
FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF CENTRAL ARIZONA NEWSLETTER
March 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

Board Meeting Wednesday, March 12, 4:00 pm
Zoom

Tuesday March 4x4, CHANGE OF LOCATION AND PLANS

MARCH 4X4 REAL THAI & SUSHI
13749 N Litchfield Rd. Surprise

A slight change from our original plans as we look forward to seeing you on **TUESDAY MARCH 4** at the Real Thai & Sushi Restaurant in Surprise. They offer a wide menu of delicious food! We also thought it might be fun to share some of your favorite memories or traditions from past St. Patrick's Day--anyone from Chicago where they colored the river green?

We look forward to seeing you and suggest that you wear your name badges! Please call Diane Francom to RSVP or with any questions 435 279-36. Diane



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March 1 is celebrated as World Friendship Day, a day to recognize the importance of friendships and the connections that bring people together across cultures and borders. This special day encourages people to show appreciation for their friends and express gratitude for the bonds they share.

Here's something for you to think about on this World Friendship Day. On the Friendship Force application to join a journey it closes with this personal statement request. "The mission of Friendship Force is to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people, with host and ambassadors acting as "citizen diplomats." Please briefly explain how you—in a situation unrelated to Friendship Force—have taken steps to overcome barriers or to perform citizen diplomacy. This might have happened in your community or in your travels." Consider what answer would you give.

WE CARE

Our Friendship Force member Peggy Tweedy has moved to a new location. She would appreciate cards, a phone call - 623-695-1611, or a visit (call first). Tender Loving Care Home, 14239 W Charter Oak Road, Surprise. AZ 85379

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FRIENDSHIP FORCE HUGS.
 Help Us Grow Stronger

Thanks this month to Gordy Birschbach and Maggie Wittenberg for the hours of time working on our membership roster so that all members can receive the club newsletter and other messages. They have also been busy ordering name badges.

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

Review February 4X4's event
 On February 4th 20 members and 3 visitors enjoyed a wonderful excursion to the A to Z Polish Market in Surprise AZ. The



delectable, eye popping goodies greeted everyone entering along with the mouth watering smells emanating from the Deli counter. While the lines were long, the waits were worth every minute as members and visitors alike enjoyed an early afternoon meal of Pierogis, pork cutlets and polish

sausage with veggies. With open air eating the evening was pleasant and enjoyable! The club meeting included everyone introducing themselves and providing a history of some of their travels especially in Poland or Germany. Diane Francom led a game of facts on Poland and its history. Updates on the upcoming Merci Train Excursion, Antelope Canyon Mini Adventure, Northern Colorado Journey in June, availability of participating in a journey to San Antonio and the fall hosting options for Washington DC and Thailand were all discussed. With full bellies and feelings of good cheer everyone headed home.

Friday April 4x4
SPRING FLING

The first day of spring 2025 is on Thursday March 20, 2025 at 5:01 am EDT. Let's celebrate Arizona's sunny skies and the hint of spring with an outdoor potluck.

Meet at 4 pm. Bring a food item to share, your own place setting and your own beverage. We will meet at the picnic tables by the fishing pond near the Surprise Regional Library, 26089 N Bullard Avenue in Surprise Community Park. Bring your stories about fishing or water sports.

If you choose, we will walk the xeriscape gardens after the potluck. 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.

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ANTELOPE CANYON UPDATE

Our Antelope Canyon exploration is fully booked thanks to Pat and Al Forsythe. There are 22 traveling April 6-8 to visit Sunset Crater, Wupatki, Walnut Canyon National Monument, Horseshoe Bend, Antelope Canyon, Glen Canyon Dam, and Montezuma Castle National Monument. It's packing lots of exploring into a few days. Pat is known for her attention to details, historical knowledge and making activities fun. Expect lots of photo sharing.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

March 1-2 9a-4p Indian Fair and Market at the Heard Museum, 2301 N Central Ave, Phoenix. Over 600 Native artists, local food vendors, and live entertainment featuring hoop dancing, traditional and modern music

Friday March 7 (10a -4p) and Saturday March 8 (10a -3p)

Ikebana International Flower Show, Arts HQ Gallery, 16126 N Civic Center Plaza, Surprise. Demonstration by Master Artists at 11a and 2p on Friday and 1p on Saturday.



March 28-May 25 Cowgirl Up! Desert Caballeros Western Museum, 21 N Frontier St, Wickenburg. 10-5 M-S, 11-3 Sunday. Showcases more than 60 female artists working in Western genre.

