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**FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF CENTRAL  
ARIZONA NEWSLETTER**  
February 2025

**2025 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS**

President Nancy Mueller - 608-838-3575  
Vice President - Maggie Wittenberg  
623-688-4245  
Treasurer - Ruth Noble 602-920-8680  
Secretary - Chris Kastella 208-691-4610

Journey Coordinator - Richard Mueller  
Membership - Maggie Wittenberg  
Newsletter - Nancy Unferth nferth@aol.com  
Website - Bill Kram  
Activities- Pat Forsythe



**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

February is often seen as the month of love, with Valentine's Day inspiring reflections on affection, connection, and closeness. But love is not limited to romantic relationships; it also extends to global friendships and international bonds that unite people across cultures. In an increasingly interconnected world, February serves as a reminder of how love transcends borders, creating ties that strengthen understanding and empathy among nations. Whether it's through shared traditions, digital connections, or cross-cultural collaborations, these relationships form the foundation of a more united world. As we celebrate love this month, it's also an opportunity to appreciate the diverse friendships that shape our global community. Embracing love in all its forms, from personal to international, encourages peace, mutual respect, and cooperation on a larger scale.

**WE CARE**

We wish a speedy recovery to Friendship Force member **Peggy Tweedy** who fell and is now in rehab. Always looking for ways to tell others about FFI, Peggy is using her 1-1 time with rehab staff to recruit new club members. Peggy welcomes phone calls at 623-695-1611. Cards can be sent to P.O. Box 2243, Sun City AZ. 85372.

**Treasurer Report Ending:**  
**December 31, 2024**  
**Club Account:**  
**Income: \$1053.50**  
**Disbursement: \$335.92**  
**Dec 31, 2T024 Balance: \$5088.81**

**Journey Account:**  
**Income: -0-**  
**Disbursement: -0-**  
**Dec 31, 2024 Balance: \$2,162.48**  
**Disbursement: -0-**

**Dues to be paid by January 1, 2025. \$40 per person. Make checks payable to Friendship Force of Central Arizona. Send to Ruth Shaw, Treasurer, 4021 N. 45th Place, Phoenix AZ 85018**

**PLEASE PAY DUES**

**Board Meeting Wednesday, February 12, 4:00 pm Zoom**

### MARK YOUR 2025 ACTIVITY CALENDARS

**Sunday February 9**, Merci Train, McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park, 7301 E Indian Bend Road, Scottsdale, RSVP and Questions: Pat Forsythe – 414-803-5704 Join the Central AZ Friendship Force for a fun filled Sunday adventure to the Merci Train on Feb 9th. This is such a great opportunity to learn about a time in our history and how grateful another country can be for the assistance provided by the US.

We'll start with lunch at 11:30 at Wildflower, 7701 North Scottsdale Rd (cross road of Indian Bend and Scottsdale Rd), Scottsdale AZ. Anticipate costs for lunch range from \$15 to \$25.

After lunch we will journey across Scottsdale Rd to 7301 Indian Bend Rd to Stillman Railroad Park. We will meet in front of the main reception building at 12:45 to attend the dedication ceremony and unveiling of the historical marker commemorating the historical significance of the special relationship between France and the United States following World War II. This is a free event and non FFI guests are welcome!

RSVP requested and if any questions, please call Pat Forsythe 414.803.5704. Carpooling will be available and you must let Pat know when you RSVP. Carpooling will meet at 10:45 at Sun City Library, Bell and 99th.

Click here for more info at <http://mercitrain.org/>

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR 4x4 Friendship Force of Central Arizona for 2025 Will be Social Gathering with a Purpose - Congregate, Communicate, Activate

Announcements about FFI and FFCAZ Speakers – student or member of cultural group or family member.

