



friendship force

HOUSTON

Jan
2017

A World Of Friends Is A World Of Peace.
A Non-Profit Organization Promoting Peace through Citizen Exchanges

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WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP FORCE INTERNATIONAL?

The Friendship Force is a non-profit organization sponsoring **people-to-people** exchanges between people in over sixty nations of the world. It brings people together through home stay exchanges – creating unforgettable experiences that build lasting bonds of friendship.

As an Ambassador, you share lifestyles in a private home in other countries for a week. In return, you may host people from that nation or other nations to share your lifestyle. The ever-widening Friendship Force global network represents a powerful and growing force that can overcome differences between people and nations.

New Year - New Opportunities

2017 stretches before FFH offering opportunities to:

Learn - expand our knowledge

Every month, FFH members are fortunate to have quality speakers enlighten, update, and acquaint us with a range of interesting and significant topics that add value to our lives. And, I think you'll agree, the most meaningful learning comes from sharing our homes and lives with ambassadors from all over the globe. Inbound exchanges are as important as outbound exchanges. No airline reservation required – just enjoy and learn from those who come your way.

Travel - provide memorable experiences and new friendships

Choices abound - stateside or overseas exchanges range from Traditional, Global, Themed, to Humanitarian. Traveling with other clubs strengthens and enriches our FF bonds. Update - watch for cruise options coming this year, and new destinations and adventures are in the planning stages at FFI. Take advantage of FFI's website and learn what's offered. We're celebrating our 40th Anniversary in Manchester, England with a multitude of travel adventures being offered. Pack your Bags!

Serve – ensure the growth of FFH

Opportunities go hand-in-hand with responsibilities. Friendship Force IS a volunteer organization that relies on the generous spirit of its members to survive. 2017 is the year to step up and give back by taking a leadership position. Board member – ED – Home Host – Day Host - Committee member, etc.; all positions need to be shared on a rotating basis. Volunteering is the life-blood of our club's growth. Lend a hand and help us grow.

2017 will be an enjoyable and rewarding year!

In Friendship,
Jean Porter
Leadership Coordinator

January meeting

Start the year out right by attending our Jan. 25th meeting and supporting FFH member Janet Thomas as she offers techie-tips and information to make your learning process and sessions at the computer more productive. Janet and husband, Richard, are new members, and Janet volunteered almost immediately to help with our website, for which Joy was eternally grateful. She will introduce us to websites that can be beneficial to us as world travelers as well as showing us our newly renovated website.

December Holiday Gathering

Our Holiday Celebration this year was an afternoon choral performance by *International Voices Houston* at the new MATCH Theater in midtown followed by dinner at Kim Son. It was a delightful selection of traditional, seasonal, and cultural songs from many different countries, also sung in many languages. We recommend this group to everyone, and we may be going to another of their performances in April.



International Voices choir with new Artistic Director, Mark Vogel



Doug Markham, Marjo Ave Lallemand, Jean & Nathan Porter

Missing from our photos, but attending the dinner later, were Rita & Matthias Pfaffelhuber, who had arrived from Germany the day before, accompanied by Gay O'Neal. They were in an auto accident on their way to the theater, but after some bumps and bruises, they joined us for dinner. What troopers!!!



Lang Starns, Joe Watt and guest, Joyce Saylan



Jo Ann Peschel, Betty Spooner, Vivian Pollack, Bonnie Weisman



Ruby Reviere, Linda & John Doolittle, Joy Huntington

Voting Results for 2018

One of the wonderful aspects of Friendship Force is that MEMBERS get to request our club's outbound exchange destinations. And the top four countries in our voting results for 2018 were Costa Rico (with 8 votes), Germany (with 6 votes), Canada, The Netherlands and Turkey (tied with 5 votes each). This information was submitted to FFI in December, so we should be hearing back from them in a few months as to our "matched" selection.

Regional Conferences

We have received the following information from Kay Binder, our Southwest Regional Representative, for our discussion. Please give this some thought and we will discuss at our January meeting.

*Instead of the annual regional conference, it was decided to have them every other year to cut down on expenses and monotony in our conference. Instead, regions are banding together to form a **Super Conference** so we get to learn from a larger sphere of clubs as well as meet other members from outside our conference.*

Our Southwest Conference has been invited to join in the Midwest Conference and the Great Lakes Conference. A possible meeting site would be Louisville, Kentucky as a more central, first-time Super Conference. We are still in the "talking" stages.

