



friendship force
OREGON'S
MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY

www.fforegon.org

Friendship Connections

The Friendship Force of Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley

February 2026

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2026 CALENDAR

- Feb 15, 2 pm** - General gathering, Albany (p 1)
- Feb 19, noon** MEG, Laughing Planet Corvallis (p 1)
- Mar 21,10 am** - Peace Studies Event & MEG (p 3)
- April 16-22** - Charlotte NC outbound journey (p 5)
- April 24-27** - North Amer. FFI Conference, Memphis
- April 28 - May 6** - FFI Festival Cruise
- May 6 - 10** - FFI New Orleans tour
- Sept 9 - 15** - Raleigh NC Inbound Journey - *we need a host coordinator or coordinators* (p 5)



Feb 15 General Gathering, 2 pm - Albany

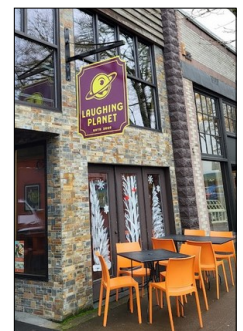
A second general gathering of 2026 will be on Sunday, Feb 15 at 2 pm in at the Lakeside Center in the Mennonite Village in Albany - 2180 54th Ave SE. We will conduct general club business - planning for this year's journeys, announcement of upcoming Friendship Shared events and MEGs, and will hear a presentation from International Mom's Group member Marina Memon, originally from Pakistan. Club members with last names N-Z are asked to bring snacks to share. Everyone should bring their own beverage. Our thanks to the Mennonite Village for use of their meeting space. This meeting will be open to the public and all Mennonite Villagers invited to attend.

The pond was covered with algae when we were there for December's holiday party. What will we see in Feb?



Feb 19 MEG, 12 noon - Laughing Planet

Our second MEG (Meet, Eat and Get Acquainted) of 2026 will begin at noon on Thursday Feb 19 at Laughing Planet in Corvallis - 127 NW 2nd St. If past practice holds true, we will meet in their second floor dining space. Laughing Planet is a "Health-minded, counter-serve chain featuring creative, globally influenced bowls & burritos." Please encourage your FFOMWV-curious friends and neighbors at attend this and other MEGs. These are time-limited, in-public events where people can meet other clubs members and explore participation in other club activities in a nonthreatening environment. If you plan to attend, please send an email to or call Marianna Biegel or Carolyn Powers to let them know. It helps them coordinate with restaurant staff.



*This Issue of Connections, and more information about our club, can be found on our website: <http://www.fforegon.org>
Contact us at: FFOMWV@gmail.com or PO Box 1703, Albany, Oregon 97321*

President's Message

FFOMWV is off to another year of fun, new experiences and adventures. Thank you to Russ for bringing another fascinating presentation to our January gathering. Thank you to Art and Marilyn Bervin for their financial support making these international speakers possible.

If you are trying to pay your FFI dues for 2026 (see article below) **OR** even trying to log into your my.friendshipforce.org account and are having problems, please let me know immediately. I am working with FFI to resolve some login issues. Also, if you are uncomfortable paying online, we have ways of handling that so let me know. We are paying our dues directly to FFI this year. This minimizes the manual process of sending dues from every club and frees up staff for other projects.

Have you heard? The FFI World Conference will be held in Strasbourg, France in 2027 (probably in the spring). Not only is this an exciting place to have the conference, but we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Friendship Force. Might be time to start brushing up on your French.

Hope to see you at the February 15 gathering.



2026 FFI Dues - Directly Paid to FFI - none due to FFOMWV

Now is the time to pay your annual dues to Friendship Force. Log into my.friendshipforce.org using your login (email address and password). Once you are logged into the myFFI site, there is a button in the upper right corner of the screen to renew your membership. You'll receive an email acknowledging the payment. You may pay monthly (\$8.33) or annually (\$100) There are no credit card fees. **You must register by March 1** to keep your organizational membership current.

