

Friendship Force of Manitoba Newsletter March 2025

Journey to Southwest Florida

Ten ambassadors representing the three Manitoba clubs recently spent a week with the Southwest Florida Friendship club. The members of their club are an interesting collection of Florida residents from Punta Gorda and Fort Myers, combined with snowbirds from diverse northern states, such as Minnesota, Michigan, Maine, and possibly others. They spend six months in Florida and are members of the Southwest Florida club

Our first evening was to be spent with our home hosts, but several of them decided to gather for a pot luck dinner on a beach near one of the bridges. We had a wonderful time and saw our first Florida sunset with their club.



The next morning, we travelled by pontoon boat across Charlotte Bay, and down the river to the home of one of their members. On the way, we saw a sailboat that had been a victim of the hurricanes. Only the tops of the two masts were above water. That scene proved to be an

opportunity to learn about a program operated by the Coast Guard to clean up sunken boats from the waterways. Apparently, if people are about to lose their boat it is not uncommon to have them stripped of all identifying plaques, etc., thereby saving them an incredibly expensive salvage fee.

Our brunch host lived in a beautiful home with a huge outdoor patio. The members treated us to a wonderful brunch and a lot of good visiting. Their welcome was very warm and genuine, and many openly expressed their love of Canada and Canadians. Our two members from Brandon had recently travelled with two of the Florida members so were able to be home hosted by them and continue their friendship.

After the welcome brunch, two home hosts took us, in their pontoon boats, for a scenic tour of the inland canals on which many homes are built, including the summer estates of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. We were able to see how they lived with their families. We also had a good look at Thomas Edison's lab and some of Ford's earliest cars along with a tour of the museum. We had a picnic lunch on the grounds outside before heading off to a hilarious and touching play at the Florida Rep Theatre in Fort Myers.

The next day featured an Eco tour of the Babcock Ranch. This was land ceded to the Florida government in order to be maintained as a

wildlife preserve. Our tour bus driver stopped and threw corn out to attract a wide variety of animals living in the reserve. We then explored the wetlands area from a boardwalk.



Back on the bus, we were able to have a close-up look at a couple of baby alligators. However, we settled for watching the adults from the safety of the bus.



At the Babcock Ranch, Loretta and I shared an order of alligator bites, which were quite tasty.

After lunch, we toured a newly developed model city with three large neighborhoods. Through a deal with Florida Power, solar energy generated by the community is sold to the utility, who then resells it to homeowners to heat and power their homes. It was all very beautiful and well laid out, with ponds, golf courses, community spaces, and a variety of housing styles. Travel in the community is often by golf cart.

Our next day was spent on the water with a cruise to Cabbage Key, one of the historic islands across from Fort Myers. We were fortunate to see some dolphins and had a nice lunch in the restaurant on the island. That night we took our home hosts out to dinner at a waterfront restaurant and explored some of the shops in the fisherman's village.

In our free time on Saturday, before we departed for our farewell dinner, we took in the local Farmers Market and saw the one third size replica of the Vietnam Nam war memorial. The beach where we met later was next-door to a wildlife preservation center. It was being rebuilt, after being damaged by the hurricane. There were also plans afoot to move it to a more stable location further back from the water. Following our tour, we met back on the beach for a variety of outdoor games and a wonderful potluck dinner – topped off, of course, with one final sunset.



World Friendship Day 2025



On March 5, the Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon clubs gathered to celebrate World Friendship Day with lunch meeting at the Caboto Centre. Approximately 51 people from all clubs were in attendance. Everyone enjoyed the meal and the company, while a backdrop slide show, prepared by Susan Finlay, highlighted some of the journeys taken by ambassadors in 2024.



After dessert, Gloria Dovoh, Community Relations Coordinator for Volunteer Manitoba, delivered a presentation on Building Strong Communities through volunteering.

In operation for 41 years, Volunteer Manitoba provides outreach, volunteer programs, youth programming, volunteer awards and training for board positions to the community.



