



friendship force
WESTERN MICHIGAN

November - December 2014

Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 10 1:00 Board Meeting.
215 Sabin Street, Kalamazoo,
MI

Jan. 17 12:30 UICA,GR,
Movie followed by 2:30 lunch at
XO Asian.

Feb. 21 1:00-3:00 Ethnic
Potluck, Zeeland, MI

March 28, TBA, Allegan Public
Library. Visiting scholar
presentation.

April TBA (Grand Rapids)

May TBA (Possibly 11th 7-9:30,
Presentation of Brazil
Exchange, Kalamazoo)

OF INTEREST

There is a lot happening that could be of interest, especially in the GR area. Check those things out further on in this Newsletter.

YOUR BOARD

President: Dave Hargreave

VP: Lyn Hargreave

Secretary: Debra Williamson

Treasurer: Roy Pearson

At Large Members:

Sue Bohlander

Jane Curtin

Laura Jane Colber

Cathy Dopp

Now that we have come to the end of 2014, we can look back over another successful year for the Friendship Force of Western Michigan. Once again our membership grew, albeit more slowly than in 2013. We enter the new year with 45 members. During this past year we have welcomed eight new people into our midst, two couples and four single women. Unfortunately, we also lost some club members to death, illness, family obligations or distance. They will be missed. Still, it is impressive that we continue to grow both larger and younger as a club, two trends which bode well for the future.

During the past twelve months we successfully hosted a global inbound themed exchange for 16 ambassadors and traveled outbound on an international exchange to Araraquara and Salvador, Brazil, as well as to Louisville, Kentucky on a domestic exchange. Some of our newest members partook in at least one of those outbound exchanges, another encouraging sign. Others have participated in exchanges found in the World of Friends Catalog.

We look forward to hosting our friends from both the Louisville club and the Braunschweig/Peine club of Germany during the upcoming year. In the next few weeks we should hear from Atlanta about our 2016 exchange requests. Once that happens we can move forward with advanced planning for the 2016 year.

We enter the new year with an enlarged executive board, with the addition of four at-large positions. It is heart warming to note in this regard that two of the eight new club members for 2014, Jane Curtin and Cathy Dopp, have agreed to serve on the board. We will now have at least two board members from each of our three metropolitan centers, Grand Rapids, Holland and Kalamazoo. Leaving the board after many years of service as secretary, treasurer and vice president is Sheila Nichols. Thank you Sheila for all of the work you put in on behalf of the club.

REPORT OF ANNUAL MEETING:

On December 13, thirty members and friends met at the Four Roses Cafe for our Christmas lunch celebration and our annual meeting. Business conducted consisted approval of the 2105 proposed budget, collection of dues from those present and not paid, sign up for hosts for the German inbound in September. There was agreement to host the Louisville club this summer and Marci Ellis volunteered to be the ED for this exchange. It was announced that Omaha would like to do a mutual exchange in 2016. New members and guests were introduced. A poinsettia was presented to Sheila Nichols for her long time service on the board. Deb Williamson presented a slate for officers for the coming year. There were no nominations or volunteers from the floor and the slate as presented was approved by a vote of the members present. Those officers are listed in the left hand column.

Minutes for this meeting (and all board meetings) can be found on the club website.



EXCHANGES

The **World of Friends** Catalog has a variety of exchanges listed that currently have openings. This should be coming to the email boxes of members, but if it is not, please let Lyn Hargreave know and she will forward your information to the proper sources at the Atlanta headquarters.

A new catalog will be coming out mid January that will tell which exchanges might still have openings. As of mid December the following is only a very few of the total listed.

EXOTIC AND NEWLY OPENED DESTINATIONS

Cuba: 3/10-3/18

Myanmar (FF in Action- Mission) 3/20-4/4

Morocco (with cooking and art workshop) 4/13-28

CLOSER TO HOME

Gardens of Oregon 5/28 - 6/11

Great Plains, Oklahoma City to Omaha 4/22-5/9

Global Biking Exchange, Ames, IA 7/20-26

Eco Walk in North Carolina: 8/9-16

DARING, available May 8-15?

Try a Mystery exchange. Cost \$425 excluding air fare. Hints: "biking, walking, boating" "canal", "museums and galleries", "Gothic architecture", "signature pastry" and "signature flowers" (May is the best month to see them.) Any guesses?

SEE MORE at:

http://catalog.thefriendshipforce.org/index.php/catalog/all_list/

INBOUNDS:

LOUISVILLE: June

Marci Ellis our Inbound ED is looking for hosts for Louisville in the latter half of June. If you are going to be in town and willing to host for a shortened (5 night) exchange please contact Marci. We need your help for home hosting, day hosting and dinner hosting.

