

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

**2025 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

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Newsletter - Nancy Unferth nferth@aol.com
Website - Bill Kram
Activities - Pat Forsythe

**National Capitol Area Inbound
Update**

We are sorry to inform our Friendship Force of Central Arizona club members that the inbound journey from the District of Columbia area has **cancelled** their journey to Arizona. It was a three- part trip and they did not have enough ambassadors. Thank you to those who were ready to offer their support. Sue LaVacque and Shirley Schwartz, Host Coordinators.

**Thailand Friendship Force Club to
Central Arizona Friendship Force Club
October 29 - November 5, 2025**

Everyone in the FF Central Arizona Club is invited to all activities with the exception of the 1st of November and Small Dinners. I do need to know numbers of people that will be joining us. Please sign up for these events by sending an email to yamashib@hotmail.com before the **15th of October**. All food costs or entry fees will be the individual's responsibility.

Bonny Yamashita, Host Coordinator
See the schedule on next page



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is the time when most of our Central Arizona Friendship Force club members travel to be with family or to tour a different part of the states or world. It's interesting to notice how quickly two people meeting for the first time try to find a common thread — Where do you live? Where did you live before? How many children do you have? What work keeps you busy? What are your hobbies? This is finding a way to be friendly and to build bridges.

In the April 2025 open letter from Donna Simek, the FFI Board Chair, Donna writes that the Friendship Force was founded on citizen diplomacy, the idea that individuals, not just governments, can bring peace and build bridges across cultural and political divides. Let us use our club to build bridges with our in-bound and out-bound journeys and among our own club members.

2025 CALENDAR

October 4 - 4pm Social gathering at Surprise Regional Library Park, 16089 N. Bullard, Surprise near the pond. Bring a friend, a dish to pass, your own dinnerware and your own drink. RSVP and questions Diane Francom 435-279-3687
October 29-November 4 - Chiang Mai Thailand inbound
November 4 - 4pm Don Ruben's Mexican Food, 11340 West Bell Road, Surprise
November 17-24 National Capitol Area (Washington DC). cancelled
Thursday December 4 - Holiday Party, Kuntz Recreation Center, Sun City West, Dinner and entertainment

**Thailand Friendship Force Club to Central
Arizona Friendship Force Club
October 29 - November 5, 2025**

Activities

Oct 29, Wed

1:15PM Pick up Ambassadors at the airport

4:30PM \$5 Welcome Party Potluck, Kuentz Recreation Center, 14401 RH Johnson Blvd, Sun City West 85375 in the Kiva Room #5, Chicken will be provided, bring a dish to share

Oct 30, Thur

\$10 entry fee 10:00 Huhugam Ki Museum, 10005 E Osborn Rd, Scottsdale, Indian Village.

Meal at Indian Taco Stand

5:30 Trunk and Treat at Dysart Community Center, 14414 N El Mirage, El Mirage, AZ

6:30 Small Dinners, with a Thanksgiving Theme

Oct 31, Fri

10:00 Tour of Fire House 301 in Surprise, 16750 N Village Dr E, Surprise, AZ. Free

11:30 Sack Lunch at the Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard, Surprise, near the pond. Water will be provided or bring your own.

1:00 Tour of the Surprise Police Dispatch Department. Requested but not confirmed.

3:00 Swimming Party and Dinner at Poppy's Resort, 10524 W Bellarose Dr, Sun City, AZ
Dinner of chili and cornbread. This event is free but bring your own drinks and drinks for the guests. NO GLASS BOTTLES may be taken into the pool area.

Nov 1, Sat

This day is with the Hosts and Guests.

Nov 2, Sun

Free day

9:00 Walk in the White Tanks County Park with Richard Mueller as the tour guide.

4:30 Dinner at The Longhorn Steak House, hosted for our guests by Julie Soske. All others pay for your meals. Julie was a long time Hollywood resident, worked at some of the biggest studios and was well known at the Polo Lounge. Ask her anything about the movie stars.

Nov 3, Mon

Morning can be used to gather what is needed for our cooking class by going to one of the international markets

12:15 Country Western Dance Club, RH Johnson Center, Social Hall at the end of the building near Fry's. The beginners class starts at 12:30 and lasts 45 minutes. After that you can stay and try out your new skills or leave. \$8-10

4:30 Cook and eat at 9702 W Oak Ridge Dr, Sun City, AZ 85351. We will teach the Ambassadors how to cook something American and they will teach us something from Thailand. We will share those dishes for dinner.

Nov 4, Tue

10:00 Sun City Adventure tour. We will explore the history of the Sun Cities and visit the recreation centers seeing all that is available in a retirement community.

