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## 2026 February FFWM newsletter

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From FFWM <FFwesternmichigan@88357545.mailchimpapp.com>

Date Sat 1/31/2026 9:56 PM

To Marcia Ellis <marcia.ellis@wmich.edu>

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February 2026



# President's Message

Welcome to Winter FFWM,

Hopefully by now you have paid your dues to FFI or to FFWM. Remember if you pay FFI, you don't need to pay FFWM. If you have questions, please contact Pam Sackett at [tulikivi@msn.com](mailto:tulikivi@msn.com). Remember: if you plan to travel, you must pay FFI dues.

Our dinner hosting LEO was a great success. Almost 30 members participated and I heard many positive comments. It's a good way to get to know each other better and an easy way to chat. A big thanks to hosts Paul and Alice Asmus, Jerry and Louise Potratz, and Gayle and Paul Franklin. Also, a thanks to Lyn Hargreave for organizing this. We will continue this a couple more times this year as well as our usual LEOs at restaurants and clubhouses.

Good news! Loie Gustafson and Marcia Ellis have agreed to be journey coordinators for our outbound to Oklahoma City in October. This is a wonderful place to visit, so if you are interested in going, please let them know.

Stay warm and safe,

Nancy Draayer

## 2026 Board Members

Nancy Draayer, President  
Cathy Dopp, Vice President  
Tom McGarry, Vice President  
Louise Potratz, Secretary  
Pam Sackett, Treasurer  
Stan Sackett  
Loie Dye-Gustafson  
Jackie Howlett  
Phil Johnson

# 2026 Journeys

## **Journey Assignments**

Inbound: May 4-10. FF Tallahassee FL and FF Central Arizona. JC: Pam Sackett (tulilikivi@msn.com). Activities will include the Chihuly exhibit at Meijer Gardens and a performance at the Gilmore Festival! Pam needs hosts so please contact her to volunteer.

Outbound: October. FF Oklahoma City. JCs: Loie Dye-Gustafson and Marcia Ellis. They are accepting ambassador applications now. Download the [Ambassador Application](#). Email completed form to wordpictures@gmail.com.

Outbound: July 11-Aug 7. Iringa, Tanzania JCs: Louise Potratz (LPL4@hotmail.com), Nancy Draayer, Lisa Fisher. Waiting list only.

**Journey forms can be downloaded from our website [HERE](#).**

## Next LEO



We will be meeting this month (the 12<sup>th</sup> at noon) at the Villas of Stonehenge Clubhouse 2500 Bluestone Circle, Kalamazoo.

Please bring a dish to share.

Our program will be a review of the FFI website and how you can pay your dues, journey fees and participate in other activities through the website.

Remember if you choose not to join the International club you can still join locally for \$10.

Pam will be present to receive your payment.

Please RSVP yea or nay to Lyn Hargreave (lynhargreave@gmail.com).



# January 12th LEO





A total of 29 members attended lunch at 3 homes for the January LEO. Lunch hosts were Gayle & Paul Franklin, Alice & Paul Asthmus, and Jerry and Louise Potratz.

## Community Event

Love meets tradition: The Lunar New Year & Valentine's Day  
Celebration in Kalamazoo

Presented by: Chinese American Association Of Greater Kalamazoo

When: February 14, 2026

Find out more [HERE](#)

## Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be March 18, 2026 at 7pm. Typically board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month. We will announce the dates and times through this newsletter. Any member interested in attending please notify Louise Potratz at LpL4@hotmail.com. You will receive an invitation to the meeting which is held via Zoom. You don't even have to leave your house!

## See Who Is Traveling

### Osaka World Expo 2025

I had the chance to travel to Osaka this past fall to visit the 2025 World Expo. We arranged the trip around my son's Korean Thanksgiving 'Chuseok' holiday break. Unfortunately, I was only able to spend one day at the Expo because tickets sold out so quickly. We found out too late that the Chinese Thanksgiving holiday falls on the same dates. I suspected there would be issues when the website said I was "34,517<sup>th</sup>" in line for tickets.