**Review Saturday January 4th**, New Year was kicked off at the HANGING GARDENS RESTAURANT! Twenty one Central AZ Friendship Force members and their guests enjoyed their choice of sumptuous meals and great conversations. Nancy Mueller reviewed the club's upcoming activities of:

- Jan 2025 - Vulture City Tour
- Feb 2025 - Merci Train Tour
- April 2025 - Antelope Canyon Mini-Journey
- June 2025 - Northern CO Outbound Journey
- Oct 2025 - Thailand Inbound Journey
- Nov 2025 - National Capital Inbound Journey



**Tuesday February 4x4**, we will be meeting on the patio at the **A to Z Polish Market** 17221 Litchfield Rd. #50 Surprise. At 4 pm our friend from Poland, Kathy, will be sharing some of her favorite things about her homeland. If you are interested in eating, we invite you to come early and check out the offerings of the deli so that you have your food in hand before she starts speaking. The patio is not large so also consider bringing a chair. RSVP and Questions: Diane Francom – 435-279-3687

NOTE: A general membership meeting will be held after the program finishes.

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**Tuesday March 4x4**, we will gather at the Surprise Civic Center Plaza and walk through the Xeriscape garden, the city hall gallery, and the Arts HQ gallery, individually and in small groups. We will then drive to the Surprise Regional Library Park 16089 N Bullard and enjoy a potluck of sorts at the picnic tables by the lake. Again, an extra chair might be a good idea. RSVP and Questions: Diane Francom – 435-279-3687

**Friday April 4x4 pm.** Real Thai and Sushi, 13749 N Litchfield Rd, Ste G109, Surprise AZ 602-515-1473. Meet the staff members from Thailand. Learn about their spices and style of cooking. Discover cultural facts about Thailand’s friendly people and tropical landscapes. Hear the latest information about the October/November inbound Friendship Force journey from Chang Mai Thailand. RSVP and Questions: Diane Francom – 435-279-3687

**Sunday May 4x4pm.** Bilbianos, 11001 N 99th Ave., Peoria. 623-972-0202 Enjoy Mexican food from flautas to fajitas in a homey, festive space. Come at 3:30 since they close at 6 pm. Make new friends with members from the Sun City Spanish Club. RSVP and Questions: Diane Francom – 435-279-3687.

**FF CENTRAL ARIZONA BADGES**

I will be ordering the name badges after the 4 X 4 gathering in Feb. Please bring \$10.00 to pay for your badge at that gathering. **All** orders must be pre-paid.  
Gordy Birschbach (Badges Chair person)  
414-588-4985

**VULTURE CITY MINE GHOST TOWN TOUR**



On Thursday, January 16, 12 members explored the American West, literally on the dirt backroads that led us to circle around until we successfully found the entrance to this historic mining community that helped Wickenburg become a bustling town. Wickenburg is the oldest town north of Tucson and was established in 1863. Vulture City Mine is located in the beautiful Sonoran Desert, 12 miles outside of the town.

Our tour led us through restored buildings and remaining artifacts as we enjoyed a sunny day on a 1/2 mile gravel path walk through the once booming mining town. We saw the machinery, assay office, cookhouse, brothel, post office, Henry Wickenburg’s original home and of course the infamous Hanging Tree! Can you imagine, today this location hosts destinations weddings!

Lunch was on the patio overlooking the golf course at Rancho de los Caballeros where we were entertained by 2 road runners, hummingbirds, and a very vocal barred owl. Thanks to Pat for organizing this social and educational activity.

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### **ANTELOPE CANYON**

#### **Mini Journey**

**– April 6, 7 & 8 –**

**Limit 20 Ambassadors**

#### **Itinerary**

*Day 1—Sunset Crater, Wupatki, Walnut Canyon Natl Monument*

*Day 2—Horseshoe Bend, Antelope Canyon, Glen Canyon Dam*

*Day 3—Montezuma Castle*

#### **Total Cost**

Per FFI Ambassador is \$500 with **\$150**

**deposit payable to**

Central AZ Friendship Force, c/o Pat Forsythe,  
9702 W Oak Ridge Dr,

Sun City, AZ 85373 due **Feb 10, 2025**. Questions call 414.803.5704

Includes two nights lodging, partial meals, admissions and transportation.

