



$$10 + 9 \times 8 \times (7 + 6 + 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1) = 2026$$

Have you renewed your membership for 2026?
 It's really simple! On the online member portal, click add/renew membership, and select either a \$100 payment or the monthly amount of \$8.33. Then, type in your credit card info. We will have a **1 pm zoom meeting on Wed, January 14th** for anyone who would like help!

The Friendship Force of Greater Seattle Newsletter #64 January 3, 2026

- FFGS Upcoming Events**
- Jeri Rask's Memorial is Sunday, Jan 11, 2026 at 3 pm
Edmonds Unitarian Universal Church*
 - Zoom session on "How to pay FFI dues", Wednesday Jan 14th at 1 pm.*
 - Japan Journey Meeting Thursday, January 15, 2026
Joyce & Joe's house: 2 pm*
 - Sunday, Feb 22, 2026
FFGS General Meeting
More info to follow!*
 - May 14 – May 28, 2026 to Gifu and Nara, Japan;
Pura & Bob coordinators*
 - August 2026, Cincinnati Inbound, Karen/Joyce Coordinators*
 - Late Oct/early Nov 2026 Richmond, VA/Orlando, FL
Ilene & Sue N coordinators*

President's Letter:

Happy New Year! 2025 was a wonderful travel year. Thank you to all of the coordinators who made all of these journeys possible! We are now busy working on plans for 2026. Our coordinators are hard at work nailing down the dates and agendas. Sadly, the inbound journey scheduled for mid-April from Stratford St Mary, Canada has been cancelled. They only had one person signed up to come.

The other big job is getting everyone comfortable with the new online dues payment system. We have planned a zoom call on January 14 at 1:00 pm for anyone who needs assistance or for all of us who just enjoy an opportunity to visit and help each other out!

Our next board meeting is January 21st 12:00 at the Lake City library. Everyone is welcome to come. Especially invited are journey coordinators – this is a great time to share information and to help us all feel prepared. Please be sure to let Karen and Joyce know that you can host for our Cincinnati inbound which will be in August.

The next General Meeting is February 22. Location soon!

--- Judi, FFGS President

What is Friendship Force? *Founded in 1977 by visionary Wayne Smith and supported by the late President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Friendship force International is a nonprofit cultural organization focused on promoting understanding, cultural education, and citizen diplomacy through homestay journeys and personal friendships. Through these exciting personal encounters, strangers become friends – and we know that by experiencing different views, you can discover common ground.*

2026 FFGS Journey Assignments – Let’s travel!

Inbound: April 2026 - Stratford St. Mary, Canada to FFGS - **CANCELLED**

August 19 – 26, 2026 - Greater Cincinnati, USA to Greater Seattle FF

Karen and Joyce will be co-coordinators for this inbound exchange.

We are so looking forward to hosting Cincinnati who hosted us September 2024.

BE SURE TO LET KAREN AND JOYCE KNOW THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HOST!

Outbound: May 2026 - GSFF to **Gifu and Nara, Japan**; **Pura & Bob** co-coordinators

*Our outbound to Japan is from **May 14-21 (Gifu) and May 21-28 (Nara).***

*There will be an **informational meeting** about details on Thursday, **January 15th** at Joe and Joyce’s house with a Zoom link option for those who can’t attend in person.*

October/November 2026 – Seattle to **Greater Orlando, & Richmond, VA**

Ilene and Sue N are the co-coordinators. Tentative dates are Richmond the last week of October with the first week of November in Orlando. Let Ilene & Sue N know that you want to go!

