



friendship force

CENTRAL ARIZONA

President's Message - Nancy Mueller

One of my earliest Friendship Force journeys was a Bridge Builder Exchange. The Madison, Wisconsin Friendship Force club, chartered in 1978 just one year after Friendship Force International began, was selected as a mentor club to San Pedro on Ambergris Caye, Belize.

The exchange was unforgettable. The tallest ambassador slept in a hammock on an outdoor balcony. One couple stayed with the owner of a dive shop right at the water's edge. My traveling companion had a private air-conditioned hotel room because her host owned the hotel. In contrast, I stayed with the mayor and his family. Their two-story home had open windows, which meant mosquitoes at night and flies during the day - but also an authentic immersion into daily life.

We were welcomed into family activities, spending time with the children, attending a wedding and even heading out to sea to check lobster pots. With guidance from Madison ambassadors, we worked alongside our hosts in schools, toured the island, snorkeled the reef, celebrated on the beach with locals, dove the Blue Hole, enjoyed incredible seafood and stayed active with our new friends.

Friendship Force International continues to build bridges of friendship through our journeys, club partnerships and connections with community groups. In 2027, FFI will celebrate its 50th anniversary. I encourage you to help keep Friendship Force strong through your financial support and the gift of your time. Home hosting, in particular, offers unmatched opportunities for meaningful connection.

Help us build even more bridges and connections here in the Phoenix Northwest Valley.

January 4X4

Kuntz Recreation Center, Room 3, 14401 R.H. Johnson Blvd., Sun City West. Potluck with Meatball cookoff - Bring your favorites - sign up with Diane Spiger 435-279-3687 Presentation on FFI fees and registration on site.

January 8th

Thursday, Jan 8th, 2026 1:00
Milk is the Star of Our Story
40034 W Clayton Road,
Stanfield, AZ

We've opened our mouths to milk. Now it's time to open your mind. Meet our 10,000 leading ladies. Hands on care but not hands on milking. Our industry - leading technology means no human hand touches the milk. Hop on our cow-spotted tram and take a ride around our family farm. Take a trip through the history of dairy. Meet at the Bell Library in Sun City on January 8 at 10:00. Lunch available - hot dog, chips, ice cream available. Tour begins at noon. RSVP Laura Isaac's 440.668.9501

2026 Board of Directors Officers and Committee Chairs

President - Nancy Mueller

Journey Coordinator - Richard Mueller

Vice President - Maggie Wittenberg

Membership - Maggie Wittenberg

Treasurer - Ruth Noble

Newsletter - Nancy Unferth/Chris Kastella

Secretary - Diane Spiger

Website - Bill Kram

Board of Directors Meeting – Central AZ Friendship Force – December 1st, 2025 at 6 pm

Attendees - Maggie Wittenberg, Gordy Birschbach, Nancy Mueller, Bonnie Yamashita, Diane Spiger, William Kram and Chris Kastella

Meeting was called to order by President NancyM via Zoom. Main topic of discussion was to review FFI increase of membership fees and agreement that dues provide the following -

- Access to FFI website where book clubs, foreign language lessons and journey information reside.
- Guests may participate no more than 2 times in non-journey club activities (4x4, field trip, speakers, etc.). Existing members will always have first priority to club activities if limited space.

Nancy thanked those members who accepted the following nominations for Board positions and Committee assignments-

- President - Nancy Mueller
- Vice President - Maggie Wittenberg
- Secretary - Diane Spiger
- Treasurer - Ruth Shaw
- Journey Coordinator - Richard Mueller
- Activities - Pat Forsythe
- Website - Bill Kram
- Newsletter - Nancy Unforth/Chris Kastella

William Kram noted the Central AZ website is ready with a Members Only section. Access codes will be sent to members after Jan 1, 2026, when 2026 FFI and local club dues are paid.

Nancy Mueller provided an update for Richard on our 2026 journey opportunity. Currently looking at May 8th to the 15th to Stratford and St. Mays Ontario. Research continues into the possibility of spending some time in Toronto before and after plus FFI is seeking another week for us somewhere.

Decision was made for 2026 to move 4X4's to members houses with appetizers and some type of activity planned each month. Diane and Chris will develop a schedule of locations....more information to follow!

Pat Forsythe will develop a calendar of FFI activities or excursions for each month. Nancy Mueller will be marketing Central AZ FFI Club to Rotary and Lifelong Learning. She will have a brochure (1000 copies) printed which can be used by possible new club in Lake Havasu and Prescott along with stocking brochures at Sun City and Sun City West Visitor Centers.

The next Board of Director meeting will be Jan 2026 location TBD. Meeting adjourned 7.30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, - Christine Kastella, Secretary

2026 Travel Opportunities

- *Journey#26179 Central Arizona to St Mary's and Stratford, Ontario, Canada*

May 8th - May 15th

Activities Include -

Stratford Theatre Festival with 3 major theaters

Toyota Auto Plant

Reapers of Hope: food dispensers to people in need around the world

University of Waterloo robotics lab

Doon Heritage Village

\$500 US includes FFI charge of \$25 per night fee

Does NOT include theatre tickets or transportation to and from the host site

Must be able to walk 30 to 45 minutes on uneven surfaces!

Contact Richard Mueller, Journey Coordinator at 608.838.3575 or RNmueller@yahoo.com
Applications can be found on the FFI website.



- *Journey #26131 Tallahassee to Western Michigan*

May 4th - May 10th

Join the Tallahassee Friendship Force Club as they journey to Western Michigan.