Once you are accepted as an FFI Ambassador Reimbursement of deposit will only occur if another FFI Ambassador takes your place.

**Must be able to walk 3 miles on uneven, sandy, rock surface!**

Any overage more than \$20 will be reimbursed

*Private vehicles will be used and each vehicle will be reimbursed \$50.00 per FFI Ambassador.—*

### **INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

February 15-16 9a-5p **World**

**Championship Hoop Dance Contest** at the Heard Museum, 2301 N Central Ave., Phoenix. With over 100 contestants from various tribal backgrounds, it features live music, singing, and drumming

**The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Polish Festival** is February 22 (Saturday) 10a-8p and 23(Sunday) 10a-4p at Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish, 2828 W Country

Gables Dr., Phoenix. Food and folk dancing.

**Phoenix Chinese 2025 Lunar New Year Festival** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 2.

Steele Indian School Park, 300 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix.

Free admission. Traditional dragon and lion dances, live music, martial arts, folk performances and authentic Asian cuisine, cultural displays and activities for all ages. phoenixchineseweek.org.

**The 29th Annual Greater Phoenix Jewish Film Festival (GPJFF)** will run from February 13 to March 2, 2025, at Harkins Theaters in Scottsdale, Chandler, and Peoria. Showcasing 28 captivating films from around the globe. [www.gpjff.org](http://www.gpjff.org)

### **NORTHERN COLORADO – June 23<sup>rd</sup> through June 29<sup>th</sup> Journey**

A fun filled journey will occur this June to Northern CO where we will visit the areas of Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland! Everyone should plan on arriving at a location TBD in Northern CO by June 23rd and we will leave by noon, June 29th (Monday to Sunday). Plans are underway to spend one day exploring each city, hopefully, one day exploring Rocky Mountain National Park (Trail Ridge Road) and the Estes Park area and one free day to share with your host.

**Cost of \$525.00pp**

**Host Club Fee - \$300**

**FFI Night Fee - \$150**

**Club Administration Fee - \$25**

**Contingency/Earned Seat Fee - \$50**

Electronic application(s) are due March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to [kastella@msn.com](mailto:kastella@msn.com) (please write “Northern CO Journey #25322 Application + your name” in the subject line). Applications

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can be found on the FFI website or picked up at monthly 4x4's.

Make checks payable for \$525.00 to Central AZ Friendship Force Journey #25322. Mail to Sandy Jordan, 17030 N. 105<sup>th</sup> Ave, Sun City, AZ 85373 journey treasurer by March 30<sup>th</sup>. Checks will not be cashed until members are accepted as journey ambassadors and you are notified of acceptance. (Any overage of money paid greater than \$25 will be refunded to Ambassadors after completion of journey.)

Transportation will be the responsibility of each Ambassador. Generally, it is cost effective to fly to Denver and schedule shuttle to your hosts city in Northern CO. Like most journeys, the days will be active meaning several hours on one's feet and walking 30 to 45 minutes. Anticipate walking on uneven surfaces yet not much change in elevation from the surrounding area.

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

**Maggie Wittenberg**



When I was 9 along with my parents and brother I legally came to the United States

from England. The state we choice was Minnesota due to many of our relatives earlier who escaped Poland when the Russians evaded.

In 1975 I met my husband Ed and we became rental landlords and continued doing that for over 40 years along with my career of being a bookkeeper. I was fortunate to be able to retire at the age of 50 and come to Arizona. I lost my Ed in 2005 due to a automobile accident. My hobbies consist of playing many games and cards, making cards and doing stain glass. My children are my rescue dogs Bella and Ginger.

I also seem to be voted onto numerous boards, as I am now Vice Chair of the Arizona Friendship Force which I joined two years ago. I also volunteer with the Surprise fire dept maintaining lock boxes.

**Gordon "Gordy" Birschbach**



In 1961 I started my 56 year career in plastic packaging at the warehouse level and concluded as the general manger and packaging engineer of the same company. Having eight children, I spent much time at athletic and academic functions. My passion for helping people has prompted me to raise a vegetable garden for Saint Vincent de Paul food pantries. My eight children live in

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Wisconsin which allows me to visit them often throughout the year. I am in Arizona and I volunteer with the City of Surprise Fire Department Crisis Response program maintaining lock boxes on residential homes.