Coordinators:

*Joyce, Karen, Bob,
Pura, Ilene, Sue N*



Change to annual dues structure

Friendship Force International is rolling out a new dues plan for 2026. In the past members from all countries paid the same \$30 annual dues in US dollars. The varying exchange rates and economic situations made the dues more of a burden to some countries than others. The national organization is struggling to cover their shoestring budget. The new dues plan will roll out over three years. The goal is to stabilize the budget and create an equitable plan across all countries. Starting on January 1, 2026 dues in the US will be **\$100 per year**. Each member will pay their dues on-line. The option will be to pay monthly \$8.33 or annually. The new system will go on-line on January 1st. We will have a zoom meeting on **January 14th at 1 pm** to make sure all our members are comfortable accessing the website. The website is also a wonderful resource for additional information and travel opportunities outside of our club journeys.

I recognize that this is a big increase from the \$50 we paid for 2025 (\$30 FFI + \$20 GSFF) For 2026 the board has voted to waive the \$20 GSFF dues to ease the transition. FFI provides a great value for \$100. Coordinating journeys with clubs around the world is a huge task.

The other way to view the dues is as a \$100 donation to the mission of World peace. In these times we need to support organizations that encourage and maintain our friendships around the world. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or any of the board members. I know that the initial reaction is “what the Heck!” but on further review I think we all want this organization to continue as a strong and vibrant source for world friendship.

In Friendship,

Judi Dellino, President FFGS

I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it.— Dwight D. Eisenhower

**What a terrific time with new friends from Winnipeg in October!
Thank you, Elaine, for a fantastic program - enjoyed by all.**

With the bouquet is Jonina (Nina). She got to get a "Hair Cut" at the fish booth at Pike Place Market which involved the workers throwing a fish back and forth, shouting, "Hair Cut!" right over Nina's head. She stood in the middle and had to duck every time they threw the fish!

Nina said, "Thank you so very much for your generous hospitality and friendship. I am most appreciative of the times we just talked." Everyone on our inbound journey were so happy to be here and see our beautiful city!



Karen, Nina, Elaine, Eleanor



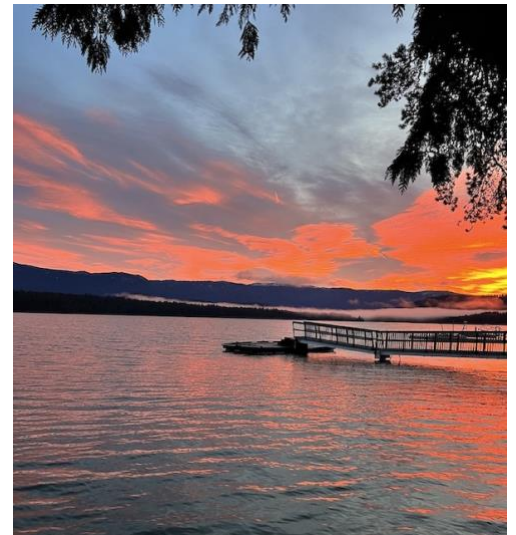
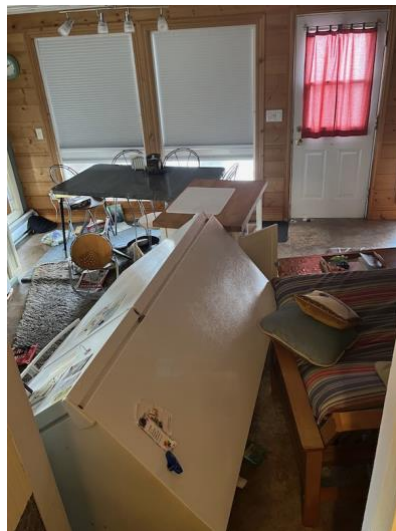
Farewell dinner at Joyce & Joe's house

Sad News from the Cincinnati FF Club

Many of you remember Rella, who coordinated our outbound journey to Cincinnati in September 2024. At the time, she had difficulty with her voice. The doctors kept thinking it was a problem with her vocal cords. Eventually, they diagnosed ALS (Lou Gehrig' s Disease). About 10-15% of people with that disease have vocal cord issues initially. Rella went quickly after her diagnosis and died in September. Her recent memorial service was really lovely. She will be missed.

