



## **The Friendship Force of Western Michigan New Member Orientation Manual**

Welcome to our club! We hope the content of this booklet gives you more in-depth information on 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. Those experiences lead to understanding a greater desire to serve our global village. Whenever we host visitors from an international or domestic club, all our members are encouraged to participate. We are really glad you joined us and we want your membership to be a rewarding experience.

### **Friendship Force International (FFI)**

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. FFI does this by connecting people from different countries and cultures at the personal level. Through the signature program of home hospitality, local hosts welcome visitors into their culture, sharing meals, conversation, and the best sights and experiences of their region.

FFI is a nonprofit organization with virtual headquarters in Atlanta, GA. Jeremi Snook is the President/CEO of FFI, and there is a governing body of 14 members who serve on the FFI Board of Directors, representing clubs around the world. In addition to the FFI staff working in Atlanta, there are volunteer Regional Field Representatives who serve as a resource to our club by coordinating between the clubs in our region 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 previously used 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. Because the term "Exchange" no longer seemed appropriate we now refer to our travels as "journeys". Today, most journeys involve 12-20 Friendship Force members visiting another Friendship Force chapter somewhere in the world.

While the size and number of journeys 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 journey 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 journey takes place. In many cases, the friendships established during a journey continue for many years, with follow-up visits through later Friendship Force journeys 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 the 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 on 6 continents in the world and over 300 journeys occur each year. Membership fees, journey 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 on the African Continent.

## Mission

Our mission is to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Every individual can make a contribution to global goodwill. The Friendship Force worldwide network of clubs and individuals seeks to overcome differences among people and nations.

## 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 among 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

*Experience Different Views, Discover Common Ground*

## 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 Western Michigan

### History

Our chapter was founded in 1990 and is chartered by Friendship Force International. 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)© with the IRS.

### Membership & Dues

Membership is open to anyone who accepts Friendship Force principles (as put forth on the previously) and pays annual membership dues. Our dues are \$35.00 for all members. 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 journeys organized by our club and Global Journeys organized by Friendship Force International office. In addition, other clubs often advertise for participants through FFI. You can receive the monthly “World of Friends” catalog via email by signing up through the international web site: <http://friendshipforce.org/> and scrolling to the bottom where you will see a place to sign up for this newsletter.

### Meetings and Events

Our local club has at least one annual membership meeting in December, when new board members are elected and dues collected.

Other membership meetings may be called throughout the year. However, there are frequent social gatherings during the year (more frequently in summer), including LEOs (Let’s Eat Out). Locations and dates are planned by the social committee. These are announced via email but can also be found on our website: <http://www.friendshipforcewmich.org/upcoming-events.html>

### Newsletter

Newsletters are sent via email.

### 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!) This is provided to you after you pay your membership dues the first time. If it is lost, a new one may be ordered at your expense. You will find them especially useful when on a journey!

## Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors serve two-year terms from January – December. Up to 3 board members are selected by a membership vote at the December General Meeting. The Board then decides who among them will serve in the following capacity of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and three at-large directors who may be asked to assist as the Chair of the Social Committee and Chair of the Membership Committee for recruitment and record keeping.

Board members may serve up to 2 consecutive terms in any one officer position.

All club business is conducted by members of the Board of Directors/officers. All club members are invited to attend. Minutes are kept for all meetings and posted on a password protected page of the FFWM web site.

## 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, phone tree, photography

**Social:** help with meeting logistics, club parties, dinners & interest groups

**Membership:** help with recruitment activities, new member orientation, mentorship, and record keeping.

## Important Websites

The international website: <http://thefriendshipforce.org>

Our club website: <http://friendshipforcewmich.org>

The FFI website is a "must" – especially if you are interested in participating in a journey or learning more about Friendship Force. The FFI website features a listing of all journeys so you can explore and join these which may be arranged by other clubs or our FFI office staff. Many of the journeys have a special focus such as humanitarian or environmental activity. Most involve a home stay with members of our network of Friendship Force clubs around the world. The FFI site also has an online shop where you can purchase merchandise and gift items with the FFI brand.

## Travel Insurance

Required for all journeys, though there are many ways you can do this. If purchasing regular travel insurance, consider the company listed on the FFI website. There are several options offered, some which are not open to the public. Though there is not a discount on these policies the price is not inflated, but FFI is rewarded with a small financial compensation for those members who book their insurance through the FFI website. This is available to members even for non-friendship force travel.