My first experience in 1996 with THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE program was a trip to SOUTH AFRICA which peaked my interest in their programs. I am a member of the F F group in Milwaukee Wisconsin where I live in the summer months and a member of F F C A on my winter vacation.

## **EXCECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

**January 9th, 2025**

Attendees: Nancy Mueller - President, Ruth Shaw Noble - Treasurer, Maggie Wittenberg – Vice President, Chris Kastella - Secretary.  
Guests: Gordy Birschbach.

The meeting was called to order at 10:35 AM and with no prior minutes available, consensus was reached to proceed with approval of minutes going forward. Two items were added to the agenda of discussion about what is needed on the website and developing a policy of determining how ambassadors are selected to fill a journey when more ambassadors wish to participate than space available.

First it was determined the club should have a **monthly board meeting** (second Wed of every month via Zoom). The meeting will be open to any member, should they wish to attend, and if the board needs to meet privately due to privacy issues, then they will excuse everyone except the board for an executive session after the monthly board meeting. 4x4 events will occur and after each event members may stay for a general meeting (approx. 5:45 pm).

RuthSN presented the **Treasurer's Report** and noted that all expenditures have been

correctly recorded. NancyM and ChrisK performed a visual audit on records the RuthSN has for the organization (see attached). Questions do remain regarding who and how the club website is being funded as no records were found. More research to follow.

NancyM lead a discussion on how the club will handle **receiving applications for memberships** going forward. It is critical that our website has the correct application (MaggieW will call new member submitting an old application with an incorrect amount paid for dues). ChrisK will forward the updated application with the corrections requested to all board members. Going forward the handling process will be as follows –

- 1 .Application and Membership fee is received by Treasurer - RuthSN
- 2 .Email sent to MaggieW, from RuthSN, with copy of application
- .3. MaggieW adds info to Membership List which she emails out in Feb and Aug to all members. MaggieW will also contact new members welcoming them into club and request a photo plus develop a bio which will be included in the newsletter welcoming our newest member.

Discussion was held regarding possibility of having **membership list** on our website, however until we have individual logons preventing the public from viewing information, the membership list be emailed to members. If possible, a membership booklet will be developed however that will be a bit in the future. Many thanks to the work Ruth Shaw Noble has conducted in working with FFI to clear up active and inactive members so members can access their MYFFI page. A few members who belong to multiple clubs are still in the works however, her efforts are nearly complete!! Wahoo!!!!

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GordyB reviewed options for **ordering badges**, and it was decided to purchase from FFI and use full color with new logo (see above).

Journey coordination works continues for the out bound **Northern CO journey** - June 23<sup>rd</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup> and National Capitol and Thailand inbound journeys in Oct and Nov.

The reviewed and discussed our options for possible **journeys in 2026**. We will request an outbound journey to Europe, an outbound in the US with another week in Canada. We will also offer to host.

A policy was discussed and is attached, if the club has **journey opportunities** which are **oversubscribed**. Hopefully this will rarely be needed. It is noted that ALL club journeys require that participants are 1<sup>st</sup> a member of the Central AZ Club. If space is available than another club's member(s) (i.e. Tucson, Oregon, Wisconsin, etc.) may be allowed to participate. Anyone may participate in the club 4x4. It was noted that our upcoming FFI activity to Tucson will require the \$25 fee to be paid to FFI Intl.

The board also discussed the **newsletter process** for providing information to NancyU.

Information due by 15<sup>th</sup> of the month  
Draft to Nancy M by the 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Newsletter Published 25<sup>th</sup> of each month

Newsletter will include president's message, meeting minutes, photos, treasurer's report, journey information and list of board along with phone numbers.

NancyM and ChrisK will **develop draft brochures** for board review.

Submitted by Chris Kastella, Secretary