



# The Exchange

## Newsletter of Friendship Force of Birmingham

### January-February 2026

FFoB on [Facebook](#)

Our Website <http://www.ffofbham.org>

## President's Report 2025

2025 was a busy and productive year for the Club. Described below are some of the highlights of the year.

### Club Meetings- Board and General

January 7, 2025 Board business meeting  
January 26, 2025 General meeting- Linda Burell chosen the FFI Southeast Representative  
March 4, 2025 Board- Linda began having Zoom calls with the SE Club Presidents  
March 16, 2025 General meeting. Presented updated FFoB brochure, received certificate from FFI celebrating 40 years as a Club, distributed Friendship bracelets to all members  
Guest Speaker- Ann Hughes with Expedia travel- Hints and tips for travel safety and advice. A financial audit committee was appointed to review the Treasurer's books for accuracy, and report at the next Board meeting.



May 6, 2025 Board- Reba set up a Zelle account for business transactions  
May 18, 2025 General Introduced new meeting format called MINGLE to reduce amount of business and increase interactions between members and guests. Guest speaker- Nick Sepsas "Sweet Home Alabama"- the history of the state  
July 1, 2025 Board business meeting  
July 20, 2025 General meeting guest speaker, Tine Hoffmeister, Executive Director American- German Partnership- Tips and pointers on travel in Germany  
September 2, 2025 Board business meeting  
September 21, 2025 General Guest Speaker Daniel Wright, Special Events Director Cullman Recreation- discussed Oktoberfest and Christkindlmarkt  
November 4, 2025 Board business meeting  
November 16, 2025 Guest Speaker Reiko Nkazawa and Gwenafaye McCormick from the Japan -America Club presented "Japan in a Suitcase"- tips on travel in Japan.

### Club Journeys

Outgoing- Sarasota FL Feb 20-25. Coordinator Gloria Hall  
Incoming- Harrisburg April 8-13 Coordinator- Terry Kaye Cleckler  
Outgoing- Mid- Willamette May 30-June 5 Coordinator- Carol Ball  
Outgoing- Germany July 25-Aug 9 Coordinator- Linda Burell  
Outgoing Sarasota November 4-9, with another Club Coordinator Melanie Pollard  
Incoming Madison, WI October 19-24 Coordinator- Melanie Pollard

### Day Trips and Activities

February 6, and 7- Calloway Gardens with Big Canoe Club  
March 21, Dinner and Delores Hydock presentation  
May 9, Dinner and Three on a String- Homewood Theater  
June 13, Wedding reception for member Gloria Hall Slater  
July 16, Shakespeare in the Park- Wizard of Oz  
August 16, The 70's Show and lunch  
September 12, Murder Mystery Plan and dinner- we each had a part  
October 3, Oktoberfest in Cullman  
October 25- Shakespeare Festival, Murder on the Orient Express  
November 15- Art Show, Mountain Brook and Brunch  
December 4, Cullman Christkindl Market  
December 5, Delores Hydock Jingle All the Way Show  
December 6- Holiday music at Redmont Theater  
December 12- Movie at the famous Alabama Theater with the Mighty Wurlitzer  
December 20- Candlelight performance Birmingham Symphony at Art Museum





#### Scheduled Activities

**LEO**-Thanks to Kathi Wolf for coordinating  
Feb 12- Bright Star  
April 16- Margarita Grill  
June cancelled due to Oregon Journey  
August-13 Luca Legato  
October 8 -El Patron  
December 10- Pita Stop

**Game Day**- Thanks to Arlene Spertus for coordinating  
Returned to The Crossings in August

#### New Events

**Wine tasting**- August 26 Judy Smalling hosted at Tributary  
October 28 Judy Smalling hosted at Tributary  
December 28 Terri Graves hosted at Tributary

#### Book Club

July 15- *The Secret Book of Flora Lee* by Patti Callahan Henry hosted by Linda Burell  
September 16 -*Miss Eliza's Kitchen* by Annabell Abbs hosted by Carol Ball  
November 18- *Child of the River* by Irma Joubert hosted by Janice Little

#### Special Events

March 25- Initiated Annual Board Retreat- hosted by Melanie and Tom Pollard at their Lakehouse. Discussion led by President Rosie Durham  
June 25- Initiated Legacy Luncheon to honor Members with longest membership: Roula Wolf, Karolyn Mersmann, Callie Waldrop, Vicki Smith, Charlotte and Tom Laggy, Betty and Charles Morgan, and Joan and Wray Pearce. A special Legacy plaque was presented to each one. It was held at Arlington Antebellum Home with luncheon, hosted by President Rosie Durham

#### Education/ Orientation/ Mentorship/ Point System

**Journey Training** was offered by Charlotte and Tom Laggy in January, June and October so all Coordinators for 2026 were prepared. Each person attending received a packet with all required forms and information.