For 2026 FFOMWV is not charging club dues.

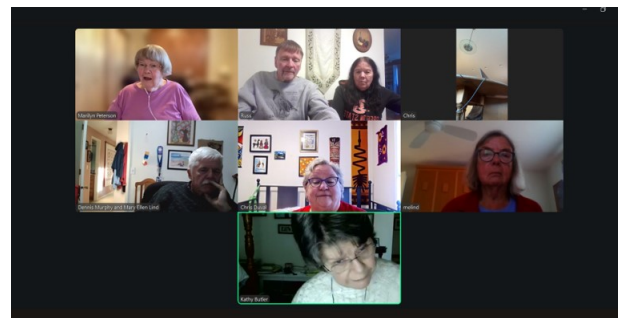
To participate in outbound journeys as an ambassador, you must be a registered FFI member. To home host or day host for an inbound journey, you must be a registered FFI member. Our club encourages all club members to register to demonstrate your support of our organization. If registration may be problematic for you for technical or financial reasons, please reach out to a board member for assistance.



Board Meetings

The date for the next FFOMWV Board meeting is Wed Feb 11 at 4 pm. All meetings are held by ZOOM. All current and prospective club members are welcomed to participate. If interested, call or send an email to President Marilyn Peterson and she will send you the ZOOM link.

Last board meeting screen shot with Chris Kastella's ceiling in view



Jan 15 MEG Recap

A MEG (Meet, Eat and Get Acquainted) was held at the Starduster Cafe in Independence on January 15. The Starduster is a repeat meeting location. The atmosphere is “rustic” but the food great. Ten people were in attendance including Barbara Orsi who plans to join our club. Per usual, conversations were wide ranging and engaging, Our thanks to Carolyn and Marianna for organizing our MEGs!



Barbara Orsi at left, Chris Kastella, right

Peace Studies Event - Mar 21

As you may have heard, our FFOMWV group is exploring options to find out more about the Peace Studies program at OSU and to find out if there are things we can do locally to help with the goals of that program. Please mark your calendar for a Saturday March 21, 10 – 12 meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis where we will begin this exploration. We are working on the details of this meeting and will share more information as it is available.

Global citizenship and peace studies are a new initiative within our parent FFI organization. We are trying to see how we can augment activities at the local level.

We are planning to hold the March MEG (Meet, Eat and Get Acquainted) after this event. Current thought is to have people self-organize after the meeting as we do not know how many people will attend and if you want to take others with you to lunch. People could go different directions. We are also pondering bringing food in. A Feb 15 meeting topic.



Friendship Shared for 2026

Thank you everyone who attended the meeting on Sunday and got our Friendship Shared 2026 year of events off to a great start. At the meeting we handed out the sheet below to share new features this year program:

- Friendship Shared (FS) event opportunities will be available all year.
- Formally sign-up to attend events at monthly meetings with payment at that time. Cost for guests to attend an event will be a \$20 donation. A person will not be included at an event until they have paid. Prior to meeting dates, unless otherwise noted, contact Eileen to see if spaces are still available for an event.
- FOR GUESTS: At meetings, we will provide sign-up sheets to attend events and will collect the \$20 donation from each guest. The recipients of the donated funds will be chosen by those attending an event. Guests will watch newsletters for information on up-coming FS26 events. If unable to come to the meetings, unless otherwise noted, contact Eileen by phone or email to sign up and make donation arrangements.
- FOR HOST: Prospective hosts will email event application guidelines (see model below) to Eileen at least a week before the next monthly meeting. We will then pro-mote the events in email notices to club members.

Eileen Minette

Barb Callner



Event (description)	Date and Time	Location	Number of guests
Hosted by:	Contact email	Phone/Text	

If you are interested in the Feb 14 event, please contact Eileen Minette. If interested in the coast weekend or Thai lunch, contact Marla Karow. Signup and payment for the Mar 11 and Apr 1st events will be at the Feb 15 club meeting, but if you know you cannot attend that meeting, contact Eileen.