Remember the recent flooding?

Here are pictures from Dave & Judi's cabin. Thank goodness the walls are tongue and groove real wood instead of something that easily absorbs water. Dave explains, "This cabin is not supposed to be this close to Lake Wenatchee with water over the deck railing. The water rose 10-12 feet above normal lake height. Did you know refrigerators can float and tip over in 3 feet of water- YIKES!" Thank goodness for beautiful sunrises!



Travel Photos from Carol and Mark

“We hope you all had a wonderful time over the holidays! We're in Fort Myers, Florida at our winter home. We went to the Everglades for Christmas - specifically to Chokoloskee, a peninsula/island built by the Calusa natives over centuries. It was built by placing layers and layers of shells on top of each other to create land. There is a lovely little restaurant there that we love called the Cuban Cafe. They had these signs that I thought you might like. Chokoloskee is the Stone Crab capital of Florida. They catch the crabs and remove 1 claw and return them to the water - a renewable resource, pretty cool! We had Crab Creole which is made for 2 people. Yum!”



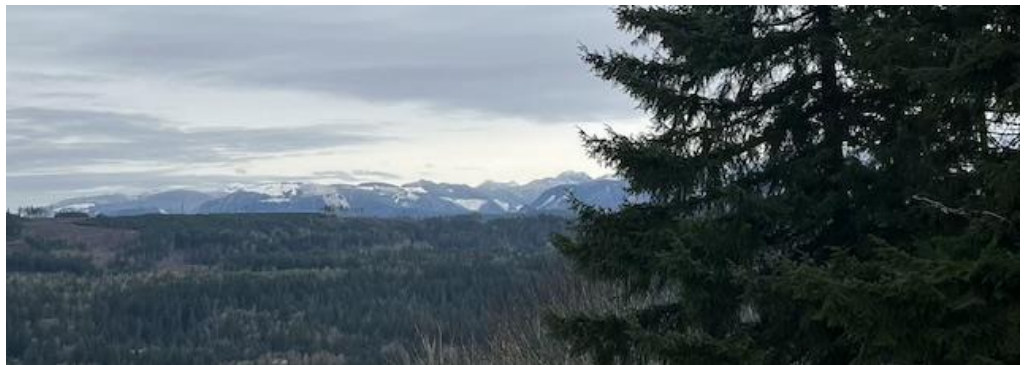
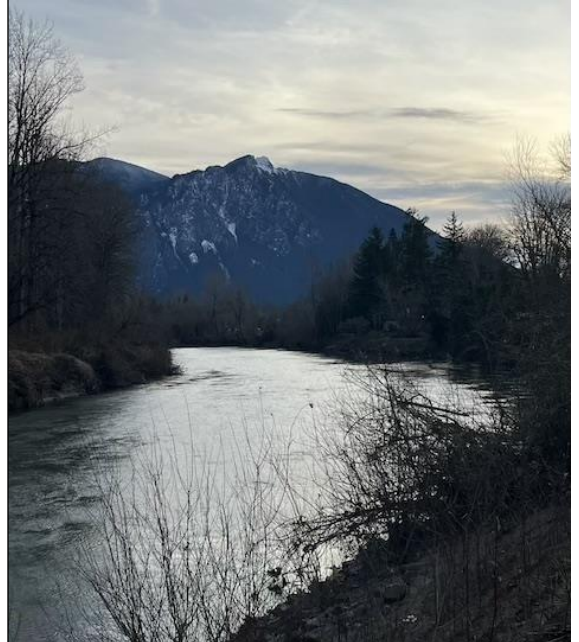
Elaine's ocean trip to Rialto Beach during the wind/rain storm