Braunschweig/Peine, GERMANY.. September

We have the list of ambassadors coming from Germany on September 26 until October 3. It appears that we have need for a home host for one lady and we will have the matching completed. This list was passed around at our Christmas gathering. Still lots of need for day hosts and dinner hosts, and a back up home host is always nice to have. Things do come up.

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

We have received a cooperative response from Dayton and Detroit for a 3 club global exchange with this theme in 2016. This would be shortened exchange of about 4 nights, 3 days in each location. We will wait to see what Atlanta proposes for any inbounds before proceeding with this.

OUTBOUNDS:

OMAHA, NE

We have been contacted by Omaha regarding a reciprocal exchange. No proposed dates have been suggested. With Louisville coming this summer, followed by Germany we will want to see what is proposed from Atlanta for 2016. However without an outbound for 2015, this may be something to consider for this summer. Our biggest hurdle again, an ED. Omaha has lots to offer (see things mentioned in the Sept/Oct Newsletter) and we have friends there thanks to our 4th Coast Adventure.

Another option, IF Omaha would consider it, would be to visit them in late March or early April next year and either precede the visit, or continue west after the visit about 3 hours for an over night in Kearney NE for an evening and early morning viewing of the sandhill cranes as they migrate across this magnificent flyway along the North Platte River. It is reportedly one of the most spectacular events in the U.S. which happens every spring between early March and early April.

YOUR INTEREST AND COMMENTS PLEASE

WORLD CONFERENCE, VANCOUVER, CANADA AUGUST 28-31, 2015

Registration now open at:

<https://www.etches.com/ehome/102747>

What better place to stage a conference with the theme "Building Bridges" than Vancouver – a city which boasts over 22 bridges and tunnels linking it to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia!

MEMBER UPDATES:

Marti Hearron joined us in 2013. However her health began declining before ever getting very involved. She passed away in December.

Deb Williamson's mother passed away January 5 after a long illness.

Our condolences to the families of both of these members.

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF POSSIBLE INTEREST

As indicated on Page 1 there are other things happening in West Michigan which may be of interest to members who are staying around this winter. I list them by venue,

CALVIN COLLEGE:**January 13, 12:30 p.m. (Tuesday)**

Tova Friedman presentation: Reflections of a Child Holocaust Survivor

January 16, 12:30 p.m. (Friday)

Roxana Saberi presentation: On the Streets of Tehran.

More information may be found at:

<http://www.calvin.edu/january-series/speakers/>

Both of these presentations will be held at the Covenant Fine Arts Center Auditorium at Calvin College. Parking is available on the east side of the East Beltline by the Prince Conference Center. A free shuttle with continuous service to the Covenant Fine Arts Center is provided daily beginning at 11:15 a.m. and again immediately following the presentation at 1:30 p.m. Guests may board the shuttle at the entrance to the conference center or take the sidewalk which leads to the convenient skywalk across the beltline. The center holds only 1000 and is frequently full. Early arrival is recommended.

WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF W. MI

Presentations held Monday evening from 6-7:15 in the Aquinas College Performing Arts Center

1607 Robinson Rd., SE, Grand Rapids. Cost is \$15 for non members, \$10 for members.

February

2 Privacy: Is there such a thing?

9: Russia and the Near Abroad

16: Sectarianism in the Middle East

23: Human Trafficking in the 21st Century

March

2: India Changes Course

9: U.S. Policy Toward Africa

16 Brazil's Metamorphosis

23 Syria's Refugee Crisis

URBAN INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

February 3 at 6 p.m.: Movie, "Watermark". A 2014 documentary that looks at human relationship with water around the globe.

FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL IN HOLLAND AT THE KNICKERBOCKER THEATER ON 8TH STREET**January 22: "Qual d'Orsay" / The French Minister @ 7:30pm**

Genre: Comedy Country: France

Doors slam and papers fly in this off-the-wall comedy about French politics directed by master filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier. Tavernier's blistering assault zeroes in on fictional Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandre Taillard de Vorms. A human whirlwind and a man confident in France's importance on the world stage, de Vorms takes on American neo-cons, corrupt Russians and the opportunistic Chinese while his hapless speech writer endures the eccentricities of his megalomaniacal boss and his sycophantic entourage. In the vein of recent political comedies such as "In the Loop", the French Minister is a hilarious send-up of diplomacy and international politics with rapid-fire dialogue and a brilliant ensemble cast.