Feb 3 noon – Soup Salad and Smiles for 6 guests at Barb Callner’s house in Albany Barb and Eileen Minette are hosts. THIS EVENT IS FULL!

Feb 14 noon - Valentine’s Day Fun Lunch and Games for 6 guests at Chris Duval’s in Salem - wear red - THIS EVENT IS FULL!

Feb 27-29- weekend at Marla & Russ Karow’s coast house - three bedrooms – participants coordinate food - CONTACT MARLA FOR DETAILS AND TO SIGN UP.

Mar 11 noon – Thai lunch (includes meat) at Marla and Russ Karow’s Corvallis house for 6 guests - FIVE SPOTS REMAINING. CONTACT MARLA.

Mar 17 1pm – St. Patrick’s Day Lunch at Dennis and Mary Ellen’s house for 4 guests -wear **green** and bring a limerick. THIS EVENT IS FULL!

April 1 5-8 pm – Irish Spring for 8 guests -Craig and Marianna Biegel’s house

Looking forward to seeing you at many more FS Events for 2026.

In Friendship - Eileen and Barb



Charlotte NC Outbound April 16-22

It might still be possible to add you to this journey, contact Marilyn Peterson if you have interest. These folks are already signed on - Kathy Butler, Marilyn Peterson, Arnie and Mary Abrams, Chris Duval, Dennis Murphy, Mary Ellen Lind, Linda Pierson, and Laraine Hicks. This is the tentative April 16-22 schedule:

16 - arrive

17 - welcome brunch, Duke Mansion, other museums

18 - Reed Goldmine, Picnic Lunch, Rosedale Plantation

19 - Kings Mountain National Military Park, Stowe Botanical Gardens, small group dinners

20 - Schiele Museum of Natural History, National White Water lunch - free time

21 - Energy Explorium (retired nuclear plant), Carolina Raptor Center, Farewell Lunch

22 - Departure to North American Conference or home

We look forward to a slide show report from those participating!

Duke Mansion



Raleigh NC Inbound Journey - Sept 9-15

Our club will host an inbound group from Raleigh North Carolina from Sept 9-15. While we have a team standing ready to assist in planning this journey, we need someone to step forward soon to take on the role of host coordinator. The Raleigh group is anxious to hear more about what have planned for them to see and do. As you know, fall in the Willamette Valley can be delightful. Per usual there are possibilities for local hikes, winery visits, and coast getaways. Dennis Murphy, our past journey organizer, and Chris Duval our current organizer have lists of home stay, day and small group dinner hosts in hand. We just need someone willing to take on the task of organizing all the pieces. Please contact Chris Duval today confer about this need and opportunity - 971-218-0361; duval15@comcast.net.



