Friendship Force
Oregon's
Mid-Willamette Valley
"a world of friends is a world of peace"

Friendship Connections

Friendship Force of Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley Sept 2026

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2026 CALENDAR

Sept 9 - 15 - Raleigh NC Inbound Journey (p 1)
Sept 12, 2 pm - a Moonfall Theatre matinee (p 6)
Sept 14, 4:30 pm - Raleigh farewell dinner, Mary's Place (p 1)
Sept 25, 12 noon - MEG - The Barn, Albany (p 1)
Oct 18, 2 pm - general gathering, CPI Bldg Philomath
Nov 15, 2 pm—general gathering, location TBD

ETIAS European Travel Information and Authorisation System

ETIAS and You - see p 3

Inbound Raleigh Journey—Ways in Which You Can Yet Participate

We have eleven ambassadors from Raleigh North Carolina headed our way Sept 9-15. These are ways in which you can become involved if not already doing so:

- Wed Sept 9, 1 pm - welcome lunch at Long Timber Brewing in Monroe - if you have not already done so, let Marla Karow know you will attend by Sept 4
- Sun Sept 13, 1pm - tour of Monteith House; 2:30 tour of Albany carousel - let Eileen Minette know if you plan to attend
- Mon Sept 14 - 9 am - small farm forestry/Christmas tree tour in Kings Valley & honey "tasting";
- Mon Sept 14, 4:30 - farewell dinner at the Mennonite Mary's Place with food and drink provided—bring your own glass and dinnerware

Your Tour Planning Team - Marla, Russ, Dennis, Mary Ellen, Kathy Butler, Marilyn Peterson, Eillen Minette, Linda Pierson

Sept 25 MEG - The Barn at Hickory Station, Albany

Our next Met, Eat and Get Acquainted (MEG) will be on Friday Sept 25 at 12 noon, The Barn at Hickory Station, 640 NW Hickory St NW, Albany. The Barn is a food cart establishment with an array of food offerings. There is covered seating. Please let MariAnna Biegel (one of our MEG coordinators) know if you plan to attend so that she can coordinate rides - she will attempt to coordinate ride sharing as needed - and seating.

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 - Marilyn Peterson

Our ambassadors from Raleigh, NC will be arriving soon. A big thank you to all of you who have stepped up to help with the planning. We had gotten into a habit where the Journey Coordinator was largely responsible for making all of the pieces come together and doing most of the work. But, that puts a huge burden on one or two people.

There's a reason that the title Journey COORDINATOR is used. It means there's a person (or small number of persons) who coordinate/see that the necessary tasks are completed, but don't do everything themselves. In years past it was expected that the various tasks were completed by different folks. The JC checked in with the planners, oversaw the progress, but didn't do all the tasks. For example there was a Journey treasurer, a welcome committee, farewell committee, transportation committee….. one could go on and on here.

The other responsibility of the JC was to be the one person that could answer questions and, if something did go wrong, could help resolve the issue. It has been amazing to watch the Raleigh journey come together with a planning committee that stepped up to act as a committee-based Journey Coordinator.

In 2027 we will have an inbound from Western North Carolina, a domestic outbound to Birmingham, Alabama as well as an international outbound to Leuven, Belgium. When the Journey Coordinators ask for help with these journeys, please step up and say "I'll help you. What can I do?"

Many hands make light work!

2027 Journeys - Chris Duval, Your Journey Coordinator

We have the whole range of inbound, outbound, national and international on the books for 2027:

Outbound to Birmingham, Alabama: Marilyn Peterson and Kathy Butler have been confirmed by the FFOMWV board to be the Ambassador JCs for this journey. Dates are being considered, possibly in May, but we will announce the dates when we have them firmed up.

Inbound from Western North Carolina: We are seeking Host JCs for this journey. Dates are being considered, possibly in June or October. We will announce the dates when we have them firmed up. If you are interested in volunteering for a leadership or committee position for this journey, contact Chris Duval.

Outbound to Leuven, Belgium: Arnie Abrams and Craig Biegel have been confirmed by the FFOMWV board to be the Ambassador JCs for this journey. Once the World Conference dates are set by FFI, we will set the dates for this journey, possibly in late August or September.

FFI World Conference in Porto, Portugal: Dates are being considered in late August or early September. We will let members know when the dates are announced. If you are interested in attending the World Conference, please contact Chris Duval so she can get a list of attendees together.