But my friend Mindi and I were able to get in for one day, and it was a great day. This Expo was much smaller than the Dubai 2020 expo. (I suspect Japan doesn't have the same money to throw around that Dubai has!) But they still built a breathtakingly beautiful site.

Most of the pavilions for each country were smaller too, but still interesting. The expo team tried an online "reservation system" to get access to the most popular country exhibits, which made sense since we often had to stand in line for hours at the Dubai Expo. Those were also all booked up, so we spent most of our time outdoors or visiting smaller countries.

We were able to get into the China Pavilion, which was very special. Not only was it a stunning pavilion, it was laid out well with plenty of fascinating displays. This was a clear highlight for Mindi, who was adopted from China and grew up in rural Iowa. Over and over she exclaimed 'Everyone looks like me!!!' on the trip. She kept yo-yo-ing between sheer joy and complete panic when folks assumed she spoke

Chinese or Japanese and started talking to her 90 miles an hour. It was both hilarious and heartwarming to watch.

The highlight for me was “The Great Ring”. When I first heard they were building “The World’s Largest Wooden Structure” I didn’t think it sounded that appealing. But it was beautiful on so many levels. Not only did the top offer great views of Osaka and the ocean, it provided a really gorgeous respite from the crowds. And at night it was lit up beautifully. It was a perfect example of how the Japanese are able to create simplicity and serenity in the most unexpected ways.

The 2030 World Expo is scheduled for Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has never been on my Bucket List before, but it is now!

Submitted by Cathy Dopp





Dave and Teresa Barnes are visiting FF Chiapas, Mexico with Vicki & Doug Vance.