NORTHERN COLORADO JOURNEY UPDATE!! FOR \$100.00 LESS!

June 23rd through June 29th, 2025

Our Northern CO Journey now has a finalized cost of \$425.00! We will be visiting a brewery, a foundry, Rocky Mountain National Park, a rodeo, a sculpture garden and a pontoon boat ride all within the areas of Fort Collins, Greeley and Loveland. Everyone should plan on arriving at Northern Colorado the afternoon of June 23rd and we will leave by noon, June 29th (Monday to Sunday).

Cost of \$425.00 per person includes:
Host Club Fee - \$200
FFI Night Fee - \$150
Club Administration Fee - \$25
Contingency/Earned Seat Fee - \$50

Electronic application(s) are due March 30th 2025 to kastella@msn.com (please write "Northern CO Journey #25322 Application + your name" in the subject line). Applications can be found on the FFI website or picked up at our monthly 4x4s.

Make checks payable for \$425.00 to Central AZ Friendship Force Journey #25322. Mail to Chris Kastella, 10950 W. Union Hills Drive, Unit 1252, Sun City, AZ 85373 by March 30th.

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

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THAILAND INBOUND JOURNEY

Bonny Yamashita is host coordinator for a group coming from Chang Mai Thailand scheduled for October 29-November 4. The group will also visit the Friendship Force Club in Los Angeles. Bonny is communicating with both clubs to work on logistics.

Chiang Mai is a land of misty mountains and colorful hill tribes. It is 700 km north of Bangkok, set in a verdant valley on the banks of the Ping River. The city was founded in 1296 as the capital of the ancient Lanna Kingdom and it still proudly displays its distinctive culture and long history.

At the February 4x4 Bonny shared a number of ideas to show case our fall culture like a Halloween party and a traditional Thanksgiving meal. There will be a variety of volunteer opportunities for this in-bound as more details are known.



REVIEW OF THE MERCI TRAIN

On February 9 thirteen members of the Friendship Force of Central Arizona club attended the dedication ceremony of the Friendship train sent by French citizens in gratitude to the US for liberating France from German occupation and atrocities of four years of war. 49 box cars were loaded with unique French treasures, many handmade by common French people when they had little of the necessities that we enjoyed. The box cars were called 40 and 8 as they carried 40 soldiers or eight horses to the front to try to stop the Nazi war machine. Many soldiers during World War I and II rode these box cars and they brought back important memories of the times at war. The Arizona Questers were instrumental in preserving the items on the box cars, and the car itself. Many leaders gave meaningful reminders of the importance of remembering what is true friendship. Merci Beaucoup as the French say thank you.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Sue LaVacque



I live in Sun City, AZ after retiring as an educator from Colorado and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I am a widow, a mother of two, a grandmother of two, and a great grandmother of two precious little girls. I stay busy with activities such as yoga, bocce ball, golfing and volunteering. I also enjoy reading and hand crafts. I joined FFI two years ago because I am interested in its travel goals which involve meeting new people and exploring new places. I am a life long domestic and international traveler. FFI has enabled me to host new people and show them to our area. The organization allows me to explore new places, as I believe being involved with those who enjoy traveling helps me to understand more of our likes and differences.

Shirley Schwartz

I grew up in Caspian, Michigan in the upper peninsula. My husband and I raised three boys in West Bend, Wisconsin. I am a cosmetologist and have owned a salon through the years. I also have owned and operated a candy store, The Candyman in West Bend.

In 1998 my husband and I became RV travelers. We loved traveling the US and meeting other RVers. We fell in love with Arizona and in 2002 we moved to Sun City. My husband died in 2022.

I have volunteered at the Sun City Visitor center for 24 years, and like the contact with people thinking of moving to Sun City. I have belonged to many clubs in Sun City through the years and made many friends. I line dance at one of Sun City's recreation centers.

I live at The Palms of Sun City, an independent senior facility. There I am very active with cards, games, exercise classes and the volunteer committees.

I am not an international traveler, but I look forward to some fun trips to interesting places in the United States with FF.