FFI Festival at Sea, Spirit of the Pacific: November 28-December 9, 2027 are the dates for this cruise to Tahiti, Bora Bora, Fiji, and more. If you have questions about this journey, please contact Chris Duval.

Happy travels to all in 2027!

Friendship Shared Needs Your Contributions

We have had seven Friendship Shared (FS) events thus far this year and all have been fully subscribed! FS events are allowed throughout the year, so make an offering. With summer here, perhaps an afternoon tea (see below), a happy hour in your yard, a picnic lunch in a park, a hike or movie outing. Contact Eileen Minette or Barb Callner with your offering. They need this information - event description, date/times, l people accommodated and your contact information. Barb and Eileen will adve work with you on getting people signed up.

Friendship Shared Tea Recap

MariAnna and Craig Biegel hosted an afternoon tea at their Peoria Road home the afternoon of Aug 25. Five club members attended. Peggy Hoecker was the taker of the photo below. Fancy hats were in order and were worn. Fruits and berries from the Biegel gardens and orchards were in abundance. The Biegel's have a fabulous outdoor seating area and yard. As shown below, it was the focal point for this event. A good time was had by all. Thanks MariAnna and Craig!

ETIAS Required for European Travel in 2017

US citizens do not currently need an Electronic Travel Authorization or ETIAS to visit the European Union or Schengen Area but the EU plans to launch the ETIAS program in late 2026, at which point an online travel permit will be required. This will require a quick online application and a small fee linked to your passport before departure and will apply to apply to short trips across 30 European countries, i.e. our 2027 FFI World Conference and Belgium journey!

Aug 23 General Gathering Recap

Our Aug 23 general gathering was held at Mary's Place in Mennonite Village. Steve Cook and Kristina Milaj with the Albanian Alps Institute spoke about their organization. It is a small non-profit that supports rural schools in Albania. Steve had travelled there long ago and saw the need and opportunity for support. Krisitina was the first scholarship recipient of AAI and broke ground in her village as a girl going to high school which was totally out of the norm at that time. She is now an engineer with Jacobs Company (former CH2MHill). You can click on the lick above to find out more about the organization and possibilities for support. The first page of their most recent newsletter is also on page 9 of this newsletter.

General club business was conducted—upcoming events, need for officers for 2027 and an orientation was held for the Raleigh journey in September. Cookies were the order of the day for snacks. 24 club members were present as well was special guest Serge Utevsky. Serge is a visiting scientist from Ukraine in OSU Fish and Wildlife Conservation. He is a leech specialist and may have discovered a new leech species while in Oregon. Per usual, a good time was had by all.

Board Meetings

The date for the next FFOMWV Board meeting is Wed Sept 16 at 3 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.

Aug 5 MEG Recap

Our August Meet, Eat and Get Acquainted (MEG) was held indoors at the 1847 Bar and Grill in Lebanon. Our intent is to gather there in summer as they have a lovely back patio next to their gardens, but the heavy smoke in the Valley precluded such on the 5th. We had 12 people in attendance including Dr. Serge Utevsky, a visiting scientist from Ukraine. Serge is a world-recognized leech researcher. Per usual, conversations in the group were wide ranging and engaging. The 1847 offers a wide array of artfully prepared foods—note the layered Cobb Salad below. Our next MEG will be on Fri Sept 25 at the Barn at Hickory Station in Albany.

Layered cobb salad

Friendship Force International
Building Global Unity

2026 Online Training For Leaders and Members

To view recordings from 2025, scroll down and click on the corresponding link.

Please note that by attending, you agree to being recorded during the sessions, and the recordings may be made available to other FFI members for training purposes.