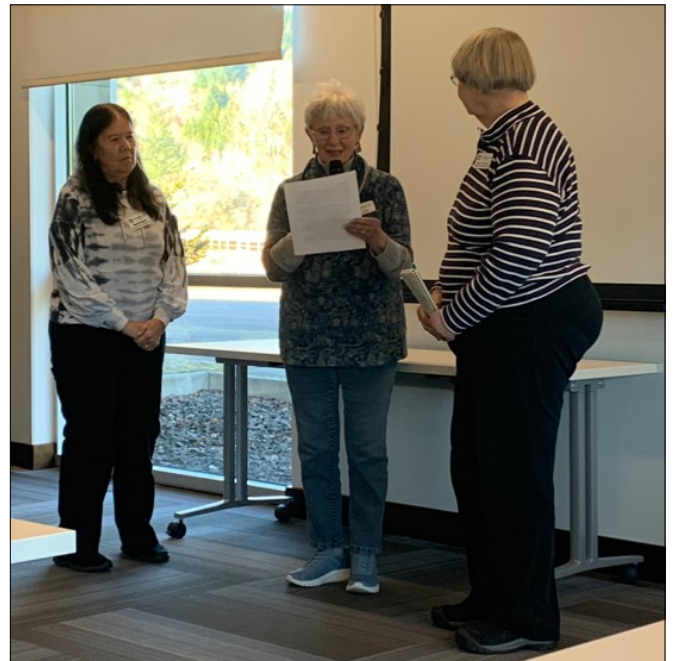
A Fact About Valentine's Day



The origins of Valentine's Day are murky. But it is thought to have been made a holiday in the fifth century when Pope Gelasius outlawed the celebration of [Lupercalia](#). It wasn't until much later that it became associated with romance. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that February 14 was the start of birds' mating season. Chaucer cemented the connection between Valentine's Day, birds and romance with his 1375 poem "Parliament of Foules," writing, "For this was on Seynt Valentynes day, Whan every foul cometh ther to chese his make." Good House Keeping Feb 14, 2025

Jan 18 General Gathering Recap

Eighteen club members gathered on a lovely Sunday afternoon to induct our new officers for 2026 and hear/strategize about club plans for the coming year. Journeys, a possible Peace Studies meeting and a FFI membership update were among the topics covered. Xiaodan Zheng with the International Mothers Group on the OSU campus gave us an informative presentation on her life growing up in China. She was from a small rural community of just under a million people (small by Chinese standards!) in south central China. She spoke about the one child policy (she was a second child) and still sometimes present societal preference for male children. As a professionally successful, educated woman her insights were insightful. Xiaodan was a speaker in our international speaker series sponsored by the Bervins in recognition of the lifetime contributions of Ted Powell and Edla Johnson to our club.



New officer induction



**Board Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2025**

Present: Marilyn Peterson, Chris Kastella, Dennis Murphy, Russ Karow, Kathy Butler, and Marla Karow

Meeting called to order by President Marilyn Peterson at 12:21 pm - meeting was via zoom

September Board meeting minutes: Minutes approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer's report sent out. No questions. Chris will coordinate with Marilyn regarding setting up account at Oregon State CU.

President's Report: There is a President's meeting tomorrow. Marilyn will inquire status of paying FFI through the portal.

Slate of officers for November election: Dennis will present this at the November annual meeting.

President: Marilyn Peterson

Vice President: Ruth Wyse

Treasurer: Chris Kastell

Secretary: Marla Karow

Appointed positions:

Friendship Shared: Barb Callner and Eileen Minette

MEG: MariAnna Beigel and Carolyn Powers

Sunshine committee: Mary Ellen Lind

Journey Organizer: Still need.

Journey Organizer report: Dennis reported that inbound Raleigh, NC journey has been set for September 9-15, 2026. Up to 12 ambassadors can be accommodated. So far 5-7 ambassadors have signed up to come. Still need journey coordinator(s). Discussion ensued regarding having journey coordinators versus journey committee. Previously journey organizer communicated with FFI, surveyed members regarding their ability to help with journey, recruited journey coordinator(s), and assisted journey coordinators as needed. If no one steps up to be JC for Raleigh journey, we could have journey committee. Marilyn reported that the club had previously taken team approach where one person was responsible for each day of the journey. Dennis will write up an explanation of the process and alternatives. Arnie reported that the Raleigh journey wasn't on the FFI website. Marilyn will check on this.

Charlotte, NC journey report: Marilyn and Kathy will communicate with JC from NC this week. So far 8 people from our club have expressed interest. Charlotte club can host 12 ambassadors. Marilyn needs to know approximate air fare in order to finalize cost for the journey. NC club estimates cost from their end will be \$300-400 per ambassador. Marilyn will bring sign up sheet to November meeting.

November 16 meeting:

- Will be at the CPI building at 2 pm.
- Election of officers – Dennis will present the slate of officers. Members can make nominations from the floor. Must get permission from person being nominated.
- Speaker is Vy Pham, an international scholar from Vietnam.
- Remind people to pay dues
- Birmingham slide show if there is time.

