

**FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF RALEIGH**  
**NEWS AND NOTES**  
**June 2025**



**We Remember Mary Louise Gray**



Our longtime member, active participant in club activities, and friend passed away on May 23, 2025, after a brief battle with congestive heart failure. Mary Louise loved to travel and was a long-time member of Friendship Force and visited over 40 countries and 49 states. For many years, she was accompanied by her husband Bobby, who proudly sported the many club pins he collected on these journeys. We already miss her wisdom, wit, and smile.

You can read the full obituary here:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/mary-gray-obituary?id=58477666>

While on this site, there's a wonderful slide show that highlights her life, including many taken on their worldwide journeys.

For more recent photos, you can view this short slide show assembled with photos from our club's collection: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ctcTIPCOIw-ORKgXchkCTc9SVGxZFjhj/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=102385544266192466267&rtfpof=true&sd=true>

Our club is contributing from the club treasury to Friendship Force International in memory of Mary Louise. Some members have expressed an interest in adding to this donation. If you would like to contribute, please mail your donation to treasurer Jane Fellows, 1108 Alabama Ave., Durham, NC 27705, no later than June 15, 2025.

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## RECENT INBOUND JOURNEYS

### Sacramento, CA, to Raleigh – May 28 – June 3, 2025



Eleven ambassadors had a delightful time getting to know our members, the Research Triangle area, and enjoying spring-like weather with temps mostly in the 70's. They were most impressed with all the green vegetation, which was especially vibrant following all the rain we have had lately.

Raleigh docent-led tours included the Executive Mansion and Gardens, the Capitol, and the NC Museum of Art. Of course, they also got the historical overview on the Raleigh Trolley and some participants made it to the City of Raleigh Museum.



Excellent guided walking tours

provided highlights of both Durham and Chapel Hill, and docents provided in-depth insights at Duke Chapel, Stagville, and Duke Homestead. Ambassadors also enjoyed exploring the Duke Lemur Center.





They had a good chance to sample some southern fare as well. The welcome party at Waltonwood Lake Boone included Bojangles chicken and biscuits. Lunch at the cafeteria in the Legislative Building offered hot and cold choices, including banana pudding. Several had a chance to experience Char-Grill, a Raleigh institution. The farewell party at Jan Johnson's farm included barbecue, slaw, potato salad, baked beans, and fried chicken, followed by Jan's pecan pie and her sister-in-law's chocolate cake. If you didn't participate in any of this, aren't you sorry!



There was entertainment too. Bunco at the welcome party gave everyone the opportunity to mix and mingle as participants moved from table to table. At the farewell party, Sacramento led a game based on a script written about their journey here. Two teams of volunteers competed, one male and one female, and everyone else cheered them on. Wouldn't you know, the men won!



Alas, the journey was over in Raleigh as the ambassadors headed to Greensboro and Winston-Salem to the Central Carolina club for another week of homestays. We met the Triad hosts at the Saxapahaw General Store where we broke bread for the last time with our new friends from Sacramento.



Giavanna Richards, Host Coordinator, and her team put together an excellent itinerary with detailed instructions that made each day easy to navigate. Giavanna wishes to express her gratitude to home hosts – Judy Wright, Karen Brown, Jane Fellows, Doyle Long, Barbara Hocutt and Krystyna Dixon; day hosts - Judy Wright, Karen Brown, Jane Fellows, Leanne Richbourg and Krystyna Dixon; small group dinner hosts – Judy Wright, Jane Fellows, Leanne Richbourg and Krystyna Dixon; and to Irene Cygan, Doyle Long, Jan Johnson and Ruth Drum for organizing our Welcome and Farewell dinners. I truly appreciated the work everyone did to make sure our transportation needs were covered and that everyone had a wonderful journey.

To view an album of pictures from this journey click on this link:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/w4zz9uN2s7QHPK557>

## Open World Moldova to Raleigh – May 14 – 17, 2025

Friendship Force of Raleigh partnered with Friendship Force of Central Carolina (Greensboro and Winston-Salem) to host a delegation of government leaders from Moldova. After spending the first few days in the Triad, the delegation arrived in Chapel Hill on May 14 at the NC Institute of Government in Chapel Hill. Members of the Raleigh club picked them up there and home hosted until May 17th.



The professional program was organized by the NC Secretary of State's Office. Thanks to our home hosts: Krystyna Dixon, Jane Fellows, Russ and Betsy Lambert and our dinner hosts Giavanna and Bob Richards. Karen Brown also supported the home hosts for Thursday's evening meal. Host Coordinators – Judy Wilkes and Betsy Lambert

We received the following from Lora Sinigur of the Secretary of State's office:



We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to each of you for so warmly welcoming the local government officials from Moldova last week as part of the Open World Program and the Congressional Office for International Leadership.

Your generosity in opening your homes and sharing your time, expertise, and insights was deeply appreciated—not only by the delegates, but also by Secretary Marshall, the Secretary of State's Office, and the NC-Moldova Bilateral Committee.