Month	Training Topic	Presenter	Date/time	Registration link
September	Matching Process	Kimberly Fraser, FFI Staff	9/7/2026 20:30 eastern	https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Ts9YFvzITr2BX9ViQJ7tyQ
	New Member Orientation	Taryn Roberts, FFI Staff	9/10/2026 14:00 eastern	https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/K8XvKh4dQM6FUVfU
	Planning Special Journeys	Hemily Nogueira, FFI Staff	9/30/2026 14:00 eastern	https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/lu-d410TSzmhvXLKXn
October	New Member Orientation	Kimberly Fraser, FFI Staff	10/5/2026 19:30 eastern	https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/HhfqZ1AXSN-R4HGabhl_9Q
	General Club and Journey Q & A	Hemily Nogueira, FFI Staff	TBD	
	Independent Journeys	Hemily Nogueira, FFI Staff	TBD	
	Recruiting New Members	Allison Lindsey, FFI Staff	10/22/2026 19:00:00 eastern	

Sign into your MyFF account to find out more about these training sessions as well as other FFI online offerings and to register

All-in-One Place Upcoming Club Event List

- **Sept 9, 1 pm - Raleigh Inbound Welcome Lunch** – Long Timber Brewing, Monroe OR
- **Sept 11, 10 am – CMLC International Coffee** – 2638 NW Jackson Ave, Corvallis, OR 97330. This is in the midst of the Raleigh inbound. Ruth Wyse will be our rep, but others are welcome to attend.
- **Sept 12, 2 pm** - **Moonfall Theatre Encore Performance!** Tickets are all sold at this point. Those attending, please bring finger food. We will provide water and punch.
- **Sept 14, ~ 4:30 pm – Raleigh Inbound Journey Farewell Dinner** – Mary's Place, Mennonite Village, Albany – club will provide the full meal - BBQ turkey, baked ham, accompanying dishes and dessert. Lemonade, iced tea and water will be provided. Feel free to bring your own adult beverages to share. **Please bring your own tableware including glasses!**
- **Sep 25 – MEG** – The Barn at Hickory Station - 640 NW Hickory St NW, Albany
- **Oct 9, 10 am – CMLC International Coffee** – 2638 NW Jackson Ave, Corvallis, OR 97330. MariAnna and Craig Biegel will be our reps but others are encouraged to participated if interested
- **Oct 18, 2pm – general gathering –** CPI in Philomath – N-Z bring snacks - Leilane Passos, oceanographer research associate at SOU will talk about her home country of Brazil
- **Nov 15, 2 pm – general gathering** – location TBD – our annual meeting and election for 2027 officers - Emilia Astorga, graduate student in Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Science at OSU will talk about her home country Chile
- **Dec 6, mid-day – annual holiday party –** likely Lakeside Center in the Mennonite Village - details still in the works

IN MEMORIUM - Lilo Rawland Has Died

Jean Townes reported that long time FFOMWV club Lilo Rawland died on August 6th. In order to be near her daughter, she has been living in Beaverton since 2000 when she retired from being an Albany school librarian. There will be a memorial service within the next two months, probably in Eugene.

Board Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2026

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

Meeting called to order by President Marilyn Peterson at 4:00 pm
Meeting was via zoom

March Board meeting minutes: Minutes approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Chris K sent treasurers' report to board members. No questions. Chris hasn't heard back from the state of OR regarding form CT-12. Fee was paid but Chris received notice that it wasn't paid. She has contacted state office regarding payment and is waiting to hear back from them.

FFI sent vouchers to pay for club members. This was paid last night.

Eileen Minette will do audit this year.

Previously the FFOWV budget item under general fund included a stipend for one member to attend a conference and $150 to give to inbound journey clubs and $25 to the journey administrator. We have traditionally given the $150 to inbound clubs but not the stipend or the $25.

Journey Coordinator Report: Chris D. reported on the 2027 journeys

Birmingham, AL – Outbound: Marilyn and Kathy have submitted applications to be JCs. They are looking for an intern to learn the process. Board voted unanimously to approve them as JCs.

Western North Carolina – Inbound: JCs needed. Marilyn commented that the planning committee process worked well but there should be a designated JC.

Lueven, Belgium – Outbound: Craig Biegel and Arnie Abrams submitted applications for JCs. Board voted unanimously to approve them as JCs. Both Arnie and Craig are aware that club members would like this journey to be tagged onto the FFI world conference. Both will be encouraged to start attending board meetings. Site of world conference is unknown at this time.

President's Report: Marilyn reported on President's meeting with Tom Best.

Tom encouraged clubs to reach out to their local clubs and do a combined journey. Board members agreed that we already have a full slate of journeys for 2027 and it would be better to focus on getting new members.

FFI revenue comes primarily from membership and journeys. Membership breakdown is 58% of clubs have a decrease in membership, 8% remained the same, and 34% increased their membership. There will not be an increase in dues for US clubs in 2027.

