

FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF RALEIGH
NEWS AND NOTES
January 2026



FEBRUARY FIRST SUNDAY, February 1, at 5 p.m.

Milton's Pizza and Pasta
8853 Six Forks Road
<https://www.miltonspizza.com/>

Hosted by Irene Cygan

Please join us! Irene has booked Milton's for our next First Sunday. If you attended in October, then you know that the space works well for our gathering. We will have the choice of using their buffets (salad and/or pizza), plus other Italian goodies, including nice desserts or ordering from the menu. FIRST SUNDAY gatherings are coordinated by Doyle Long.



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**FFR OUTBOUND JOURNEY TO OREGON'S MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY,
SEPT. 9 - 16, 2026**

A beautiful valley with the Rocky Mountains to the east and the rugged Pacific Ocean to the west ... Willamette Valley is where you will find acres and acres of tulips ... let's hike through the enormous Douglas fir forest ... and see spectacular waterfalls ... and did I mention Mt. Hood? - an amazing sight to behold!

Check out the video of Oregon's Willamette Valley! <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/gssengk5nqo3zn1w4p9nn/FFC-to-Ore%20gon.wmv?rlkey=hx2tdqkk0uccs5j603n3p4tox&e=1&st=e9amqfzo&dl=0>

Bring your questions to the February First Sunday Gathering! There will be a sign-up sheet for this journey. Deposits for this journey will begin this spring. Journey flyer attached.

Karen Brown and Rosemary Brown, Journey Co-Coordiators

Karen 919-247-3753 kareneslbrown@aol.com;

Roselyn 252-940-8010 roselynsbrown@gmail.com

FFR OUTBOUND JOURNEY TO FF GREATER SENDAI, JAPAN, APRIL 21-17, 2026

Our plans are coming together for the four ambassadors from Raleigh who are going on the journey to Japan in April.

We're kicking off 2026 by having lunch at Orchid Japanese Buffet on January 24th to get to know each other and build excitement about the trip. If any of you have visited Japan and would like to join us to share your experience and some all-you-can-eat sushi, just let Giavanna know at (giavannajane@gmail.com).

The four of us engaged the services of a Japanese travel agent with Kimkim travel to plan a pre-journey excursion to see more of Japan. We plan to arrive in Kyoto on April 13th. We will spend 2 days in Kyoto, 2 days in Takayama, 2 days in Kanazawa, 1 day in Tokyo and then travel to Sendai.

In Kyoto, we will visit the Kyoto Arashiyama Bamboo Forest and Gardens, enjoy a private tea ceremony, visit Nijo Castle and Imperial Palace and have dinner with a Maiko at a traditional Kyoto restaurant. In Takayama we'll have a guided tour of the city including the preserved Sanomachi district and enjoy a dinner featuring the local Hida beef.

We'll visit Shirakawa-go on our way to Kanazawa and that evening enjoy a hands-on sushi making class for dinner. Following a full day of guided sightseeing in Kanazawa, we'll travel to Tokyo where we'll have a guided half-day tour and a private food tour of the Shibuya district for dinner.

On the 21st we'll take the train to Sendai where we will meet our hosts and begin our journey. We're looking forward to meeting their club president, Shigeko Kamata and vice-president, Tamaki. They have already been very welcoming – sharing photos and information about their home.



FFR INBOUND JOURNEY FROM OMAHA, NE, JUNE 8 – 14, 2026

FF Raleigh will welcome ambassadors from Omaha the week of June 8-14, 2026. They currently have 13 ambassadors wanting to come. Whether or not we can welcome that many will depend on how many of us will be home hosts and are current on our Friendship Force International dues. FF Omaha graciously hosted members of the Raleigh club in 2023. Your dues can be paid here - https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign_in

The journey coordinators for this trip are Jan Johnson and Leanne Richbourg. Please let us know if you are willing to home host. We are excited to hear from you! lrichbourg@gmail.com.

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MRS. LACEY'S MAGNOLIA HOUSE AND EXCURSION TO SOUTHERN SUPREME FRUITCAKE COMPANY, NOVEMBER 5, 2025

Seven members and one guest enjoyed this second annual outing to Mrs. Lacey's Magnolia House in Sanford, followed by a tour of Southern Supreme Fruitcake Company in Bear Creek and shopping after the tour. The Fruitcake Company is so much more than fruitcakes, including cookies, candy, nuts, jelly, mustard, relish, pickles, etc. Several people purchased holiday gifts for others – and for themselves! Check out their website: (<https://www.southern supreme.com>)



Jan Johnson organized this outing and made our reservations. Thank you, Jan.

FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF RALEIGH'S DECEMBER 2nd HOLIDAY PARTY

Twenty-four Friendship Force members celebrated the holidays at a delightful luncheon at the NC State University Club in Raleigh. We had a great time mixing and mingling before lunch with a fun questionnaire prepared and distributed by Irene Cygan. She and Krystyna Dixon generously used their talents to make the entire event fun and festive. Irene brought her scrumptious baked goodies and Krys added a special touch by making beautiful candle holders and table decorations. Everyone enjoyed the delicious Tuscan lunch buffet.



With a nod to the spirit of the holidays, the board selected the NC State "Feed the Pack" Food Pantry to be the beneficiary of food and monetary donations provided by the attending members. We received the

following acknowledgment from NC State for the donations we collected...

Thank you so much for your generous donation of 71.2 pounds of food to Feed the Pack along with a cash donation and three \$25 gift cards. Your time, effort, and dedication to collect food and other items is greatly appreciated and a substantial help to our pantry. It is through people like you that our pantry can thrive. Together, we can fight food insecurity on campus. We are extremely grateful for your donation! [Feed the Pack: The Food Pantry at NC State](https://www.facebook.com/feedthepacknc)

Visit our website at <https://friendshipforceraleighnc.org/> and

our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/friendshipforceraleigh>

FIRST SUNDAY INFORMATION MEETINGS, March 1, August 2, and November 1, 2026, at 5 p.m.

Waltonwood Lake Boone
3550 Horton St, Raleigh, NC 27607

Specific details will follow but mark your calendars now. Of course, mark your calendars for every first Sunday of the month except July and December. When we combine a First Sunday with a welcome or farewell party then the dates might change. Stay tuned. The best way to learn what is going on is to attend First Sunday gatherings.

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ANNUAL DUES FOR FFI AND FF OF RALEIGH

Hopefully, by now you are aware that the dues structure has changed. In the past you paid dues just to the local club and the club paid dues on your behalf to FFI. That has now changed. You will join FFI directly for an automatic payment of \$8/month or a one-time payment of \$100 per year. This will qualify you to travel and host throughout the year. Please complete your membership prior to March 31st.

In addition, you will benefit from supporting all that FFI stands for and offers as an organization. At the last informational meeting, Leanne shared details about how the FFI board decided this was the best move to create stability for the organization and to rededicate the organization and members to an emphasis on citizen diplomacy.

Here is a copy of the video that Friendship Force International put out that could be helpful. You do not have to create a Vimeo account to watch it.

https://vimeo.com/1144895488/53e8398fa6?utm_source=Klaviyo&utm_medium=campaign&_kx=K6boK8TSzgXWnKgGJp7dOKjyzEuv6mqA5TDDfb9bIVs.RaH2Qb

If you have never been a member before, use this link:

<https://friendshipforce.org/join-us/>

If you are already a member, use this link:

https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign_in

If you have never used the member portal before, you will need to create an account on this link.

The local dues for FF Raleigh are \$10/year. Send your check payable to Friendship Force of Raleigh to Treasurer Jane Fellows, 1108 Alabama Ave., Durham, NC 27705.

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HIKING JOURNEY IN COLORFUL QUEBEC, SEPT 21 – OCT 4, 2025

Pre-journey adventure: Jane Fellows and Leanne Richbourg drove to Quebec City and the Charlevoix area of Quebec and spent Sept 14 – 18 exploring the Chateau Frontenac, the Old Town of Quebec City, Ile de Orleans, Montmorency Falls, and the northern coastline of the St. Lawrence River.



They took a Zodiac boat trip and saw multiple species of whales. Sadly, the whales did not pose for photos. Jane and Leanne enjoyed the towns of Baie St. Paul, La Malbaie, and Tadoussac.