See the Holland Tulip Festival

Vineyards and wineries

Dip your toe in Lake Michigan and hike trails

Ford Museum, Kalamazoo Valley Museum, Meyer May House to tour



Contact Wendy Johnston, Tallahassee Florida Journey Coordinator for more details at mrswendyjohnston@gmail.com if you are interested. This was a journey assigned to Central Arizona that we did not pursue. Spots might be available to join.

Travel opportunity Tucson “The Old Pueblo” - March 2026

A Tucson 3 day 2 night exploration is in the planning stage. Pat Forsythe is checking hotels for the first or second week in March. Stops will include The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, a unique 98-acre fusion of a zoo, botanical garden, natural history museum, and art gallery; the DeGrazia Gallery in the Sun museum; hiking or riding the tram in Sabino Canyon; touring "The White Dove of the Desert" - the stunning Mission San Xavier del Bac, a historic Spanish Catholic mission, and a tour of the Arizona Inn where Past Presidents have slept. On the way we will stop at Casa Grande. Meeting with members of the Tucson Friendship Force is also being coordinated. Estimated cost is \$300-\$350 per person for hotel, transportation and tours. For questions and to hold a spot call Pat Forsythe at (414) 803-5704



4X4 - Sunday, January 4th at 4:00 pm

Come one, come all to our first 4X4 of 2026!! Bring your entry for the Meatball Contest (yes, we get to taste ALL of them and the winner gets a prize!!! Additionally, we will view the FFI video regarding the need for increase in dues, we'll review the FFI website to show possible journeys and resources plus ensure you are signed up for "My FFI". Club dues (\$10) will be collected after payment is entered through the FFI portal. It truly is very easy to do and incredibly important to get 2026 started off strong! Join us:)

The image displays two overlapping screenshots of the Friendship Force website. The left screenshot shows the 'Member Login' page with fields for email and password, a 'LOG IN' button, and a 'SIGN UP' button. The right screenshot shows the 'My Dashboard' page with a 'Membership' tab selected, displaying status (Active), expiration date (Dec 18, 2026), and renewal options (Renew Annually, Renew Monthly). It also shows membership details: Annual Membership, Annual Cost: \$100.00, and Monthly Cost: \$8.33.

Save the Dates - Future 4X4s

4th of each Month at 4:00 pm	Location	Activity or Speaker
January - Sunday	Sun City West, Kuntz Recreation Center 14401 R.H. Johnson Blvd, Sun City West	FFI Video and provide overview of the new FFI payment portal - Nancy Meatball Contest
February - Wednesday	Mike/Diane Spiger Home 15909 N 109th Ave, Sun City West	Rummikub and bring something pink, red or made with love
March - Wednesday	Sue LaVacque 9801 W Gulf Hills Dr, Sun City	Blank Slate
April - Saturday	Poppy Bushnell Home 10524 W Bellarose Dr, Sun City	Corn Hole
May - Monday	Nancy and Richard Mueller Home 10523 W Bellarose Dr, Sun City	Update on Kansas November inbound
Summer off	Summer off	Summer off
Oct - Sunday	Don Rueben's Restaurant 11340 W Bell Rd Unit 125, Surprise	Travel Trivia
November - Tuesday	Chris Kastella Home 10950 West Union Hills Dr Unit 1252, Sun City	Lawn Bowling
December - Friday	Sun City West, Kuntz Recreation Center 14401 R.H. Johnson Blvd, Sun City West	Holiday Party

American Indigenous Speaker Series



Please plan to attend an educational gathering at the home of Judith Rainforth on Tuesday, January 30, 2026 at 5 pm at 19849 N 107th Dr, Sun City, AZ, 85373. Please bring an appetizer to share during this first of a series of speakers on the indigenous population in the US. Our first two speakers will be Tinka and Clayton Echols. Tinka's heritage is from the Soux tribe and Clayton's is from the Chickasaw Tribe. Please RSVP to Judith at 402.880.0898

Historically Speaking - From the April 2002 Newsletter

Submitted by Nancy Unferth

Travelogue Club Meeting

Ruthann Welander organized a program which included a 30 minute video of the excerpts of **The Friendship Force Story** put together by Al Schubert, showing portions of Ghana, Brazil, Budapest, and Campaign Exchanges for the Travelogue Club meeting Friday night March 23rd at the Fairway Recreation Center in Sun City. Orpha Lippolt, Penny LaVerne, Guy Ziegler, Al, and Ruthann all presented personal experiences as Friendship Force travelers and hosts for the Travelogue members after the video was shown. Fran Padgett, a Travelogue Club member also attended the meeting. It is hoped that this presentation will glean a few new members for our Friendship Force club.

December 2025 Treasurer Report

Two Cents Worth from our Treasurer:...Our calendar time for this year is short, I wish each of you a sincere Happy New Year. With the upcoming Stratford-St Mays Canada Journey, the past holidays with the Winter Solstice, I will share William Shakespear's brief words:

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.

The Friendship Force of Central Arizona Treasurer Report Ending: December 28, 2025

Chase Bank Club Account opened April 2025

Beginning Balance: \$4,216.96
Income (Holiday Party).....\$ 250.00
Disbursements (Holiday Party).....\$ 625.00
Ending Balance \$3,841.96
December 28, 2025

Chase Bank Journey Account :

Beginning Balance: \$3,152.48
Income (Thailand Journey)..... \$ 193.00
Disbursements (Colorado
Journey)..... \$ 835.00
Ending Balance\$2,510.48
December 28, 2025

Dec Member Meeting Thanks!!!



Thanks to Sharon Overbaugh for the table decorations and Maggie Wittenburg for heading up the amazing evening's catering and location. A great time was had by all!

We cannot have activities and events without the amazing support of you, our members. Thanks to everyone who stepped up in 2025 to make our Central AZ FFI Club awesome!!!