FFOWV did not raise membership fees this year. Chris K. pointed out that the board needs to decide about whether to increase the fees or have them remain the same for the annual meeting in November.

In 2028, FFI will adjust dues on a more equitable manner for clubs.

Clubs are to advertise any openings for ambassadors starting with regional clubs first.

Tom and Taryna would like to be notified if members are still having trouble paying their dues online.

Tom and others are looking at the FFI website to make it more user friendly. Club names aren't always clear as to the location of the club. FFOWV is a good example.

Marilyn is unable to attend the President's meeting on July 23 at 10 am. Russ and/or Marla will attend.

Raleigh NC inbound Journey: Marla reported that the planning committee met after the MEG on Tuesday. The budget was based on 13 ambassadors and now there are 11 resulting in a budget deficit. Two less ambassadors changes the club expenditure to pay part of hosts' costs from $650 to $550. It was decided to decrease the amount of money given to ambassadors for their lunches rather than increasing the journey fee. Ambassadors will now be given $25 which should pay for one of four lunches. Afterwards, Marla reworked the budget and there is now a small budget surplus.

Community Outreach: Board needs to concentrate on this as it will help increase membership.

Nominating Committee: Eileen is chairing the committee. A full slate of officers will be needed for the October general meeting.

MEG update: Wednesday, August 5 at 1847 in Lebanon

Friendship Shared update: Peter and Sharon are having a garden party on July 27 from 11:30-2.

Membership Update: None at this time (CONTUNUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Board Meeting Minutes (continued)
July 8, 2026

Calendar for the next few months:
July 19 – picnic at Thompson shelter in Corvallis. Russ will provide pulled pork. Chris D. will pick up fried chicken. Marla reported there are ample salads and desserts. Marilyn offered to bring some appetizers. Russ will send out email reminding people to bring their own tableware and beverages. Alcohol is permitted.

August 23 gathering – Will be at the Mennonite Village in the room labeled classroom. Agenda will include Raleigh journey orientation. Village residents welcome. There will also be a discussion about journey coordinators and alternate models for leadership. Russ will look into options for models and do a presentation. Board members are encouraged to bring finger foods to share.

September 12 – Moonfall at 2 pm. This along with hosting the Raleigh, NC club will count as our September meeting. There will be 11 ambassadors and 11 drivers. Tickets for ambassadors and drivers will be paid for from the journey budget. Chris D. reported she has sold 3 of the 25 tickets she hoped to sell. Need to let Marlene know how many tickets are sold so she can advertise if needed. Because Moonfall actors are providing a special show for us, they will be given all the money from ticket sales. Previously Moonfall ticket sales was a fundraiser for club. Chris D. will bring tickets to July 19th picnic and Russ will send email reminding people to buy tickets

September 14– Farewell dinner for Raleigh journey at Mennonite Village. Linda Pierson is taking the lead in organizing decorations and food. Linda P is providing a turkey. Russ and Marla are providing a ham. Other food items will be purchased with cost being paid by journey budget.

October 18 gathering – CPI room in Philomath

November 15 – Need venue, Election of officers

December 6- holiday party

Next board meeting: No August meeting. Board members will be notified via email if issues arise. Next board meeting via zoom is on Wednesday, September 16 at 3:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned at: 4:50 pm

International Day of Peace

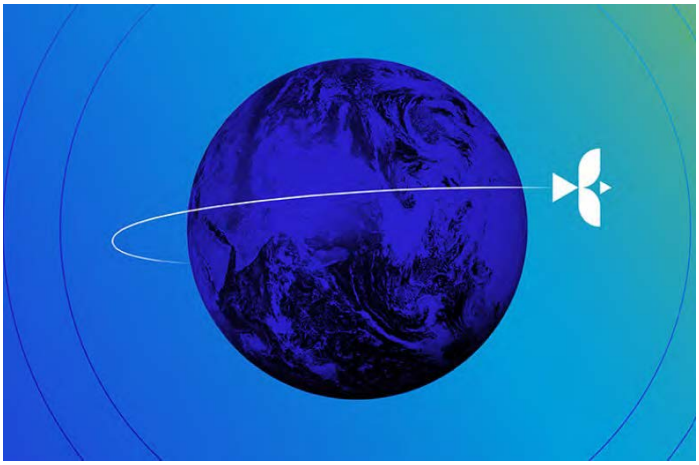
On 21 September, the world marks the International Day of Peace.

