

February 12, 2014



friendship force
GREATER CINCINNATI

New Member Booklet

Explore • Understand • Serve®

**CHANGING THE WAY YOU
SEE THE WORLD**

thefriendshipforce.org

February 12, 2014

Friendship Force is an international cultural exchange and home hospitality program that promotes international understanding, friendship and world peace.

The Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati

New Member Booklet

Welcome to our club! We hope the content of this booklet gives you more in-depth information about Friendship Force, how our club operates and the many membership benefits available to you.

As a new member, you obviously share our interest in exploring new cultures, countries and regions. Friendship Force provides us the opportunity to meet new friends through travel and home hospitality, and those experiences lead to understanding and a greater desire to serve our global village. Whenever we host visitors from another international or domestic club, all our members are encouraged to participate, so we have included quite a bit of information about traveling with Friendship Force and how you can be involved when we host an exchange group.

We are really glad you joined us, and we want your membership to be a rewarding experience!

Friendship Force International

Friendship Force International (FFI) is a worldwide network of clubs (local chapters) and individuals that advance our mission of promoting global understanding across the barriers that separate people. We do this by connecting people from different countries at the personal level.

FFI is a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Atlanta, GA. Joy DiBenedetto is the President/CEO of FFI, and there is a governing body of 16 members who serve on the FFI Board of Directors, representing clubs around the world. In addition to the FFI staff working at the Atlanta office, there are volunteer Regional or Field Representatives who serve as a resource to our club by coordinating between the clubs and FFI.

History of FFI The Friendship Force was founded by Wayne Smith and introduced by President Jimmy Carter at a White House gathering of state governors in 1977. Rosalyn Carter served as Honorary Chairperson until 2002.

Initially, FF involved groups of 150-400 U.S. citizens, known as friendship ambassadors, traveling via chartered aircraft to a partner city where a group of the same size boarded to return to the original city, hence the term "Exchange," the word we still use to refer to our travel programs. Over the years, Friendship Force changed from charters to one-way exchanges on regularly scheduled airlines, allowing greater flexibility and a reduction of group size. Today, most exchanges involve 18-22 Friendship Force members visiting another Friendship Force chapter somewhere in the world.

While the size and number of exchanges has changed dramatically since 1977, the basic Friendship Force formula is the same, with visiting Ambassadors spending a week in the home of a host family. While each exchange is now in just one direction, the participating Ambassadors and hosts develop a shared understanding of each other's culture so that a true cultural exchange takes place. In many cases, the friendships established during an exchange continue for many years, with follow-up visits through later Friendship Force exchanges or through private visits.

In 1992 Friendship Force was nominated for **The Nobel Peace Prize** for its A.R.M.S. (American Russian Mutual Survival) program that arranged exchanges between citizens of the U.S.A. and Soviet Union. Since 1977 Friendship Force has been an effective means for promoting international understanding.

The Friendship Force has brought together millions of people. Today there are over 360 Friendship Force chapters active in 60 countries and 6 continents in the world and over 300 exchanges occur each year. Membership fees, exchange fees, donations, and foundation grants support friendship Force International. Currently, FFI is working on adding clubs in areas not yet well represented including China, India and Africa.

Mission

To promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people

Values

Mutual Respect Cultural Diversity Cultural Exploration Service

Vision

- Each individual will make a contribution to global goodwill.
- The Friendship Force worldwide network of clubs and individuals will overcome differences between people and nations.
- By connecting the world one friend at a time, we will create a world of friends that becomes a world of peace.

Slogan

Changing the Way You See the World

Tagline

Explore • Understand • Serve

Explore: We explore new countries and regions. We explore new cultures and new ways to connect across the barriers that separate us.

Understand: By sharing a home, meals, conversation and everyday experiences, people become friends, seeing beyond governments and borders into the heart of a country and its people. By combining home hospitality with cultural exploration, we reach a new level of understanding.

Serve: Exploration leads to understanding. Understanding leads to an acceptance of our common humanity and the desire to serve our global village – with words and actions.

About Our Club – Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati

History Our chapter was founded in 1988 and is chartered by Friendship Force International, located in Atlanta. We are an affiliated club but not a corporation. FFI is a non-profit corporation registered as a 501(3)(c) organization and thus can accept tax-deductible charitable contributions. However, our chapter is not registered as a 501(3)(c) with the IRS.