*Lake Crescent
At left during
intense rain
and wind*

*Snoqualmie
River to the
right during
recent wind
and rain*

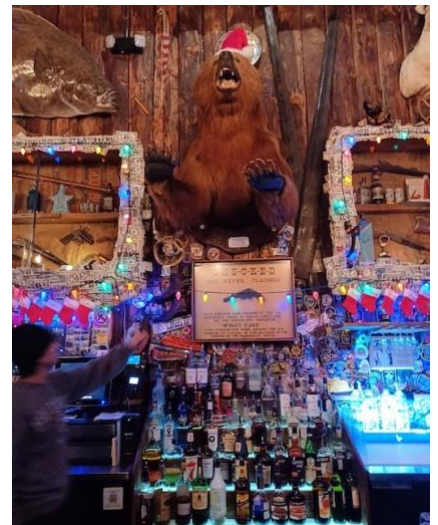
*Below, snow in
the Cascades
(taken in her
neighborhood
near
Snoqualmie
Falls).*



Brian and Judy celebrated Christmas in Juneau, Alaska!

Their grandkids helped them navigate the airports. What a lovely family memory! Brian and Judy: *"We flew to Juneau, Alaska for a beautiful white Christmas at our daughter & son-in-law's home. We had a fun dinner at the Red Dog Saloon one of the nights. On Christmas Day, we enjoyed a fabulous 'seafood boil' meal at their home. We are so lucky they are excellent cooks. Happy New Year everyone!"*

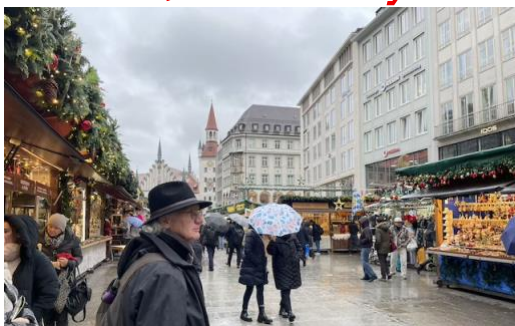
Here is a couple of interesting photos from the Red Dog Saloon, including Wyatt Earp's pistol! Judy says that he and her great grandma were 1st cousins – really! Trivia is fun, especially when it's true!



Joyce & Joe spent a wonderful day rediscovering Amsterdam, including a street market, quirky bikes, street art, fountains, canals & boats, and a rubber duck store!



**Joe and Joyce visit 5 Christmas markets, 8 days, 3 countries
Munich, Germany**



Basel, Switzerland



Mulhouse, France



Strasbourg, France (really crowded on Black Saturday...)



Colmar, France (our favorite!)



Lots of rides!



Venice style boat ride – duck going under the bridge!

Geraldine “Jeri” Rask: March 12th, 1946 – September 16th, 2025

A celebration of life will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Edmonds on January 11, 2026 at 3 pm.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in memory of Jeri to ‘Doctor’s Without Borders’ or the ‘Sierra Club’.

The address is: 8109 224th Street SW, Edmonds, WA 98026-8247



Friendship Force of Greater Seattle 2025 Holiday Party



A great time was had by all! Judi, Don, and Denise enjoyed opening their mystery gifts (and with Mark, showed off their fashionable paper crowns). It was a stormy day on the bay, but we all enjoyed the incredible view, good food, and fabulous company!



Karen made special earrings to share, Mark F did a great job as the MC, and we welcomed some guests and a couple of new members. Sadly, there were no singing pickle ornaments this year, but we did send a few people home with a nice bottle of wine and someone received a roll of Sudoku toilet paper!