The continued success of the NC-Moldova Bilateral Partnership over the past 26 years is a testament to the dedication of incredible North Carolinians like you. Your willingness to host, engage, and build meaningful connections helps strengthen governance, organizations, and civil society in Moldova. We hope you also found the experience rewarding and gained insights relevant to your own work and interests.

Lora Sinigur  
International Liaison & Business Analyst  
North Carolina Secretary of State Department



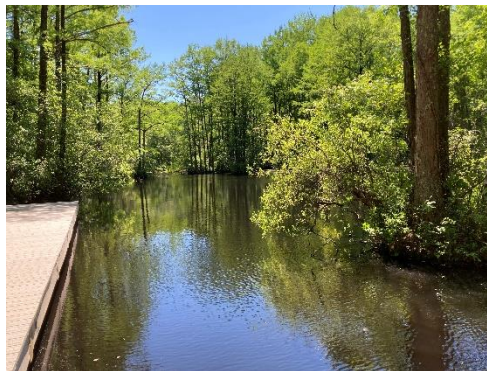
## UPCOMING JOURNEYS

### Inbound/Outbound Combination - Mid-Atlantic Outdoor Journey

Oct 6-17 with the Raleigh section being Oct 10-13, 2025

Host Coordinators: Leanne Richbourg - [lrchbourg@gmail.com](mailto:lrchbourg@gmail.com); Jane Fellows - [jane.fellows2014@gmail.com](mailto:jane.fellows2014@gmail.com)

Background Information: Friendship Force of Raleigh is partnering with the Richmond and Western NC clubs for an active outdoor themed journey. Richmond is the lead club. As it is a pilot program, it will not be open to other clubs. There will be fifteen participants in total. While one club hosts, members from the other two will travel. If this pilot program is successful, then it might be offered again and open to all Friendship Force clubs.



The activities include river rafting, biking, hiking, kayaking, zipline, and mushroom hunting. Check out the following links to get the details, requirements, and schedule of activities. Let Leanne know if you would like to participate as an ambassador, a home host or a day host.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EciR5xAF8n-AgniKkuVP7xea841OltEb/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EciR5xAF8n-AgniKkuVP7xea841OltEb/view?usp=drive_link)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g6900vXSuezTBYaKjf2\\_G9XL5ZsdMaM2/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g6900vXSuezTBYaKjf2_G9XL5ZsdMaM2/view?usp=drive_link)

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### Outbound - Sendai, Japan – April 21-27, 2026

Giavanna Richards, Ambassador Coordinator  
[giavannajane@gmail.com](mailto:giavannajane@gmail.com)



Consider joining us for this exciting adventure. Sendai is 90 minutes by air travel north of Tokyo and is the capital city of Miyagi Prefecture. We will be there during their famous cherry blossom season. It is a land of waterfalls and snow-capped mountains with temples, shrines and museums to explore. Contact Giavanna for more information.



## **Inbound from Omaha, Nebraska – June 2026**

Host Coordinator needed. Contact Leanne to volunteer.

This is a reciprocal journey. Omaha hosted FFR in August of 2023. The four of us who traveled there had a fabulous time with a wonderful group of people. We look forward to sharing our southern hospitality with them.

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## **Outbound to Willamette Valley, Oregon – August 2026**

Ambassador Coordinator needed. Contact Leanne to volunteer.

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## **2025 Board of Directors**

President – Leanne Richbourg - [lrichbourg@gmail.com](mailto:lrichbourg@gmail.com)

Treasurer – Jane Fellows

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

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### **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.

**THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF RALEIGH**

New application\_\_\_\_\_

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

**RALEIGH 2025 MEMBERSHIP  
APPLICATION/RENEWAL**

Today's date:

<https://friendshipforceraleighnc.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/friendshipforceraleigh/>

**A. INDIVIDUAL DATA**

Last name\_\_\_\_\_ First name\_\_\_\_\_ M.I.\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Primary phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail\_\_\_\_\_ Employer\_\_\_\_\_

Profession (or former prof.) \_\_\_\_\_

**B. SECOND ADULT - Family Membership**

Last name\_\_\_\_\_ First name\_\_\_\_\_ M.I.\_\_\_\_\_

Primary phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail\_\_\_\_\_ Employer\_\_\_\_\_

Profession (or former prof.) \_\_\_\_\_

**C. TALENTS OR INTERESTS YOU COULD SHARE WITH FRIENDSHIP FORCE**

Foreign languages spoken\_\_\_\_\_

Countries visited or have knowledge\_\_\_\_\_

Talents and skills\_\_\_\_\_

Countries you would like to visit\_\_\_\_\_

**D. MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR CALENDAR YEAR JAN. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2025**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$65.00 \*Family membership (Two adults living in  
same household with or without minor children)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40.00 \*Individual membership

\* Note that \$30pp of your dues will be paid to Friendship Force International.

Please make check payable to Friendship Force of Raleigh and mail to:  
Jane Fellows, 1108 Alabama Ave., Durham, NC 27705