Membership & Dues Membership is open to anyone who accepts Friendship Force principles (as put forth on the previous page) and pays annual membership dues. Our 2014 dues are \$25.00 for individuals and \$45 for couples. Dues payments are sent to our treasurer with checks payable to "Friendship Force of Greater Cincinnati". The membership year is from January 1-December 31, and all dues are collected by the end of December for the upcoming year. As a member of our club, you are eligible to apply for all the travel exchanges organized by our club and the Friendship Force International office in Atlanta. In addition, other clubs often advertise for applications through the FFI website and email communiques from FFI. You can receive the monthly "World of Friends" catalog by signing up via the international web site: <http://friendshipforce.org> and entering through "Get Involved". Once on that page, you can learn more about Friendship Force, its clubs and upcoming trips. You can even download an electronic copy (pdf file) of the most recent "World of Friends" catalog.

Meetings and Events Typically, we meet monthly for programs from September through May. We currently meet on the third Friday of each month at Northern Hills United Methodist Church, 6700 Winton Road, Cincinnati OH. Currently, most meetings begin at 6 pm with a potluck supper and involve fellowship, a brief business meeting and a presentation. Check our club website <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/> for information about the location, meeting time and program for monthly meetings. An annual meeting is held in November to elect new club officers.

Newsletter and Website A club newsletter or announcement of meetings is sent out every month by e-mail to all members. Upon request, a printed copy will be mailed to members. The newsletter lists all upcoming events, information about exchanges, committee reports, and news from the FFI office and other alerts. Similar information is posted and regularly updated on our club website <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/>.

Name Badges All members are asked to wear their FF club name badge to club meetings and events. (We want to get to know you!)

Officers Club officers serve one-year terms from January - December. We elect our club officers at the November General Meeting. Our elected positions are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Officers may serve up to two consecutive terms.

Board of Directors All club business is conducted by members of the Board of Directors/Officers. All club members are invited to attend. Voting members of our club's board include all elected officers, chairpersons of standing committees, Exchange Directors and the past-President. Reports of Board business are made in the website and newsletter.

Committees & Appointed Positions We are always looking for new members to join one of our committees or to work on a special project. You don't have to commit a lot of time or assume a lot of responsibility. It's a great way to get to know other club members better and make your membership a more interesting and enriching experience. Opportunities include:

Communication: help with newsletter, website, publicity, photography

Hospitality: help with meeting logistics and club social events

Membership: help with new member orientation, mentorship, and greeting

Programming: help with planning programs at meetings

Important Websites: The international website: <http://friendshipforce.org>

Our club website: <http://www.friendshipforcecincinnati.org/>

The FFI website is a "must" – especially if you are interested in participating in an exchange or learning more about Friendship Force. The home page features the link to the **World of Friends Catalog** that lists all travel opportunities and exchanges, so you can explore and join exchanges arranged by other clubs or our FFI office in Atlanta. Many of the exchanges are designed with a humanitarian or environmental focus, and most involve a home stay with members of our Friendship Force clubs. The FFI site also has an online shop where you can purchase merchandise and gift items with the FFI brand.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."
Mark Twain

Hosting & Traveling

How It Works

Traveling with Friendship Force As a FF member, you have a number of options:

- You can apply for travel on international or domestic trips arranged by our club
- You can apply for travel on international or domestic trips arranged by other clubs
- You can apply for travel on international trips arranged by Friendship Force International.

Our Club Travel - How It Works Each fall, every Friendship Force club submits destinations their members would like to travel to the year after next. (Example, in the fall of 2013 our club submitted preferred destinations for 2015.) Each club also identifies how many weeks they would be willing to host visitors from other clubs. This information is submitted to FFI in Atlanta where all the preliminary assignments are made. FFI does the initial coordinating and then turns it over to the clubs to implement.

Details regarding how these requests are granted is available on the FFI web site. Two important considerations are:

- where the club has traveled recently (to avoid repeat visits to a region, nearby exchanges will seldom be granted within a three year period) and
- whether a club has a history of filling its exchanges.

The club that is traveling (Ambassadors) and the club that is receiving guests (Hosts) assign Exchange Directors. The Exchange Directors communicate closely

about home accommodations, sightseeing opportunities, and cultural activities that are coordinated by their committees. The two Exchange Directors customize the trip, coordinate details and costs and prepare their members for either hosting or traveling.

What's Involved in Traveling as an Ambassador? Every member who wants to travel on a club exchange will complete an application to become an Ambassador. Typically there are 18-22 Ambassadors in an exchange group. The (Outgoing) Exchange Director will then select the Ambassadors to go on the trip, with this selection based on the type of trip, the demands placed on the Ambassadors, and their ability to meet those demands.