Could you please run this by your members to find out if they would like to travel outside our own region for a conference and please get back to me by then end of January if possible? Planning conferences takes months.

These conferences have usually been held in the spring, but may be later this year, due to the planning delay. All members are welcome to attend these conferences, and the club has in the past contributed something to the registration fees for the top officers.

40th Anniversary World Conference

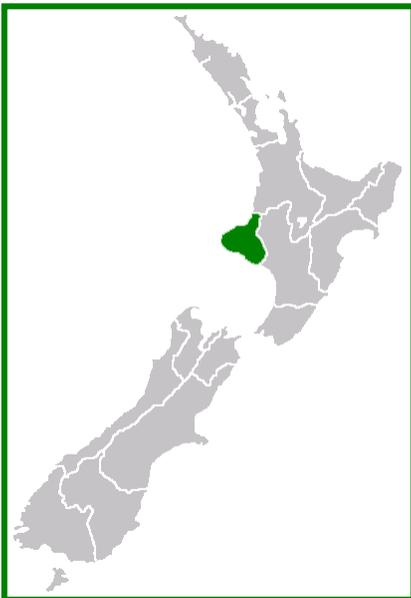


For information on the 2017 World Conference, see the FFI website or use the following link:
<https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=209170&>

May 2017 Inbound Exchange

We have been asked to host a group from South Taranaki, New Zealand next May 29th – June 5th and are expecting 14 Ambassadors for a week. This is a great opportunity to discover what Friendship Force is all about, as we introduce these “Ambassadors” from New Zealand to the wonderful things Houston and Texas have to offer. Please put this on your calendar and sign up to be either a **home host**, a **day host** or a “**small dinner**” **host**. We will be looking for an Inbound Exchange Director, and Jean Porter will help train and guide that person as we plan the week’s activities and hosting assignments.

South Taranaki is a territorial authority on the west coast of New Zealand's North Island that contains the towns of Hawera, Manaia, Opunake, Patea, Eltham, and Waverley. The District has a land area of 2221 miles and a population of 27,700. (source: Wikipedia)



View of Mount Taranaki from Stratford, facing west. Fanthams Peak is to the left of the main peak. The cow in the foreground is emblematic of Taranaki as a major dairying region.

U.S. Passport Changes

[JH1]

[JH2] Passport changes are coming, and if you plan on traveling in the future — especially if you’re among the 49 million Americans whose passports will expire in the next few years — you need to know what passport changes are in store.

While it may seem easy enough to acquire or renew a passport if and when you plan a trip, the State Department says there’s about to be a massive backlog of passport applications. (More on that in a minute.) Plus, passports themselves are going to change. Here’s what you should know about both the expected passport application delays and the passport changes coming in the years ahead.

You should renew your passport now. A decade ago, an important piece of travel legislation made American passports much more in-demand. The State Department saw an "unprecedented surge" in applications when a 2007 law enacted by the 9/11 Commission established passports as necessary for all travel to and from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. Millions of travelers acquired 10-year

passports that year as a result, and now they're all about to expire. It's safe to assume many of those passport holders will need to renew, which means that passport applications will jump significantly once again.

Concerned about wait times yet? Passport renewal already takes about six weeks, and many destinations require foreign passports to be valid for months after your trip. Factor in unknown delays, and you might have a lot less time to renew than you thought.

REAL ID changes aren't helping. A newer federal law, the REAL ID Act, will soon enforce updates to all state-level identification in the form of security features like machine-readable data chips. Now people in some states that are lagging behind in the technology are realizing that their licenses might soon be invalid for air travel — even on domestic trips. That could mean a rise in passport applications as well.

The following states/territories have an extension through October 10, 2017, allowing Federal agencies to accept driver's licenses and identification cards from these states/territories: Am. Samoa, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, N. Marianas, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, **Texas** and Virgin Islands.

Information on other states was omitted. For info on other states, check link below.

Expect new security features. Like state IDs, passports will now include added technology to ensure security and decrease fraud. Catching up with many other countries, U.S. passport changes mean that new passports will include a data chip that can provide all your personal info upon scanning it onto a computer. You can also expect your new passport to be lighter — rather than the 52-page passports of the past, only 28 pages will be included unless you opt to get more.