Dovoh pointed out that Manitoba is only second to Saskatchewan in the number of volunteer hours per capita among Canadians.



Each table was decorated with a Canadian flag as well as a potted begonia that was raffled off to lucky winners at the end of the event.

Upcoming Events

April 2025 Club Meeting

Dinner at Caboto Centre followed by Games Night.

May 2025 Club Meeting

Highlights from Journeys to Florida, Washington and Brazil.

June 2025 Club Meeting

Presentation by Donna Janke on her book, *111 Places in Winnipeg You Must Not Miss*

Fall 2025

A speaker from Brazil will present at one of the club meetings. Information to follow.

December 2025

FF Manitoba at FF Winnipeg.

With thanks to the Program Committee for organizing the above events.



Journey Coordinator's Report

Outbound Journeys 2025

Friendship Force Manitoba's 2025 journeys started with a group of 10 ambassadors heading to Friendship Force Southwest Florida. Even though you would have thought Manitobans would be anxious to escape the cold winter weather, only 10 of the 15 available spaces were taken – and only one of those was from Friendship Force Manitoba. Thanks go to Outbound Ambassador Coordinator/Treasurer Denise Lawson who led a group made up of Friendship Force Winnipeg and Friendship Force Brandon members to Fort Myers February 17-23.

FF Manitoba's other 2025 outbound journey will be to FF Tere-Rio, Brazil from November 12-19 and NorPeru, Peru from November 19-26. First time ambassadors and Outbound Ambassador Coordinators, Christine and Francis Hanlon, have been communicating with the host coordinators to get all the details ironed out. This journey generated a lot of initial interest. However, it now looks like we will be filling the 12 available spaces from within our own club – with no waiting list.

Inbound Journeys 2025

August 9-16 will stretch our hosting capacity to the maximum when we welcome both the FF Adelaide club FF Manitoba club – that we visited in November 2024 – and the FF Greater Seattle club at the same time! With 11 coming from Adelaide and 15 coming from Seattle, FF Manitoba is fortunate that some of the FF Winnipeg club members have offered to assist us with this journey. The highlight of the ambassadors' week is expected to be Folklorama, but other activities will be part of the week as well. Susan Finlay will be the Host Ambassador Coordinator. She is being ably assisted by Gail Keeley, Peggy Smith, Gisele Hansen, Kathy Hansell, Yingke Lee, Helen

Whetter, Joan Bluethner, Lynda Walker, Teresa Tacchi, and Marilyn Ouimet.

Outbound Journeys 2026

Friendship Force International has been notified that our outbound request choices for 2026 (in descending order) are Germany, Türkiye and Indonesia. Journey assignments are expected to be distributed to clubs in April 2025. Watch your email for an update when it becomes available.

After requesting – and receiving – 'extra' weeks of journeys to the United States in both 2024 and 2025, FF Manitoba has decided to request only two weeks of outbound journeys for 2026. We have traditionally hosted two weeks a year, and travelled two weeks a year. Because the 'extra' journeys to the US generated a lot of work for – but little uptake from – our FF Manitoba membership, we did not request 'extra' weeks to the US for 2026.

Any members wishing to go on additional outbound journeys are welcome to browse the online Journey Catalogue for Independent, Club to Club and Special Journeys that interest them. It's available on the my.friendshipforce.org website. Currently there are 19 Club to Club journeys, 12 Special journeys and 34 Independent journeys posted on the site. The offerings range from exotic places like Africa and Sri Lanka, to domestic locales here in Canada. Lots of choices!

2025 is shaping up to be a busy year for FF Manitoba!

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Finlay
Journey Coordinator

Program Committee Report

The Program Committee is focused on organizing an exciting year for everyone! In January, we started the year with the traditional favourite, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, arranged by Gail Keeley. Then, in February, we shared highlights from last November's Australian Journey.