Advice to Ponder (*taken from New York Times article by Melissa Kirsch*)

- If it's meant to serve you, and it doesn't (and it's affordable), replace it. Daily things like your bag, your water bottle, your socks. Find ones you actually like using.
- You don't need to tell everyone everything that goes into making the chicken soup.
- Don't think harder, breathe deeper. Most of us are surviving on shallow sips of air.
- We tend to forget that baby steps still move us forward.
- Good conversations have lots of doorknobs.
- It'll be fine or it'll be over. —
- Write what's bothering you down on a piece of paper; put it in a little box. A year later, read what's in there and see if you don't start laughing.
- "Wear the ring." — A jeweler who cleaned a family heirloom I'd kept in a box for 50 years for fear of losing it.
- Best advice for decluttering: If you didn't own it, would you buy it again?
- Stop trying to calm the storm. Calm yourself, the storm will pass.
- Ask for a favor, get advice. Ask for advice, get a favor. Asking for a favor can put someone in an uncomfortable spot, but asking for advice taps into their intelligence and shows respect. It may feel slower, but it ultimately gets you what you want more effectively.
- Even in the hardest of times, you have the ability to whistle in the dark.
- When going on a trip, ask yourself: Are you going to see places or show yourself? Then pack accordingly.
- Always have a bottle of Champagne chilling in the fridge. — Helen Labun, Montpelier, Vt.
- Don't pick up the rope: When someone is starting to argue, state the facts calmly and walk away.
- In order to fall asleep, you pretend to fall asleep. Perhaps that's how everything works ... cheers to faking it 'til you make it.
- Anxiety is not intuition.
- From a fellow vegetarian: Don't bother ordering the sad, token meatless item on the menu when they drag you to a steakhouse. Just get dessert, and relish it.
- Sometimes, you have to let people lie to you. You don't always have to be right or call people on their nonsense.
- Put away your phone whenever there is a human being in front of you.

10 Things to Remember When Decluttering in the New Year (Laura Gaskill, Houzz.com)

1. Remember Why You Are Doing This
2. Make an Exit Strategy
3. Big Stuff First
4. Save Shopping For Later
5. Eyes on Your Own Clutter
6. Start Somewhere (Anywhere!)
7. Keep the Pressure Off
8. Be Intentional about "Just in Case"
9. Love Your Stuff
10. Remember – There's More to Life Than Decluttering

All that clutter used to be money. - - - Joshua Becker

Just because the space exists doesn't mean it has to be full. - - - Allie Casazza

Clutter is nothing more than postponed decisions. - - - Barbara Hemphill

Did You Know - - - Hokkaido (Source: *Wikipedia.com*)

- *Is the northernmost and second-largest of Japan's four main islands, it's about the size of Indiana. The Tsugaru Strait separates Hokkaido from Honshu.*
- *Hokkaido was originally inhabited by the Ainu people. In 1868 the government dispossessed the Ainu of their land and forced them to assimilate. Today the majority of Japanese of Ainu decent have no knowledge of their heritage or culture.*
- *With its suitable climate and containing over 25% of Japan's arable land the island is Japan's top producer of wheat, soybeans, potatoes, onions, corn, and dairy products. Based on American farming techniques Hokkaido farms are larger and more mechanized than average Japanese farms.*
- *June temperatures in Sapporo range from a high of 64 to a low of 50, precipitation averages 2.7 inches with rain occurring an average of nine days.*



Did You Know - - - Japan (Source: *Wikipedia.com*)

- *Has a population of 123,000,000; with a declining birth rate, restrictive immigration, and an increasing medium age its population is expected to drop to around 88,000,000 by 2065.*
- *Japan is approximately the size of Montana, with 75% of its land mountainous and heavily-forested. Less than 12% is suitable for agriculture.*
- *The Portuguese and Jesuit missionaries reached Japan in the 1500s, by 1600 however the county implemented an isolationist policy which lasted for the next 250 years.*
- *In 1853 the U.S. Navy sent Commodore Matthew C. Perry to open up Japan to the outside world. A period of rapid industrialization followed with the country adopting Western political, judicial, and military institutions.*
- *Japan today has the world's fifth-largest economy, the Japanese yen is the world's third-largest reserve currency after the U.S. dollar and euro.*

Did You Know - - - Sapporo (Wikipedia.com, photo by Nryate)