Lunch will be at one of the many locations in the area. BYO

4:00 Our 4X4 at Don Ruben's Mexican Food, 11340 W Bell Road, Suite 125, Surprise, AZ 85378. This will also be our farewell. BYO

Nov 5, Wed

8:00 AM Our guests will leave for the Airport

THAILAND

Thailand is a southeast Asian country. It's known for tropical beaches, opulent royal palaces, ancient ruins and ornate temples displaying figures of Buddha. In Bangkok, the capital, an ultramodern cityscape rises next to quiet canal-side communities and iconic temples. There are nearby beach resorts.

Chiang Mai is a major city and cultural capital in mountainous northern Thailand. It is known for its ancient temples, vibrant markets, and a unique cuisine. It offers a laid-back atmosphere compared to Bangkok. This city served as the Capital of the ancient Lanna Kingdom and preserves much of its historical architecture including the old city walls and moat.

WAYS TO TRAVEL WITH FRIENDSHIP FORCE

1. **Travel with your local club on an out-bound journey.** FF Central Arizona members traveled to FF Northern Colorado in June 2025. This was a reciprocal journey since FF Northern Colorado visited Arizona in 2024. A year in advance, FFI connects 2 clubs from around the world for journeys. Members do the planning.
2. Some club members have **dual membership with another club**, often because they are snowbirds. Chris Kastella is a FF Central Arizona Club member and a member of Oregon Mid-Willamette. When Chris was the outbound journey leader to San Antonio for her Oregon club, she and Diane Francom, both FFCAZ members, traveled to Texas. Chris announced this journey to both her clubs.
3. Some journeys have openings and these **openings are posted on the FFI website for members-at-large. (friendshipforce.org)**. Nancy and Richard Mueller traveled to the FF Washington DC area with a FF club from Albuquerque in spring 2025 to see the cherry blossoms.
4. Join your **club member only travel event**. In March 2025 eighteen FFCAZ members traveled to Antelope Canyon for a three day exploration planned by our club members.
5. **Independent Journeys are listed on the FFI website**. These are 3 day solo journeys between members coordinated through FFI. Details are determined between hosts and guests.

ANTELOPE CANYON EXPLORATION Central Arizona Friendship Force Antelope Canyon Journey April 6-8, 2025 18 Club members participated

Dear Diary
From Gordy, Renate, Molly, Maggie
April 6, 2025

After gathering in our carpools, we headed north on Highway 17 towards Walnut Canyon, our first stop on the itinerary. We saw many dying cactus due to the past two years of drought.

There were two tours, the Rim Tour and the Lower Tour at Walnut Canyon. The group with limited walking took the Rim Tour while others took the Lower Tour.

The Rim Tour was almost a fourth of a mile from the face of the mountain that showed the ancient dwellings. We were in awe of how the inhabitants found this area back in the 12th century. There were no manuals to show how to build or find suitable dwellings. The need to find vegetation and wildlife for food and survival was provided by the mountain. Bighorn sheep, deer and fish were in the area. Water was in the lower part of the canyon. There were trails from alcoves to dwellings. It was obvious that the inhabitant's survival instincts worked overtime to provide for their survival. We then enjoyed an informative video about the inhabitants and their life and history. We all met at picnic tables along the path to enjoy the lunch that we had brought with us.

Next we headed to Sunset Crater to view a video about the volcanoes in that area. Some of our group went for a close up look at the lava fields and some went to Wupatki.

At Wupatki information center we viewed the remains of buildings and the ball courts.

We all gathered at the Clarion Hotel for social time with much needed snacks and drinks. Groups made decisions on where they wanted to eat. Some chose a steak house and others a Mexican restaurant to end a most amazing and incredible first day of our three day trip.

Dear Diary
From Dave and Debbie Hjortland
April 7, 2025

The excursions of Monday, April 7, 2025, began at 8:30 a.m. with the group caravanning to Horseshoe Bend, a highlight of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The city of Page recently constructed a large parking lot about 4 miles south of Page that enabled visitors to park securely and hike $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on an accessible trail to the spectacular overlook. (And the city reaps \$10 per car as well...). Horseshoe Bend is named for a meander of the Colorado River in the red-hued Glen Canyon sandstone cliffs and the overlook sits about 1,000 feet above the river.

The next stop was to view the Glen Canyon Dam at the Carl Hayden Visitor Center, a couple miles north of Page. The visitor center had a wealth of information about the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, the dam, its history and impact on the water and power needs of the southwest. Plus, there were stunning views of the Glen Canyon Dam, which was completed in 1963.