When you travel as a Friendship Force Ambassador, you are truly immersed in the new culture. You stay in the homes of other Friendship Force members and spend your days with hosts or day hosts who are always proud to introduce you to their family, friends, traditions, lifestyle and, of course, important sites in their region. Generally, you will know something about your home host(s) before the trip – their names, ages, professions and interests.

Don't worry about language problems! There is always someone who can help translate, and you will be amazed how smiles, nods and assorted hand language are universally understood. It all makes for new friends and great stories! Of course, you will be spending many of your days with other travelers from our club/group, and you will know what to expect because your trip's itinerary has been planned in great detail to give you a rich and personal experience. Bottom line – relax and have a great time! Friendship is the golden thread that ties all hearts together.

Planned Time and Free Time Generally, most exchanges involve a one-week home-stay in the home of another Friendship Force member at the chosen destination. Often, the trip may include two exchanges to two destinations, with two different host families. There is usually one free, unplanned day per week that you will spend with your host. Frequently, there will be an optional extended trip in the same region, before, after, or between the exchanges. Members may also travel independently to another destinations before or after the exchanges. There are ample opportunities for you to spend free time doing the things you might choose to do on your own. Details of the planned activities will certainly be given to you when you arrive at your destination. Sometimes this information will be sent to you before the trip. Your Outbound Exchange Director will have a general idea of the planned activities several months before the trip, but will probably not know exact schedules and details.

It is important that you are a good ambassador and exhibit the qualities of a friend:

Keep an Open Mind: this is the ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli. The fewer expectations, preconceptions and private agendas you have, the more successful your experience will be. After all, the joy of discovery is a surprise.

Have a Sense of Humor: the ability to laugh and find humor in things helps guard against disappointment and frustration. Be quick to overlook and slow to lose your sense of humor.

Be Flexible and Adaptable: the ability to cope with new situations as well as keeping options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum will enable you to enjoy new and different experiences. Your hosts have agreed to welcome you into their homes without reimbursement. Allow them to be hospitable. Be open to their attentiveness and the ways they express it. Let your host family take charge of your life for a week. You won't be disappointed.

Have a Positive Regard for Others: remember the ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for others. A willingness to communicate is important. Keep in mind the duties of a good guest and don't take advantage of your host's hospitality. Be sensitive to hosts whose economic resources may be more limited than your own. It may or may not be appropriate to help with the extra expenses during your visit. Remember that your hosts are proud people; feel your way with your heart in this matter.

To show your appreciation, you will want to bring along a gift for your hosts. This, in addition to a warm note of thanks left behind in the guestroom, is a very personal way to show your gratitude for your host's attentiveness.

Concentrate on the experience of sharing a week in the lives of your hosts. Accept this time as a gift from this tiny planet we call home. You may never come this way again. Your new friends are waiting. Enjoy!

A few more "hints":

- Be sensitively aware of the feeling of other people (hosts and your fellow travelers), thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part.

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- Take along photographs of your home, family and community to share with your hosts so they have a better understanding of you.
- Refresh your knowledge of history, demographics and geography, both of your own community as well as of the cities you are visiting.
- Punctuality is a must for all activities. One person's tardiness affects the entire group. Be patient if lines are long and service is slow.
- Be independent. Enjoy the activities your hosts have planned for you, but be able to amuse yourself as well. Explore the neighborhood, write postcards, read, play with the children, or go sightseeing or shopping when the family is busy.
- Be reasonable about your purchases of souvenirs. Don't let shopping seem more important than making friends and learning about a different culture.
- Remember that many problems will work themselves out (it's only for seven days). If a hosting situation poses a real problem, ambassadors are expected to exercise tact and diplomacy. First address the problem with your host. When necessary, contact your Outgoing Exchange Director.
- Cultivate the habit of listening and sharing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Instead of knowing all the answers, ask questions.
- Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in an attempt to deepen your understanding.

Costs of Travel Currently (2014), the typical costs for a 5 to 7 day outgoing international exchange are listed below. Other cost structures are possible for domestic (US) or FFI Global Exchanges.

\$165 to FFI

\$25 to your local club

A \$50 contingency fund which may be used to cover fluctuating exchange rates and other non anticipated events.

A minimum of \$100 to the host club. This is negotiated between the EDs. Due to increasing fuel costs worldwide this is generally increased.

Transportation cost to the hosting club (may include local air or ground to host city)

Possibly some meals, generally lunches when out.

Possibly some extra costs for local transportation and entrance fees though most of these are covered by the fee given to the host club.