Today, amidst staggering volatility, the search for peace feels overwhelming—but it has never been more urgent.

Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the foundation necessary to collectively tackle humanity's challenges. It is the lived experience of safety, dignity, opportunities and cooperation in our daily lives.

Under the theme ***Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day***, this year's International Day of Peace honours the 'everyday architects of peace'—people driving local action, laying the groundwork for stability, and building a lasting peace from the ground up.

Remember, peace isn't just built in conference rooms—it is shaped by everyone, everywhere, every day.



Everyone, everywhere can do their part for peace. Take one small step for peace every day:

Give your time to help someone else.

Lend your voice to drive positive change.

Host a Peace Circle - an intergeneration youth-led conversation on solutions.

Use your platform to promote a cause or tell a story of peace and hope

2025-26

Albanian Alps Institute

Our Mission:
Supporting improved educational opportunities for the children and youth of the isolated Malësia e Madhe region of Northern Albania

President: Steve Cook

Secretary: Terri Cook

Albania Manager: Marash Rakaj

Executive Dir: Kristina Milaj

Board of Directors:

Mary Alice Seville
Mona Jones-Romansic
Jennifer Gervais
Carolyn Powers
Karen Mills

Albanian Alps Institute
8600 NW Oak Creek Drive
Corvallis, OR 97330

Phone: 541-230-1285
Email:albanianalpsinst@gmail.com
Website:www.albanianalps.org

New Kindergarten Teacher in Vrith

On his recent trip to Albania, Steve walked a two-hour loop over the mountain from Vrith to the farming community of Razma. As he neared Razma, he passed a small derelict building with the remains of a concrete toilet behind it. He remembered this building from over twenty years ago. It looked like an animal shed but was, in fact, a primary school. He had encountered Lula, the teacher, who invited him into the school. It was one room, one tiny window, an ill-fitting door. No stove. No electricity. No blackboard. One ratty table and several broken chairs.

"A primary school?" he asked incredulously.
"Yes, Lula said, "We have ten students in three grades."
Steve asked what she needed and after a minute's thought, she said, "A toilet. It doesn't matter for boys, but some girls won't come to school if there is no toilet."
Steve paid for materials for both a toilet and an additional window. Lula's brother volunteered to construct both.

Fortunately, this decrepit school was closed several years later, and the students were sent to the school in Vrith.

Fast-forward to 2025. The AAI-supported kindergarten in Vrith needed a teacher. On the recommendation of the head teacher, Nikoleta, a woman named Lula was hired. Steve was introduced to Lula in October when he was in Vrith, and she was the same Lula from twenty years ago! Cheek kisses and laughter all around.

Marin Malotaj

AAI has awarded Marin Malotaj a scholarship to attend ETSP Campus of Cachan for the current year. The school is a historical seventeen-acre campus located at Cachan, in the inner suburbs of Paris. "The program is designed to train engineers on a spacious campus where the most advanced technologies are combined with areas devoted to concentration and conviviality." Marin will be working on his Masters in Engineering. We wish Marin the best of luck!

"I would like to sincerely thank you for all you have done for me. Your generous support of 2000 USD this year, together with the AAI scholarship that I have been fortunate to receive for the past four years, have made it possible for me to begin my studies in Paris. I am deeply grateful."-Marin

Your 2026 Leadership Team

Board Members

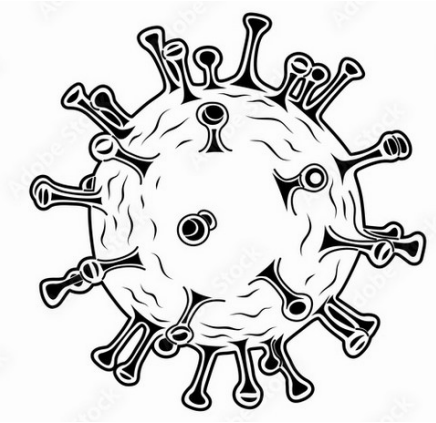
President	Marilyn Peterson
Vice-President	Ruth Wyse
Secretary	Marla Karow
Treasurer	Chris Kastella
Journey Organizer	Chris Duval
Newsletter/Archives	Russ Karow

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 - planning team - Marilyn Peterson as during-the-journey contact

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.