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**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
IT TAKES A VILLAGE**

The in-bound journey from National Capitol Area, commonly called Washington DC, is scheduled for November 17/18-23/24, 2025. The Co-Host Coordinators, Sue LaVacque (970-589-5004) and Shirley Schwartz, have begun the planning process. Now they ask you to think how you are going to participate. There are always details that make the week go smoothly and it's not too early to volunteer to be part of the team to:

- **Host a single or couple for the week in your home
- **Provide car transportation to activities
- **Host a small group dinner

**Introduction to Phoenix's West Valley
Proposed Itinerary**

First day arrival - meet with hosts

Day activities:

Music Museum - lunch cafeteria, welcome dinner at the Hanging Gardens

Hassyampa Nature Trails
Lunch & shopping in Wickenburg
Dinner at Don Rubens

Sun City Museum
Tour a recreation center, (Fairway), play bocce/mini golf, (Sundial), lunch at George's (Bell), walking and or paddle boats (Lake View).
Dinner - take your host to dinner

Indian Museum with hands on activities- (making fried bread, watching clay items being made).
Tour a walk through a Naval Monument.
Lunch at the Shack
Small Group dinner

Glendale - tour the stadium, lunch and shopping downtown Glendale, view the free range peacocks.

Or

Hike the White Tank trails,

Picnic lunch

Farewell dinner the last night at Tivoli Gardens

Treasurer Report Ending: January 31, 2025

Club Account:

Income: \$330.00

Disbursement: \$630.00

Jan 31, 2025 Balance: \$3,431.53

Journey Account:

Income: -0-

Disbursement: -0-

Jan 31, 2025 Balance: \$2,162.48

"My bank has a new service, where they text you your balance. I just don't think they should add LOL on the end."

Dues are \$40 per person. Make checks payable to Friendship Force of Central Arizona. Send to Ruth Shaw Nobel, Treasurer, 4021 N. 45th Place, Phoenix AZ 85018

**FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF CENTRAL
ARIZONA BOARD**

Meeting Minutes February 12, 2025

Attendees: Nancy Mueller, Maggie Wittenberg, Ruth Nobel, Chris Kastella, Bill Kram, Richard Mueller, Nancy Unferth, Bonny Yamashita, Gordon Birschbach

The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 3:00 on February 12th, 2025 by President Nancy Mueller via Zoom. Maggie moved and Bill seconded a motion to approve the January Executive Board Meeting minutes as presented to the members in the February Newsletter. Approved.

Treasurers Report on February 11, 2025 showed \$6,321.53 in the clubs Wells Fargo Account and \$2,162.48 in the Chase Journey Account. Note that \$630.00 was paid to FFI Intl for dues and \$2,400 was deposited for the Antelope Canyon initial payment deposits. The club has 17 paid memberships to date.

Discussion was held regarding including the membership roster in the March newsletter. Decision was to postpone distribution in the newsletter until all information is verified and members agree to distribution. There are currently 38 members. 14 badges are on order and a check is in the mail to Gordy for these badges.

Bill is renovating the club website. The website will move to a new provider which will cost less (\$120 per year versus \$240 per year). Bill is unsure if the club will get a refund from the prior provider. The club existing website will be live until the new one has been approved and released. The temporary website address is: <https://ffcenaz2.org> and the board is asked to review and provide feedback to Bill. Nancy U will need newsletter info as soon as possible as she will be out of town beginning the 15th. The goal is to send the Central AZ FFI Newsletter on the 25th. Expected information will include club activities through May/June. Draft minutes of the Board meeting. Maggie will do a write up introducing

two members and include pics. Nancy will write the Presidents message plus a "We Care" write up on Peggy Tweedy in addition to the Merci Train Excursion with photos. Chris K will write an article about the Feb 4x4 and include photos along with an update on the June Northern CO trip. Pat will write an article about the Antelope Canyon Mini Journey which has 22 FFI members participating. The window has closed for the \$150.00 deposit to be refunded. Final payment of \$350.00 is due to Central AZ FFI (mailed to Pat) by March 10th. Pat will also write an article regarding the Ikebana Flower show, March 7 and 8, in Surprise.

Bill reported the Jewish Film Festive did not draw quite enough interest for a group discount so members will need to purchase their own tickets on-line to ensure seating.

Chris K reported interest has been expressed for the Northern CO Journey however she has received NO applications or deposits to date. Bonnie reported she has been in contact with Thailand however she is waiting for a response. No update was available on the National Capitol Journey.

Gordy met with a group of 46 Wisconsin snowbirds and handed out 14 information sheets – including our Central AZ FFI club application and business cards in recruitment of new members efforts.

Bonnie asked about Central AZ pins to exchange as Ambassadors on Journeys. Nancy will ask Pat and will get back to Bonnie if the club has any.

The next Board of Director meeting will be March 12th at 4:00. Meeting adjourned 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Kastella, Secretary