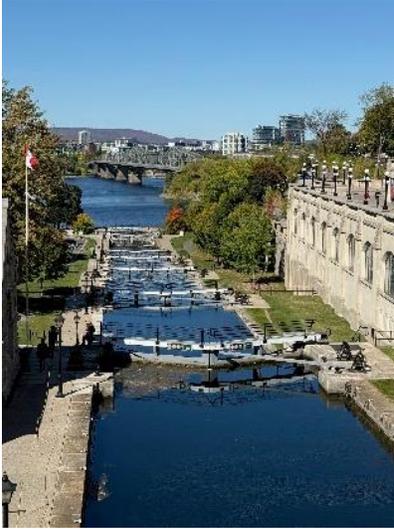


On the way to Montreal on Sept 19, they stopped at the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area and enjoyed the museum and woodland trails. After visiting an old nursing colleague/friend in Montreal and enjoying a wonderful Saturday market, Jane flew home.

Leanne joined the group of eleven ambassadors on Sept 21 for the hiking journey. The other ambassadors were from Washington, Wyoming, Michigan, Wisconsin, Virginia, and Ghana Africa. Four days ensued of hiking up ski mountains, riding the chairlifts back down, exploring Old Montreal, climbing Mont-Royal and Westmount within Montreal, visiting parklands and cathedrals (including St. Joseph's Oratory), and eating wonderful local specialties.



On Sept 26 the group moved on to the town of Sherbrooke. Three days were spent hiking in the local mountains, exploring the historic city and botanical garden, viewing the many downtown murals, and enjoying the colorful display of leaves, apple harvests, ciders, and chocolates.



Finally, on Sept 30 the group moved to the cojoined cities of Ottawa and Gatineau. The former being in Ontario and the latter in Quebec, divided by the Ottawa River. A bus and walking tour of downtown Ottawa featured many beautiful buildings from the early years of the 20th century. More mountains were climbed, markets explored, churches admired, and wonderful food consumed. The ambassadors headed home, sorry to leave their new friends from Canada, the US, and Africa.



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HELP FOR UKRAINE VIA THE MOLDOVA WORLD CHILDREN'S FUND

We previously told you in the October newsletter about the urgent need in Ukraine for disguised vehicles to transport wounded soldiers. Here's a link to that newsletter.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qxflB6FtgHVqMHQWQI8h0DeZlfh3jffp/view?usp=drive_link

Because of the proximity of Moldova to Ukraine, there's a large effort to help Ukraine. Your FFR board voted to donate \$1,000 of the revenue left over after hosting the delegation from Moldova to the Moldova World Children's Fund to help purchase a vehicle to assist Ukraine. We received a big thank you from the president of the MWCF. In his words "Please thank Friendship Force of Raleigh for the splendid gift to help purchase an off-road vehicle for emergency medivac of war victims in Ukraine. The disguised ambulance was in service and safely moving patients before the end of October. Super timing on your part. Again, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!"

**a world of friends is
a world of peace.**

IN MEMORY

FFR member Judy Allen lost her brother, Alex Allen, November 7, 2025. You can learn more about Alex, his friendships and his interests here:

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/raleigh-nc/alexander-allen-12602138>.

Judy Allen's address is 1410 Springmoor Circle, Raleigh, NC 27615 and her email is JBXandie@aol.com.

Judy Wilkes lost her husband Bill on December 25, 2025. Bill and Judy have been members of Friendship Force of Raleigh for several years. Prior to that they were members of the Friendship Force of Western Carolina. They have an extensive history of volunteerism with international exchange organizations. You can read more about Bill's very full and dynamic life here:

<https://neptunesociety.com/obituaries/raleigh-nc/william-wilkes-11678479>

Judy received a beautiful letter from the Congressional Office for International Leadership, the sponsors of the Open World program. You can read the letter here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ewsLvH6_39ut2v8vwgAumFGYE2XkNBjk/view?usp=sharing

Judy's address is 6104 Steeds Run Drive, Raleigh, NC 27616, and her email is judy126@bellsouth.net.

2026 Board of Directors

President – Leanne Richbourg - lrichbourg@gmail.com

Treasurer – Jane Fellows

Directors – Krystyna Dixon, Ruth Drum, Jan Johnson, Doyle Long, Giavanna Richards, Judy Wilkes, Judy Wright.

THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE PLEDGE

As a member of the Friendship Force
I recognize that I can make a difference.
I recognize that I have a mission.
That mission is to be a friend to the
people of the world.

As I embark on this adventure,
I know that others will be watching me.
I know that through my example to
my fellow citizens and
people of other countries,
the cause of peace and friendship
can be furthered.
I can make a difference.

Guests are always welcome to attend any of our events. We hope that you will join us. Contact the president Leanne Richbourg - lrichbourg@gmail.com.