December 7 holiday party - Mennonite Village. We have the room from 1-5pm. The event is from 2pm-4.

- People need to bring their own tableware and hearty appetizer or dessert.
- Boxed wine from previous event will be there. People can bring own beverage to share.
- Marianna Biegel agreed to bring 'greenery' to decorate table.
- Kathy will provide tablecloths.
- Marianna will MC the gift exchange. Chris suggested people could bring item from travels.
- Gifts need to be in good condition and under \$15.
- Ask people to label if food is dairy and/or gluten free.
- Marilyn will bring sign up sheet including volunteers for set up and clean up

January 18 meeting: Russ has speaker from Serbia.

Old Business: Recruiting new members continues to be an issue.

New Business: Inbound hosting availability form for 2027 was sent to board members. President of club needs to fill out. Questions on the form and Board response:

How many international inbound journeys can you host: 1

How many inbound domestic journeys can you host: 1

What months can't you host: November through February.

How many ambassadors can you host: 8-12 depending if ambassadors are single or couples.

Can you host a special journey: No. A special journey has a theme. Marilyn voiced advantage is people from various clubs come for the theme. Disadvantage is that the hosting coordinator has to vet all of the ambassadors. The club has had mixed results when hosting a special journey.

Marilyn and Dennis will work on Save the Date postcards for upcoming journeys to mail to club members.

Non-members can host though need to agree to FF mission statement.

Journey commitments made to other clubs.

Marilyn hasn't heard back from Washington DC club regarding doing reciprocal journeys.

Birmingham, AL club indicated they would like to host our club in 2027. Marilyn will follow up with the JC from their visit to our club.

MEG update: December 16 at Loafers in Albany at 11:30 am; January 15 at the Stardust Cafe in Independence at 11:30 am

Friendship Shared: Marilyn will be meeting with Barb Callner & Eileen Minette to discuss how they want to set this up. Information will be put in the newsletter.

Next board meeting: January 14 at 12:30pm

Meeting adjourned at: 1:24pm



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

a world of friends
is a world of peace

(Must be completed by *each* new member. Sometimes couples have different contact information and participation interests.)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-Mail _____

My primary interest is: Hosting Traveling Both Other _____

I understand the primary purpose & mission of Friendship Force of Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley is to promote international understanding by conducting people-to-people homestay programs with other Friendship Force Clubs.

Signed _____ Date _____

Local dues are waived for 2026. FFI dues will be \$100 paid *via FFI portal*
Dues include name badge for new members. Replacement badges will be charged at cost. **PRINT CLEARLY EXACTLY HOW YOU WANT YOUR NAME TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE**

We are glad you have joined FFOMWV!

Sign up online at my.friendshipforce.org using your email address. If you need help with the myFFI website, contact any club officer.

Tell us about yourself: to know each other, we spotlight members in our Newsletter. This may help you get started: How long have you lived in Western Oregon? What other places have you lived? How did you learn about FFOMWV? What is your current career? Are you retired? If so, what was your former career? What are your hobbies and/or interests? Tell us what places you have visited or places you would like to visit? Do you enjoy hosting friends and/or family in your home? Do you have pets in your home? If so, tell us about them. Share anything of interest about yourself and/or your family.

Completed application with payment may be mailed to FFOMWV, PO Box 1703, Albany OR 97321 or can be given to any club officer at an upcoming meeting or club event.

Email biographical information and photo to our club address: ffomwv@gmail.com

FOR TREASURER'S USE ONLY

DATE JOINED _____

PIN _____

BADGE ORDERED _____

Invitation to Members to Participate in FFOMWV Activities

The Friendship Force of Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley Board of Directors would like to know which of the following committees/projects you would be willing to work with. Please check those of interest!