We met back at the Clarion at 11:30 a.m. to “lunch” on the snacks provided by Pat and Al Forsythe, the organizers of this excursion, that had been planned for the previous night’s daily roundup but had missed when we arrived at the hotel later than expected. We had a couple hours to ourselves before meeting at 2:00 p.m. to gather for our tour of the Upper Antelope Canyon.

Our tour company, Tsé Bighanilíni, was located a couple miles east of Page. We were put into two groups of 9 and shuttled over a bumpy unpaved road to the Upper Antelope Canyon. Our group’s Navajo guide was Wyatt, but we never saw his face – all the guides wore face-protector scarves and sunglasses. Wyatt explained the geology of the canyon, shared information about the Navajo culture, and was invaluable in making sure that each of us had beautiful photographs of this awesome slot canyon. The canyon was formed by flash flooding and winds, which created narrow passageways and flowing shapes in the orange-tinged sandstone. It was magnificent, and for most of us, the highlight of the trip.

After returning to the hotel, we enjoyed appetizers and drinks and shared our thoughts about the trip before heading to dinner. We thought — This was our first trip and it was wonderful.



Dear Diary
From Pat Forsythe
April 8, 2025

Groups determined their own activities and routes for the return to Sun City.

This group took a boat ride on Lake Powell. They saw lots of millionaire yachts and some ate at a floating restaurant. Others traveled to Horseshoe Bend or Cameron Trading Post on the way home.



**TRAVELING WITH FRIENDSHIP FORCE
TO SAN ANTONIO — CHRIS KASTELLA
AND DIANE FRANCOM**

From the Texas size welcome dinner with BBQ, variety of salads and desserts to the hauntingly beautiful missions, Riverwalk boat tour, fields of bluebells planted by Lady Bird Johnson and the mesmerizing Japanese Gardens built from a limestone and cement factory rock quarry to the amazing send off with great food, lively entertainment and much laughter; the ambassadors from OR, AZ and UT renewed and built new friendships with our hosts and their fellow San Antonio Friendship Force members. San Antonio, with a past steeped in history and culture from both American and Mexico, provided ambassadors with tastes, smells, visual experiences and memories which all participants eagerly embraced and absorbed into their lives. A journey with many memories.



Hosts and Ambassadors

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Debra and David Hjortland – North Oaks
Minnesota and Sun City

Debra: I'm 74 (gasp) and a grandmother of 3 darling grandchildren. I retired 10 years ago from the Federal Reserve (the US Central Bank) having worked there for almost 30 years as a project manager and analyst in the payments area. My husband David and I have been married for 47 years and have two children. Both our children live in the Twin Cities. Our son Davis was adopted from Korea and is single. Our daughter is married and she and her husband have three children, ages 5, 3, and 6 months. My hobbies, besides liking to travel, are reading, knitting, gardening, being with our grandchildren, and practicing Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging).

David: David is 75 is also retired, after a career as a Nursing Home Administrator. David is active in our church, is an avid reader and an audiophile - he likes good quality sound equipment and has an extensive LP and CD collection

LOCAL INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

October 10-12. Four Peaks Brewing **Oktoberfest.** Enjoy traditional German food, beer, and festivities. October 10-12 times vary by day. 80 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe. Tempe Sister City is co-sponsor.

October 18-19. Experience **Spain**, October 18-19, Musical Instrument Museum offers variety of music and dance performances, cultural workshops. 4725 E Mayo Blvd, Phoenix

Board Minutes - September 17, 2025

Present: Nancy M, Richard M, Gordy B, Bonnie Y and Chris K.

Meeting called to order by President Nancy Mueller at 4:07 pm.

Meeting was via zoom.

Purpose of Meeting is Journey Update -

Journey Organizer –

Nancy reported Washington DC journey has been cancelled by them. Our journey coordinators Sue and Shirley have agreed to be the JCs for the Kansas Inbound in 2026.

We have a journey scheduled for May of 2026 to western MI and another week in Stratford-St Mary's, Canada preceding MI. Interest will be gauged at the Oct 4x4 for these journeys. An Ambassador Coordinator will be needed for these journeys!

Bonnie reported the Thailand journey planning is proceeding. She will reach out to members during the Oct 4x4 to get signers for small group dinners, day hosting, leading a cooking class (American food) and participating in an afternoon of Country Dancing. A Zoom meeting will be held between Thailand and US host.

Newsletter: Nancy reported a newsletter will soon be finished. She thanked Maggie for conducting interviews and getting pics of new members. Judith Rainforth will be setting up some native American educational opportunities which will occur in Jan/Feb 2026. Pat Forsythe is checking out the possibility of going to a rodeo in Tucson. More information will follow shortly.

Meeting adjourned at: 4:42 pm.