

October 2021 Newsletter

FFWM <FFwesternmichigan@gmail.com>

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



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A Message From Our President

Trick or treat?

It is that time of year. When I was a kid, out trick or treating for a living, there were some households that would expect me to do a trick for them before they would give me a treat. Obviously, these were not my favorite households to call upon, but, being desperate for a sugar

fix, I typically entertained them by eating some of my candy and making it “disappear”. As bad as that trick was, I always got some candy. Perhaps they felt sorry for me or they just figured that “this was the best I could do”... low expectations if you will. Sometimes we have to do what we don’t want in order to get what we do want. As an adult example of this... I do not like to ask for money... put another way, I do not like fundraising. Give me just about any other job and I’ll gladly do whatever is required.

Given the above paragraph, I fully expect your eyes are eager to turn away from this message... if you haven’t already done so..., but give me one more moment please! Think about that next Journey that you want to take with Friendship Force. Maybe it is our upcoming trip to Turkey, or maybe a trip to the great American Northwest, or maybe you are looking forward to meeting new friends through hosting.

Whatever it is that you are looking ahead to, it is important that FFI be around to make the Journey happen. FFI will soon be launching a “45 for 45” campaign. We are all being highly encouraged to give a gift of \$45 in recognition of FFI’s 45th anniversary. A lot of non-profit organizations have issued “compulsory pandemic recovery fees” to raise revenue. FFI is not doing that. What FFI is doing is asking us to celebrate with them by gifting \$45 to our future as a club... to another 45 years of friendship. I personally feel that this is money well spent. You can expect to hear more about this in the near future. Now, I’m going to go make some candy disappear!

Calendar Entries:

Two must-attend events for your calendar:

- November 6th at 6:00 pm LEO at Go Jo, in East Town, 421 Norwood SE, Grand Rapids
- December 6th at 6:00 pm Holiday Party at Martell’s, 3501 Greenleaf Blvd, Kalamazoo

Please see below or Lyn Hargreave’s email of October 19th for more details!

Giving Thanks:

Western Michigan is beautiful this time of year... okay, maybe a little too much rain lately... but the trees are turning colors and we are preparing our long list of “thank you’s” for consumption later this

month. I'm thankful that I live here! I'm thankful for having friends like you! I'm thankful for our board and committee members that volunteer some extra time each month to keep our club active and on the go! I'm thankful that I have at least one club member that has stepped forward to be nominated to our board at the Holiday Party. How about you? Are you also ready to step forward? Let me know, I'd be happy to talk with you and add your name to my extra-thankful-for list!

Dues are Due!

Our annual dues are due at the holiday party on December 6. FFI increased our dues to \$25 and our club (FFWM) dues are \$15 for a total of \$40. Please write your check made out to FFWM and give it to Lisa Fisher at the party. Or you can mail it to her at 9704 Oakview Dr., Portage, MI 49024.

See you at the LEO!

<https://www.friendshipforcewmich.org/upcoming-events.html>

When: November 6 at 6pm

Where: Go Jo

421 Norwood SE, GR

<https://gojoethiopiancuisine.com/>

RSVP to Lyn Hargreave before Nov. 4.



Save the date!!

December 6 at 6pm is our **Christmas party!** It will be at Martell's, 3501 Greenleaf Blvd, Kalamazoo. Martells has excellent food and a beautiful setting. Their menu for our event is here. The price for dinner is \$28.95 + 18% gratuity for a total per person of \$34.16 plus any drinks you may order. They will not do individual checks except for the drinks so be prepared to submit a check or cash for \$34.16 each to FFWM.

RSVP to Lyn Hargreave by December 1.

Board Nominations

Please consider Board service!

Send all nominations for board members to
Jerrypotratz@hotmail.com.

Have You Registered With

FFI Yet?

If you have not. . . **PLEASE DO IT NOW!!!**

FFI Online is now live. It will eventually house all our member resources and exclusive member-only content, and keep you up to speed with news from FFI and around the world. A recent message from FFI through this website informed us of an update of the latest features that were added:

Coming soon! Friendship Force multilingual website. Over the past year, a new website has been in development, geared towards sharing our mission, history, and programs with potential members. The website is in final review with a target launch by the end of December. Since this is a multilingual site, it has taken more time than expected to translate and ensure nothing is lost in translation.

Coming soon to myFF! Interest Groups. Coming in the next few weeks is a new feature called 'interest groups.' These virtual groups will be found right here on my.friendshipforce.org and are a way for people to come together around shared interests. Soon there will be a place for groups like the Book Club, Coffee Chats, Field Representatives, Club Admins, language learner groups, and so on.

Coming soon to myFF! Club-level communications. Within the club profile page on myFF, there will be a new feature that allows clubs to post messages to be visible on their club page. When these messages are posted, all members of your club will receive a notification in their primary email inbox.

Coming soon to myFF! myFF Global Club Directory. All members will be able to browse and view your club profile page and see the photos you've posted, your journey history, and learn more about your club.

Eventually the member portal will be used to sign up for journeys, pay any fees etc.

The minimum information required to sign up is your name, club and email address.

Be sure to sign up if you have not already done so!

Here is the website sign-up

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

Photocluster

Street Art



Travels

Wonder where your friends are traveling recently?
If you have taken a trip--even a weekender--please share your story
with us! Include pictures, too!!
Send your story and pictures to ellism@wmich.edu.

This from Cathy Dopp on her recent trip to **Greece**:

This September I took a cautious, but fabulous trip to Greece. I ensured every flight and stay was fully refundable, and signed up for extra travel insurance in case I picked up some “Delta Alpha Mu” strain of Covid while I was there. I kept mentally preparing for a last minute cancellation, and almost did cancel when the State Department put Greece on the “Level 3 – Reconsider Travel” list. But then I started checking the Covid rates in Greece compared to the US. They actually had 1/12th the Covid Infection rate as the US, so I was literally safer there. Greece was a go, but I sure as heck wasn’t going to go near Florida or Texas!

I flew out of Chicago where far more people were masked up than here in Grand Rapids. Masks and Vaccine Cards were mandatory at the airport, and things went pretty smoothly. I had to present my Vaccine Card again in Istanbul to board my connection to Greece – and fill out a “Passenger Locator Form” so they would know where I’d stayed should I test positive later.

The Greeks were very consistent, yet friendly about masking up. Anywhere indoors (except your hotel room) you were politely reminded to wear your mask. In order to enter any of the museums you needed to present either your Vaccination Card or a negative PCR test from within the last 72 hours. Most of the restaurants and historical sites were outdoors and not nearly as crowded as usual, so you got plenty of “face time”.

Getting back into the US took a little more effort. Even if you had been vaccinated, you still needed to be tested to insure you didn’t have a break thru infection. The Athens Airport had an on-site clinic where I got my test for 20 Euros within 20 minutes. It was very well run.

I was surprised by the FIVE security checks I went through in Istanbul when connecting for my final flight back to Chicago. Not only did I have to reclaim my luggage and go through Security again with it, I had two Covid checks and two “body” checks. I suspect the extra security may have been heightened due to the Afghanistan tensions. Overall, the extra precautions were sensible and efficiently run. The crowds were much smaller than usual, but everywhere seemed alive with both ecstatic tourists and vendors thrilled to be reunited. Almost all of my fellow travelers were from Europe, and the absence of Australians and Asians seemed really odd. I never thought I’d miss

those polite mobs of Chinese tourists following their guide around, hopefully we'll see them back again soon too!



Happy Thanksgiving!



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Contact us: FFwesternmichigan@gmail.com

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