Home Host – This involves hosting an individual(s) or a couple for 4 – 6 nights. You'll have a chance to “open your home and heart” to share our culture by providing some meals, transportation to planned activities, and companionship to your guests. We need to know bedroom configuration(s) - twin bed(s), double, queen or king beds and whether your ambassador(s) would have their own bathroom?

Day Host — This is another way to be actively involved in a journey. Having a day host gives the home host more flexibility. A day host is a great way to join in and get to know our ambassadors. You could be a driver for a planned activity or one of your choosing. Day hosts can also drive the ambassador(s) to an overnight for a planned activity such as staying at the coast for one night.

Small Group Dinner Host — During the week of a journey while we are hosting ambassadors, we plan small dinner gatherings (6 – 8 persons) in several members' homes. YOU decide the number you can accommodate as well as the menu. You can ask a non-hosting member to help you with dinner preparations or to furnish a menu item.

Journey Planning — Members' input is essential for planning each of our journeys. The group that makes the plans for the week's activities is that journey's committee. New people bring fresh ideas to the journey activities.

Journey Coordinator – The coordinator works with the Journey Planning committee to finalize the journey itinerary, develops a budget to charge the ambassadors, and is the main contact to the journey coordinator from the other club. The Journey Coordinator makes all necessary reservations for the planned activities.

Event planning — We are looking for new and interesting ideas and a group of individuals to plan and carry them out. Many hands make light work in setting up/cleaning up, organizing food details, theme-decorations, and entertainment. This ad hoc group plans special events such as the annual holiday party. You don't need to commit to helping with every event, but a few extra hands at each event is helpful.

Membership Recruitment and Retention — Welcomes new members and greets attendees at club events. Plans annual new member training.

Public Relations — Secures media coverage of both incoming and outgoing journeys as well as special events. Submits information to local media of upcoming events.

Programming — Assists the Vice President secure programs for membership gatherings and for other events as needed. Determines equipment needs and assists in securing equipment for programs.

Meet, Eat and Get Acquainted (MEG) – Organizes monthly get togethers at local restaurants. Makes reservations at the restaurant and sends out a notification to all members. Informs the newsletter editor of the time, date, and location so the information can be put in the newsletter.

Friendship Shared – Assists members in organizing events such as lunch, happy hour, etc. in their homes and helps them set a price to charge people who sign up for their event. Money earned at these events is donated to the charity that the people attending the event vote on.

Newsletter — Provides content for the Newsletter as requested by the newsletter editor and/or assists in creation.

Your 2026 Leadership Team

Board Members

President	Marilyn Peterson
Vice-President	Ruth Wyse
Secretary	Marla Karow
Treasurer	Chris Kastella
Journey Organizer	Chris Duval
Newsletter/Archives	Russ Karow

Activity Leads

Friendship Shared	Barb Callner Eileen Minette
Internet Communications	Marilyn Peterson
MEG Coordinators	Carolyn Powers Marianna Biegel
Sunshine Committee	Mary Ellen Lind

2026 Journey Coordinators

April 17-22 - Charlotte NC outbound - Marilyn Peterson and Kathy Butler
Sept 9-15 - Raleigh NC inbound - coordinators needed!

Viruses And Our Club

As you are likely aware from personal experience or that of friends, an array of viruses are circulating in our communities - flu, norovirus, COVID, RSV, and even measles in some parts of the US. The effects of these viruses vary significantly for individuals and can result in hospitalization in some cases. Your board encourages all of the members of our community to get the whole array of vaccines available to you if no other medical conditions prevent or make it dangerous. We encourage you to wear a mask in crowded situations. It is one of the best forms of protection available to all of us. Along with the face masks, washing your hands especially after having been in crowded situations with unknown people. If you are not feeling well in even the slightest way, please do not attend club gatherings. We have a number of members with medical conditions of various sorts - many of us are of that age. We all need to do our very best to protect ourselves and each other in every way that we can.