- *Is the largest city and the capital of Hokkaido Prefecture, with its estimated 2025 population of 1,970,000 it's Japan's fifth largest city.*
- *Sapporo hosted the 1972 Winter Olympics, the first Winter Olympics held in Asia. It recently dropped its bid for the 2030 Winter Olympics while offering to potentially host the Winter Olympics in 2034 or later.*
- *The annual Sapporo Snow Festival draws more than 2,000,000 tourists. Notable sites are the Sapporo Beer Museum, the Sapporo TV Tower, and Odori Park.*
- *Sapporo is serviced by the New Chitose Airport, the Shinkansen bullet train is scheduled to reach Sapporo by 2038.*
- *An Ohio rancher, Edwin Dun, came to Sapporo in 1876 and established sheep and cattle ranches. He demonstrated raising of pigs, making butter, cheese, ham, and sausage.*



Did You Know - - - Shinkansen (Source: Wikipedia.com)

- *Is Japan's high-speed train service, or bullet train. Shinkansen means "new trunk line" in Japanese.*
- *The first bullet train began operation in 1964, linking Osaka and Nagoya to Tokyo. Today's network of over 1,800 miles connects major cities on Honshu and Kyushu as well as with Hakodate on the northern island of Hokkaido.*
- *The 33.5-mile long Seikan Tunnel connects Honshu to Hokkaido, 14.5-miles of which runs beneath the seabed of the Tsugaru Strait. Opened in 1988, the Seikan Tunnel is the world's longest undersea tunnel.*
- *Trains operate at speeds between 160 and 200 mph.*
- *Since its opening the Shinkansen has carried over 6.4 billion passengers.*



Yum! Fudge!

Karen's Super-Duper, No-Fail, Five Ingredient Fudge

- 3 cups (18 oz) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 14-oz sweetened condensed milk
- Dash of salt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Chop walnuts and set aside.
 Get a cookie sheet out and put a piece of wax paper on it.
 Put chocolate chips, salt and sweetened condensed milk into a sturdy saucepan.
 Turn heat onto medium and stir constantly.
 When you can't see the chips anymore and everything looks smooth, stir in walnuts.
 It will be thick.
 Take pan off the stove and quickly stir in the vanilla.

Dump/scrape out everything onto the cookie sheet covered with the wax paper. Pat down with a spatula until it is about 1 inch thick. Put in fridge for two hours.
 Cut into pieces. Good until it dries out, so keep it in an airtight container.

I have used almond extract instead of vanilla before. Also, almonds instead of walnuts. Be creative!

Northwest Flower & Garden Festival

February 18-22, 2026, Seattle Convention Center



Denise's tips for first time attendees...

- Decide which day to attend by checking the website for free seminars that most interest you. Times, topics, and speakers are posted for each day of the show.
- Buy your ticket online in advance (save \$5 before Feb 18)

The Seattle Boat Show, the Biggest Boat Show on the West Coast,

will be at Lumen Field and Bell Harbor Marina from January 30th to February 7th, 2026.

2 for 1 Tuesday \$20.00 (Plus \$1.50 service fee)

Single Day Admission FOR TWO to Both Locations on Tuesday, February 3 ONLY. Includes TWO tickets.



On Friday nights from 5-9 PM "Boat Show after Dark" will feature special lighting in the West hall of Lumen Event center, pour centers (drinks) - live music in the other halls.

Friendship Force Pledge

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 of the people of the world.

As I embark on 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



Are you missing any of these items? Let Joyce know as they have showed up over the last year or two at her house!

Keith and Eleanor pictured at the Nara Museum – Japan



As the country's first permanent capital, the ancient city of Nara is famous for being home to some of the best-preserved historical sites in Japan. From the world's oldest surviving wooden buildings at Horyuji Temple to the towering Great Buddha of Todai-ji, these fascinating sites tell the story of Japan's spiritual and cultural evolution.