Double-check children's passports. If you've lost track of when your own passport needs renewing and you travel with children, double-check your child's passport as well. Child passports are only valid for five years, and they're subject to more paperwork, like parental consent forms and proof of a parent-child relationship.

How to renew your passport. You can apply for or renew a passport online through the State Department, or in person at an eligible local agency like the post office. Make sure you follow instructions carefully and meet all the requirements, like the new rule against wearing glasses in your passport photo. Doing so could further delay the process.

[Official website of the Department of Homeland Security](#)

New Travel Insurance from FFI

Friendship Force no longer has an arrangement with TravelGuard. The new Travel Protection Plan is designed exclusively for Friendship Force participants and represents a great value for travel protection. In the event that you become unexpectedly ill or injured before your trip, the plan may reimburse you for charges that are assessed due to cancellation. Proper medical coverage has become increasingly important while traveling outside the country. In addition, the plan addresses minor inconveniences like lost or delayed baggage.

Details regarding the plan are fully outlined in the Certificate/Policy of Insurance. The travel insurance benefits are underwritten by **Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company**. This plan is only valid once the appropriate plan cost has been received by Friendship Force.

For further questions, please contact Allison Lindsey: 404-965-4342 allison@friendshipforce.org.

https://docs.google.com/a/thefriendshipforce.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSffcivMkeK8Afg8ggKosD8IGiS37M_qskb5CLuBGzQsVtWK-Q/viewform

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FF Houston 2017 Calendar

Date	Day	Activity	Location	Time
Jan 14	Sat	International Dining Night	Kasra Persian Grill, 9741 Westheimer, 713-975-1810	6 PM
Jan 28	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation on "Helpful Travel Technology and the FFH website" by Janet Thomas	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Feb 11	Sat	International Dining Night	The Queen Vic, 2712 Richmond, 713-533-0022	6 PM
Feb 25	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation of 2016 England Exchanges to Cornwall and Leicestershire	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Mar 11	Sat	International Dining Night	Patagonia Grill, 8408 Katy Frwy, #200, 713-468--8408	6 PM
Mar 25	Sat	40 th Anniversary Celebration of FFI, potluck & presentation on "Improving Your Eyesight" by Mimmi Gadkari	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Apr		Southwest Regional Conference	Details forthcoming	
Apr 8	Sat	International Dining Night	Alexander the Great, 3055 Sage Rd., #170, 713-622-2778	6 PM
Apr 22	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM

		"Confessions of a Cruise Director" by Robert Landau		
May 13	Sat	International Dining Night	Fratelli's Italian Restaurant, 1330 Wirt Rd., 713-263-0022	6 PM
May 20	Sat	Meeting, potluck & finalization of exchange plans	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
May 29 – Jun 5	Mon – Mon	Inbound Exchange from New Zealand	Details forthcoming	
June 10	Sat	International Dining Night	Lucy Ethiopian Restaurant, 6800 Hwy 59 So., 713-334-0000	6 PM
June 24	Sat.	Meeting, potluck & presentation on India by Venki Kamath, friend of Janet Thomas	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
July 8	Sat	International Dining Night	Golden Dim Sum, 10600 Bellaire Blvd., 281-495-1668	6 PM
July 22	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Aug 12	Sat	International Dining Night	Andes Restaurant, 2311 Canal St., #104, 832-659-0063	6 PM
Aug 24 - 28	Thu - Mon	40 th Anniversary FFI World Conference	Manchester, UK See FFI website for details	
Aug 26	Sat	Meeting, potluck "picnic" & presentation	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Sep 9	Sat	International Dining Night	Theo's Greek Restaurant, 812 Westheimer, 713-523-0425	6 PM
Sep 23	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation Possible outing to Buffalo Bayou Park, Dunlavy's and the Cistern	TBD	11 AM
Oct 14	Sat	International Dining Night	Rudy Lechner's German Restaurant, 2503 S. Gessner, 713-782-1180	6 PM
Oct 28	Sat	Annual Meeting (election of officers), potluck & presentation	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Nov 11	Sat	International Dining Night	India's Restaurant, 5704 Richmond, 713-266-0131	6 PM
Nov 18	Sat	Meeting, potluck & presentation	Tracy Gee CC *	11 AM
Dec 9	Sat	Holiday Party / Brunch	To be determined	.TBD

*Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Dr., inside Beltway 8 West off of Richmond