In September I took the Special Journey training offered by FFI on Zoom

In November I took the New Club Leader training offered by FFI on Zoom.

**New Member Orientation** was offered by Marsha Haney in February, April, June and September. Each new member was given a packet of information about FFI and our Club. They were also given a kaleidoscope to represent that we see the world differently and in new colors.

I send all new members a Welcome Card and a Birthday Card to all members to thank them for being a part of the Birmingham club.

We added 17 members in 2025- an all time record!

**Mentorship Program**- The Board decided to restart the program where all new Members were assigned a seasoned member who would help them get oriented to the benefits of the Club, call and invite them to attend meetings and events with them, offer any guidance and answer questions. Marsha Haney makes the assignments.

**Point System** -The Assistant Treasurer was assigned to maintain and record points Members earned for participation in the various club activities. The plan is to use this if it is necessary to determine who can go on journeys if numbers are limited. The system was explained to new members by Carol Ball.

**Special Thanks** to Terry Douglas for expanding and improving the Club newsletter, to Linda Burell, Melanie Pollard, Rosie Durham and Tavia Sorrell for maintaining our Social Media, Facebook and FFI website, and to all Board Members, new members and seasoned members for your contributions to the success of this club. We stand on the shoulders of those who 40 years ago began this club and have continued it to today.

My thanks and appreciation for the honor and privilege to serve as your

President .**Rosie**



# Journeys 2026

Veracruz, Mexico- (outgoing) Feb 23-28

The North American Conference in Memphis, April 24-27. Contact Terri Graves ([gramgraves@me.com](mailto:gramgraves@me.com)) for room reservation and carpooling. Sign up online at FFI webpage. This journey will be especially good for all the new members.

Japan (outgoing) May 12-25 with Huntsville

Tallahassee (incoming) September 14-19, (outgoing) October.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa (incoming) April 7-11.

More information to follow.



## See You at Our Next Meeting !

Thursday, January 15th at Shelby County Library, 2:30 PM

Members whose last name begins with M-Z please bring a snack to share. Members whose last name begins with A-L please assist with the cleanup. The program is on fraud and scams and how to be safe. It will be presented by Officer Crim of the Vestavia Police Department. He will be arriving at 3:00 PM. We will socialize prior to his arrival.



## GREAT INTERNATIONAL NEWS!

FFI now has two websites:



[Visit FFI Website](#)

- The member portal requiring a password is **my.friendshipforce.org**
- The website for the general public requiring no password: **www.friendshipforce.org**



***January***

***5-Janet Craven***

***18- Carol Ball***

***20-Charles Morgan***

# 2026

## Board Meetings

- January 6
- March 3
- May 5
- July 7
- September 1
- November 3

## General Meetings

- January 15
- March 19
- May 21
- July 16
- September 17
- November 19

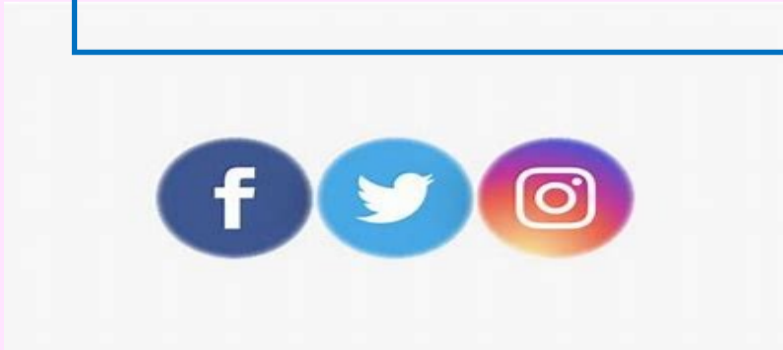


### Announcements

Please go to our website [ffofbham.org](http://ffofbham.org) to see the monthly calendar of events, updated forms and general information about the club.

The points tally sheet is there now, [Friendship Force of Birmingham - Home](#) (under "More" and "Links").