January 24: "Le chat du rabbin" / "The Rabbi's Cat" @ 3:00 p.m

Genre: Animation/Adventure Country: France

Set in Algeria in the 1920s, a rabbi's cat who learns how to speak after swallowing the family parrot expresses his desire to convert to Judaism.

January 24: "Le passé" / "The Past" @ 7:30pm

Genre: Drama/Mystery Country: France/Italy/Iran.

An Iranian man deserts his French wife and her two children to return to his homeland. Meanwhile, his wife starts up a new relationship, a reality her husband confronts upon his wife's request for a divorce.

INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS



RITA AND JEFF NEUMANN

Grand Rapids

Rita is a physical therapist working with patients recovering from strokes, spinal cord injuries and brain injuries at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Rapids. She also works in the Quality Improvement Department at Mary Free Bed. Rita grew up in New Orleans and moved to Michigan in 1989 to go to school. She fell in love with the beauty of Michigan's four seasons and decided to make it her home.

Rita volunteers for the Kent Special Riding Program in Alto, MI, which provides horseback riding lessons to children and adults with physical, mental or emotional disabilities. She also enjoys spending time with their mini-rex rabbit, Pepper Jack.

Jeff is a master electrician and retired professor from Grand Rapids Community College, where he taught electronics for 25 years. He has two sons, Mark who is 28, married and living in Kalamazoo and Kevin, who is 31, married and living in Grand Rapids as well as an 18 month old grandson Nathan.

In the late summer of 2004, Jeff had the opportunity to join two GRCC colleagues and a student on a trip to Tanzania, Africa. After the successfully climbed the Machame route to the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, they had the opportunity to engage in several African safaris in northern Tanzania. The group was able to tour and camp in the Great Rift Valley, Arusha National Park, the region of Lake Manyara in Tarangire Park, the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti- experiencing and learning about African wildlife.

Two years later, Jeff decided to ride his bicycle around Lake Michigan. He trained for several weeks, and began his journey in late June, when the days were the longest. As he rode down his driveway to begin the adventure, he planned for the trip to take him 2 weeks. He rode alone all day, every day, and when it started to get dark, he would look for a hotel to spend the night. He enjoyed it so much that, with very favorable weather conditions he was able to pedal the 926 miles around Lake Michigan in less than 7 days!

Jeff currently volunteers for Experience Grand Rapids, and works coverage at Mary Free Bed Rehab hospital as a Patient Escort, Valet Driver, Patient Safety Attendant and Switchboard Operator.

Jeff and Rita were married in 2009 and live on the west side of Grand Rapids, near John Ball Zoo. They love to pedal the Kent Trails, Millennium Park and White Pine Trail together, and paddle the area's beautiful rivers and lakes. They joined the Grand Rapids Audubon Club to learn more about west Michigan's birds. In the winter, they enjoy cross country skiing. Jeff retired from teaching in 2013 to start a new business with Rita called GR Paddling. GR Paddling provides customized canoe and kayak trips on Grand Rapids area lakes and rivers. When they are not busy with GR Paddling, they enjoy traveling long distances by train. Together they have been to San Francisco, Seattle, San Antonio, Denver and Boston on Amtrak, and think it is the best way to see the country.

They are looking forward to traveling with Friendship Force, meeting new people and seeing different cities.



LISA FISHER

Kalamazoo

I became familiar with Friendship Force this past summer through Meetup.com. I participated in several activities and as a day host for the September 2014 inbound exchange. I enjoyed participating in the exchange and the people that I met. I am planning to go on my first outbound exchange to Haliburton, Ontario on January 22. I am also planning to go to Peru with the Detroit club in October.

I was born in the Netherlands with my family immigrating to the United States when I was three years old. I majored in accounting in college and began working for Kellogg Company right after graduating. I retired from Kellogg Company on May 1, 2014 after working there 33 years. My last position was as Sr. Finance Manager.

I have two children. My son, Scott is 25 and lives in Overland Park, KS. He is planning to be married in June 2015. My daughter, Elise, is 21 and is in her senior year at Grand Valley State University. she will graduate in April 2015 with a bachelor's of social work degree.

Since retiring, I have focused on improving my physical fitness. I love to walk and try to walk at least three miles most days. In October I participated in a 50 mile walk over three days from the Kalamazoo Nature Center to Lake Michigan in South Haven. I'm a member of the YMCA and am taking water aerobics and strength training classes. I also like to bike and kayak. I enjoy being outdoors.

I love to travel and experience new places and cultures. I have been to 49 states (missing Idaho) as well as to Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Europe and several islands. Now that I am retired I hope to spend more time traveling. I am looking forward to traveling with Friendship Force. I am excited to experience places from the perspective of people who live there and to making new friends.