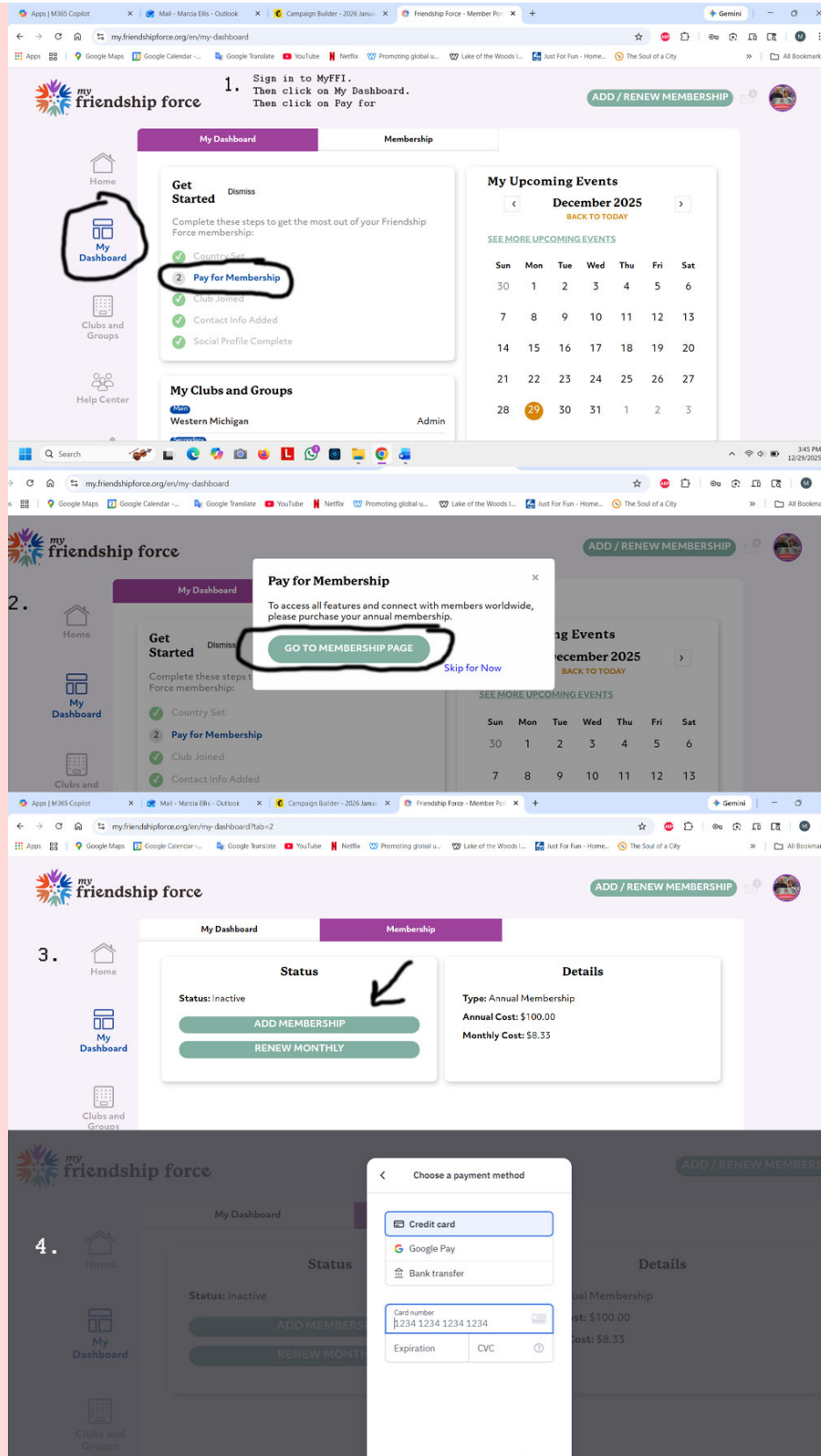


Loie went to the beach!

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## How To Pay FFI Dues

Sign in to your MyFFI account and click on My Dashboard on the left. Then follow the screen prompts as pictured below.



# Tips for Flying

Dr Rema Malik, Board-Certified Vascular Surgeon in Houston, TX recommends this as your "In-Flight" Vascular Protocol.

She states compression socks (15-20mmHg) are non-negotiable. They mechanically force blood flow and prevent swelling. Put them on before you leave the house for a flight.

The 8-ounce rule: Drink 8oz. of water for every hour you are in the air. Coffee and wine don't count (they dehydrate you further).

Every 30 minutes, do 30 ankle pumps. Pretend you are pressing a gas pedal. This manually fires the calf muscle to clear stagnant blood.

The Truth: You wouldn't drive a car without oil. Don't fly a body without circulation.

Submitted by Loie Dye-Gustafson

## FFI Regional Conference



Registration is now LIVE for Friendship Force International's 2026 North American Regional Conference in the heart of Memphis, Tennessee.

**[REGISTER NOW](#)**

### Conference Details

When: April 24-27, 2026 (Friday arrival through Monday checkout)

Where: The Hyatt Centric Hotel on Beale Street - Memphis's most exciting district

What: A weekend of learning, friendship, fun and Southern hospitality

# Travel Opportunities

Click the links below to review a catalog of Special Journeys that are currently being offered by other FFI clubs. Perhaps there is a journey that interests you!

Go [HERE](#) to see all group journeys. (You must be signed in to myFFI).



## Contribute to the Newsletter

Would you like to contribute something or share a travel experience in this newsletter? If you are willing to share your adventures, a photo, or *anything related to travel, cultures, places you've visited*, please email your article to Marcia Ellis at [ellism@wmich.edu](mailto:ellism@wmich.edu).

## My FFI

The members-only portal, [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org), is the go-to place for news, journey opportunities, payments, virtual experiences and all other member-relevant information. If you have not yet signed up, click [Word](#) or [PDF](#) for detailed instructions.



FFWM Newsletter  
<https://www.friendshipforcewmich.org/>



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