LEO and Game Day TBA.



Friendship Force of Birmingham / The Greater Birmingham area, Birmingham, AL 35244



**The Friendship Force of Birmingham**

**Membership Application 2026**

The annual dues include: Membership in both the local and the Friendship Force International, subscription to the club's newsletter and opportunities to host FFI members from other clubs and travel to and visit other clubs.

Type of Membership: New\_\_\_ Renewal\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*Dues \$100.00 to FFI \$15.00 to FFofBham \*\*\*\*

Name Tag Required \$15.00 to FFofBham

As of January 1, 2026 you must pay FFI online in a lump sum of \$100.00 or monthly Payments of \$8.33

Zelle The Friendship Force Email used rebaw1219@gmail.com

Name Tag: Type: Magnetic\_\_ Pin\_\_\_

Name on NAME TAG (Print)\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Cell\_\_\_\_\_ Home\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies\_\_\_\_\_

What events do you like to attend? \_\_\_\_\_

Member that invited you \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in serving on one or more of the following committees?

Membership\_\_\_ Social\_\_\_ Hospitality\_\_\_ Finance\_\_\_ Publicity\_\_\_ Programs\_\_\_

Welcome\_\_\_ Website\_\_\_ Communications\_\_\_ Facebook\_\_\_ Scrapbook\_\_\_

Mail to:

Marsha Haney

10850 Hwy. 174

Odenville, Al. 35120

(704)785-5274

Marsha9718@gmail.com

Please read the code of conduct and sign

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

## **Illness Guidelines for FF of Birmingham Ambassadors on Journeys**

1. Pay special attention to Cold symptoms: wash hands and use hand gel often, and before eating. Avoid close contact with people and crowds.
2. If symptoms continue or increase, monitor temperature for fever, wear a mask in public and take a COVID 19 test.
3. If symptoms include aches and higher temperature, seek Medical advice for a flu test.
4. During this time treat symptoms with Over the Counter medications for fever, cough, sinus infections, etc.
5. Notify the Journey Coordinator of symptoms. Journey Coordinator will notify Host Coordinator.
6. Make arrangements to move out of host home to hotel, or return home
7. To facilitate possible refund for expenses, save all receipts for medications, office visits and cost of hotel. Check your insurance policy to see what they require.

**Code of Conduct agreement:** Friendship Force members affirm the following values:

**Welcoming:** FFI (Friendship Force International) promotes friendship amongst peoples of different backgrounds and cultures globally, regionally and locally. FFI welcomes everyone regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political opinion, religion or any other difference.

**Open-Minded:** FFI seeks to foster mutual respect and appreciation of differences. Members challenge their own prejudices and approach new situations with a learning attitude.

**Adventurous:** FFI members have a spirit of adventure! They are flexible and adapt to uncertain circumstances with energy and enthusiasm.

**Positive:** FFI members always consider the needs of others and seek to give more to host communities than they take. FFI members seek to be a force for good and aim to have a positive impact wherever they go.

**Innovative:** FFI seeks to be constantly evolving; adapting to new and better ways of carrying out our goals. FFI will be responsive to cultural and social changes. FFI members are open to change.

**Peace:** FFI firmly believes that a world of friends is a world of peace. FFI brings diverse people together to discover common ground. FFI members seek to further peace in all they do. The Friendship Force Member understands that the scope of their relationship with Friendship Force International is limited to a volunteer position and that no compensation or employment-related benefits are expected in return for services provided by the Friendship Force member. The Friendship Force Member recognizes that connected with any travel there are risks of loss, damage, and injury to persons and property, and the Member is willing to assume and bear those risks. The Member also recognized that they are responsible for complying with all laws of all countries visited. Therefore, the Friendship Force Member agrees to and does hereby release, indemnify and hold harmless Friendship Force of Birmingham and Friendship Force International (which shall include the directors, officers, and employees thereof, as well as its volunteer leaders and members) from all claims, actions, and causes of action related to Friendship Force events, journeys or other activities. The Friendship Force Member understands and acknowledges that this release discharges Friendship Force of Birmingham and Friendship Force International from any liability or claim that they may have against Friendship Force International with respect to bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from the Member's involvement in Friendship Force activities.

# FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF BIRMINGHAM

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

LIST ITEMS TO BE PAID. ATTACH ALL SALES RECEIPTS OR INVOICES.

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
TOTAL	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

Date paid	Check #