you for your dedication to this extraordinary organization. Thank you for standing strong for friendship, even when it's not easy. The world needs us—now, more than ever.

In friendship,
Donna Simek
Chair of the Board
Friendship Force International

**Friendship Force of
Southwest Florida**

Email Us



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Group Facebook Page! Click
FaceBook icon above!***

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