## Hosting & Traveling: How It Works

## **Traveling with Friendship Force International**

As a FF member, you have a number of options:

You can apply for travel on international or domestic trips arranged by our club, trips arranged by other clubs, international trips arranged by Friendship Force International (called “global journeys”), or you can even offer to lead a global journey for FFI.

## **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 2018 our club submitted preferred destinations for 2020.) Each club also identifies how many weeks they would be willing to host visitors from other clubs. This information is submitted to FFI where all the preliminary assignments are made. FFI makes the initial coordination announcements, then turns it over to the clubs to implement.

The club that is traveling (Ambassadors) and the club that is receiving guests (Hosts) assign Journey Coordinators (JC). The journey coordinators communicate closely about home accommodations, sightseeing opportunities, and cultural activities that are coordinated by their committees. The two journey coordinators customize the visit, coordinate details and cost 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 journey will complete an application to become an Ambassador. The Journey Coordinator will then select the Ambassadors to go on the trip, and his/her selection is based on the type of trip and the physical demands placed on the Ambassadors and their ability to meet those demands. The JC has the final decision on who will be selected. This does not necessarily have to be from their own club.

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. 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. In addition, there are apps for cell phones which will translate words for you. 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 journeys involve a one-week home-stay in the home of another Friendship Force member at the chosen destination. Often, the trip may include two journeys to two destinations, with two different host families. There is usually one or two free, unplanned days that you will spend with your host. Frequently, there will be an optional extended trip in the same

country, before, after, or between the home hosted journeys. Members may then travel independently to another destination before returning home. There should always be ample opportunities for you to spend free time doing the things you might choose to do on your own.

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 with 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 your visit occasions. Remember 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 guest-room, 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 very sensitive to the feeling of other people (hosts and your fellow travelers), thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part. Remember that other countries see different news accounts of current events. Avoid expressing strong opinions on religion or politics.

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—of your own community and of the country 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 on sightseeing or shopping excursions 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, talk with your Journey Coordinator.

Cultivate the habit of listening and sharing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Instead of knowing all the answers, ask questions.

In an attempt to deepen your understanding, spend time reflecting on your daily experiences.

## **Planning the Cost of a Journey**

The journey coordinators will plan the budget for a journey. Some programs have extra costs due to the specific activities or local costs. The budget is worked out in detail before your commitments are made for the journey. The cost for the home-stay will come from the hosting club. This will cover most of the activities planned for the journey. This does not include round trip travel expense or additional tours planned by the ambassador coordinator. In addition, there will be a fee each ambassador pays to FFI for each week of home-stay.

In addition to these budgeted items you will incur an expense for:

- Taking your host out to one dinner

- Visa and passport costs

- A gift to your host family and small gifts to give to dinner hosts or those who do something special for you.

## **Hosting Ambassadors From Another Club**

When our club receives Ambassadors from other clubs, our Journey Coordinator and his/her committee plan their itinerary, assign their home hosts, coordinate their visit and identify opportunities for each of our members to participate. They also prepare us for understanding the culture, history and worldview of the visiting Ambassadors who will become our new friends.

Generally, all 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, goody bags and find items to fill them.

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 one or more free days in the week when the home host or day host can plan an interesting experience or the ambassadors may go out on their own if they wish. There is always a welcome and farewell reception during a journey that all club members are invited to attend.

## **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 journey coordinator 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 many activities planned, so you don't need to worry about entertaining your guests every day 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 of the time. Plus, 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 beach, 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 place 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 Western Michigan.

## **Cost of Hosting**

Hosting ambassadors in your home is somewhat like hosting any invited friend. 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.

## **Journey Director and Committee**

Very simply, we cannot receive ambassadors or travel as ambassadors if we don't have a journey coordinator and a journey committee. FFI has a detailed manual for journey coordinators and our members are willing and able to mentor any members interested in learning how to serve as a JC – either for an outgoing or an incoming journey – either international or domestic. Being a journey coordinator can be great fun, especially with a helpful committee. Club members and FFI staff can provide you all the support you need. Outbound journey coordinators are reimbursed for some of their travel expenses by ambassador fees and

are rewarded by FFI if they recruit a full (usually 20) journey of ambassadors. Host coordinators for inbound journeys also have compensation choices.

As a new member, we don't expect you to make a commitment. But we hope you will consider and volunteer to participate on a journey committee to assist one of our current or future JCs. It's a great way to make friends and learn more about the operation. Just let the board know that you are interested!

### ***A PLEDGE OF FRIENDSHIP***

***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 up this adventure I know that others will be watching me. I know that through my example to my fellow citizens and the people of other nations, the cause of friendship, love and peace will be furthered. I can make a difference.***