March brought us together for International Friendship Day, which we celebrated at the Caboto Centre with the Winnipeg and Brandon Clubs. Guest speaker, Gloria Dovoh from Volunteer Manitoba spoke on Building Strong Communities through volunteering.

Program Committee volunteers have been busy preparing for April's Games Night, an activity that will help us get to know each other a little better. Then in May, we will enjoy highlights from recent journeys to Florida, Washington and Brazil – a destination for some of our ambassadors this fall. This will be followed in June by a presentation from Donna Janke, speaking about her new book, *111 Places in Winnipeg You Must Not Miss*. We are sure to come away with some excellent ideas for hosting!

In the fall we look forward to a speaker from Brazil, just before a group of ambassadors leave for their journey. Rounding out the year, the Winnipeg club has invited us to join them for their meeting in December.

How the year flies by! Locally and globally, as members of Friendship Force, we continue working together to promote friendship and peace. Our committee is always happy to welcome your suggestions and feedback for all the programs we organize throughout the year.

In friendship,

Helen Whetter, for Dallas Bagby, Joan Boyd,
Kathy Lesyk, Yinke Li

President's Report

As your new president, I would like to let you know a little more about myself. I was an elementary teacher in Louis Riel school division for over thirty years teaching Language Arts, mathematics, and the sciences. Gail and I have two children: our son Sean, who is a red seal plumber and our daughter Terri, who is a nurse. We are the proud grandparents of an 18-month-old grandson named Killian.

My interests include music – playing clarinet and saxophone – gardening, fishing and hiking at our cottage near Kenora in the summer. In the winter, I enjoy cross-country skiing in and around Winnipeg.

The new year promises to be another eventful one for Friendship Force Manitoba. Several groups of our members took part in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* in January and February, which was a great success. Thanks to all the members who shared their homes for this annual event.

The outbound trip to Fort Myers, Florida was a memorable journey for the ambassadors from our Manitoba clubs. The members of the Florida club were wonderful hosts.

In August, our club will be hosting the Greater Seattle Club from the United States as well as the Adelaide Club from Australia for a total of approximately 24 ambassadors! We will need as many members as possible to help make the inbound journey a success.

Lastly, for our club to remain viable, I strongly encourage our newer members to consider taking on leadership roles in a secretarial, treasurer, and vice-president capacity in the coming year. The experience is well worth it in terms of learning how our club and FFI functions.

In Friendship,

Doug Jackson

Board Members 2025

President: Doug Jackson

Vice President: vacant

Secretary: Rose Gerbasi

Treasurer: Dane Schipper

Committee Chairs and Members

Journey Coordinator: Susan Finlay

Past President: Denise Lawson

Program Committee: Helen Whetter (chair),
Dallas Bagby, Joan Boyd, Kathy Lesyk and Yinke Li

Newsletter Editor: Gail Keeley and Christine
Hanlon


Website: Marilyn Ouimet

Historian: vacant

Journey Directors:

Christine and Francis Hanlon (outbound) FF Rio
de Janeiro, Brazil and Trujillo, Peru (Nov 2025)

Susan Finlay (inbound) FF Greater Seattle and
Adelaide (Aug 2025)



Check for information and updates related to the
FFI Website by accessing the Member Portal at

https://my.friendshipforce.org/en/users/sign_in

FF Basics

Membership renewals:

Memberships run from January to December.

Renewing member: \$70

New member: \$70

Associate member: \$40

All members are being asked to complete a
membership renewal form at the time they pay
their membership.

Address changes:

Have you changed your address, email, or phone
number? Please tell our incoming President
Doug Jackson right away so he can update our
membership list.

Club website: friendshipforcemanitoba.org

FF Canada website: friendshipforce.ca

FF International: Go to friendshipforce.org for
up-to-date information.

My.friendshipforce.org gives you access to the
latest new messages and allows you to pay
journey fees.

Newsletter:

To contribute to the Keystone Klippings,
contact either
Gail at gailke@hotmail.ca or
Christine Hanlon
at christinekhanlon@gmail.com