Small gifts to your host and others (dinner hosts, day hosts, children, etc.)

Taking your host out to one dinner

Visa and passport costs

All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their exchanges. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- a) through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel,
- b) through the policy offered by FFI on our website, or
- c) by purchasing a separate travel insurance package

Some programs have extra costs due to the specific activities or local costs. In addition, some exchanges include pre- or post-exchange tours – usually optional, sometimes required. These may raise the costs significantly. The budget is worked out in detail before your commitments are made for the exchange.

Travel to and from the exchange is your responsibility to arrange and pay for; although in some cases your Exchange Director may seek out charter fares and arrange a discount. Use of this service is normally optional.

Travel Guard Insurance When you purchase travel insurance, consider the Travel Guard policies that are offered at a significant discount if purchased on the FFI website. This is available to members even for non-friendship force travel.

Hosting Ambassadors From Another Club

How It Works

When our club receives Ambassadors from other clubs, our Incoming Exchange Director and members assisting her/him plan their itinerary, assign their home hosts, coordinate their visit and identify opportunities for each of our members to participate. The Incoming Exchange Director also prepares us for understanding the culture, history and worldview of the visiting Ambassadors who will become our new friends.

Generally, all of our club members will be asked to participate in one or more of these ways:

- Hosting Ambassadors in your home
- Serving as a day host
- Providing transportation to the scheduled activities
- Hosting a small group dinner in your home
- Attending a welcome and farewell reception
- Help with planning entertainment for our visitors at the above receptions
- Welcome - make signs and assembling welcome bags including finding items to fill them – maps, brochures, small gifts, etc.

Our club usually has a week of activities planned for our visitors, all designed to acquaint them with our culture, geography, traditions, etc. The full week is not planned completely – there is usually at least one free day in the week when the home host or a day host can plan an interesting experience. Alternatively, the Ambassadors may go out on their own if they wish. We always have a welcome and farewell reception and group activities during the week that may interest you.

Hosting Ambassadors in Your Home

When you host an incoming Ambassador in your home for their 5-7 night visit to our community you will find it a wonderful experience. Often your Ambassador's departure will be the beginning of an enduring friendship that will grow through correspondence and visits.

Our Incoming Exchange Director is armed with information about the ages, gender and interests of the Ambassadors and will try to pair you up accordingly. Our club will have a full week of activities planned, so you don't need to worry about entertaining your guests around the clock. Group activities are planned in advance; the cost of the Ambassador's portion will have been paid for by part of their program fee.

Hosts are responsible for providing suitable accommodations and any meals that are not part of the group activities. Hosts are responsible for getting their guests to the group activities and paying for their own entrance fees or meals, but other members also serve as day hosts so you don't have to be on the go all the time. In addition, other members who don't have extra bedrooms also assist by hosting dinners, offering transportation, etc.

The most important thing to remember is that you are hosting Friendship Force members who share the same interest in learning about different cultures. They will surely enjoy their trips to the riverfront, museums and nearby attractions, but meeting your friends and family and understanding your lifestyle will enrich their travel experience. Hosts might consider taking them to their places of worship, the grocery store, the library or even the post office. Walks through your neighborhood, bike rides on one of our bike trails or a backyard barbecue with neighbors - these everyday experiences might be the best memories of their visit to Greater Cincinnati.

Cost of Hosting Hosting ambassadors in your home is somewhat like inviting any guest. You will generally provide breakfast, sometimes a few packed lunches or snacks; transportation on the days not covered by a day host, your own meals, entrance and activity fees on days you accompany your ambassadors; and possibly some potluck items which you bring to the Farewell or Welcome dinners. The club has limited "scholarship funds" available to help you with the costs of hosting if that presents a difficulty for you. Simply make a written request to the club President.

Exchange Director

Very simply, we cannot receive Ambassadors as Hosts or travel as Ambassadors if we don't have Exchange Directors. FFI has a detailed manual for Exchange Directors and our members are willing and able to mentor any members interested in learning how to serve as an Exchange Director – either for an outgoing exchange or an incoming exchange – either international or domestic. Being an Exchange Director can be great fun and our club and FFI can provide you all the support you need. Outgoing Exchange Directors can have some of their travel expenses paid if they organize a fully subscribed exchange.

As a new member, we don't expect you to make this level of commitment. But we hope you will volunteer to participate in exchanges and offer to assist one of our current Exchange Directors. It's a great way to make friends and learn more about the exchange operation. Just let us know that you are interested!