



# friendship force

## GREATER MILWAUKEE

*a world of friends is a world of peace*

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025

[www.friendshipforcemilwaukee.org](http://www.friendshipforcemilwaukee.org)

### president's message

Greetings. I am humbly writing as your new president. I have some thoughts as we begin a new year, but first a heartfelt thanks to the officers of the Friendship Force this past year. A special thanks is extended to Chris Vogel, who has done a remarkable job as president of the club. Her work is definitely appreciated!

When asked to become the president of FFGM, I had to do some serious thinking. This was not a decision made lightly. I went to the website of the Friendship Force International and read: "For us, travel is about more than taking a vacation.



Dave Loosen

With over 300 clubs and thousands of members worldwide, Friendship Force International connects people with its mission to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Through home-hosting and travel experiences, participants learn about other cultures, develop a better understanding of our world, and discover our shared humanity."

I found the statement very meaningful, capturing the true value of this organization

The start of a New Year is an opportunity to reflect on a New Year resolution. Now I am the first to admit, I usually don't set resolutions; they are often forgotten or so hard to achieve one quickly gives up on them.

Here is my challenge: I encourage each of you to set an achievable resolution related to Friendship Force. How about resolving to become more active or, if you are already active, to maintain that level of activity. The strength of any group is based on the strength of its individual members. FFGM provides so many opportunities for growth. This year, host a Five at Five, attend monthly gatherings, participate in the book club, take part in one of the fun and educational activities, join an outbound journey, ask a friend to join our group, help with an inbound journey by hosting a dinner party or providing lodging, participate in the picnic and annual meeting. I firmly believe the more you give to an organization the more you get.

I look forward to getting to know each of you better and to a great 2025. My wife Lynne and I wish you a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

## SOMETHING NEW

### let's eat out

So, who's LEO? No — not a new FFGM member. LEO is a new endeavor for 2025 to provide yet another opportunity for FFGM members to get together. With many new members we need more ways to get people together. LEO stands for Let's Eat Out!

As you explore new restaurants, you'll get to know one another better. We'll choose a different restaurant each time, and you are encouraged to suggest favorite spots or places you'd like to try. You could even help set it up if you wish.

*See LEO, page 3*

## JAN. 21: See fossils, historic maps, at UW—Milwaukee

The University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee is home to some amazing and internationally recognized resources. On Tuesday, Jan. 21, we will have the opportunity for guided tours to several of its famous collections.

Please plan on carpooling; we may use a meet-up place in the area so we can park as few cars as possible at UWM.

We will meet at 9:50 a.m. at UWM Library's Front Desk (1st floor, West Wing). At 10 a.m., we'll tour the American Geographical Society Library, (<https://uwm.edu/libraries/agsl/>),

*See UWM TOURS, page 3*

## at a glance

**1/5** 2 p.m. Fifth @ 5 at Barbara and Joe Geck's, 1258 Seitz Dr., Waukesha. R.S.V.P to Barbara.

**1/8** Book Club. 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. *The Firekeeper's Daughter* (Ojibwe) by Angeline Boulley.

**1/16** LEO. 12:30 p.m. Wild Roots, 6807 W. Becher St., West Allis. R.S.V.P. to Ann Line.

**1/21** University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee American Geographical Society Library, Geological Museum and Manfred Olson Planetarium (\$6). Meet at 9:50 a.m. Lunch in UWM cafeteria. R.S.V.P. to Mary Wacker,

**2/2** 5th @ 5, 2-4 p.m. home of Linda Epperson, W175 N8106 Robin Circle, Menomonee Falls. R.S.P,V to Linda.

**2/3** FFGM Board meeting. 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

**2/11** LEO. 12:30 p.m. at Singha Thai, 2237 S. 108th St., West Allis. R.S.V.P. to Ann Line.

**2/26** Delafield Day with 10 a.m. tour of Hawks Inn. 426 Wells St. Lunch at Lumber Inn. R.S.V.P. to Mary Cimbalnik.

**2025 Journeys**

July 21-25 - Cedar Rapids/Iowa City, IA Mini-Inbound

Aug. 16-23 - Adelaide, Australia, Inbound.

TBD - Baton Rouge, LA Outbound.

Check [my.friendshipforce.org](http://my.friendshipforce.org) frequently for other travel opportunities.

**FIFTH @ 5: yes, Jan. 5th, but @ 2**

The January Fifth @ 5 will be at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 5, at the home of Barbara and Joe Geck, 1258 Seitz Dr., Waukesha. Please tell Barbara you plan to attend by calling or texting Barbara.

Linda Epperson will host the February Fifth @ 5 — although we'll use "winter hours" from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 2.

Volunteers are needed for the rest of 2025. (See president's letter about getting involved.) Hosting a Fifth @ 5 is one of the easiest things you can do. Your FFGM friends come over for a couple of hours, bringing appetizers, desserts and their own beverages, and you provide plates, napkins and cups. Or you can host a game night. Or some other activity you think people would enjoy.

During winter months, when it's dark early, we have been changing the time to earlier in the afternoon. You can even change the date to a Saturday or Sunday closer to the actual 5th of the month.

Please let Barbara Geck know when you'd like to host.

**JAN. 8: book club**

Calling all book lovers! Come read and discuss with FFGM! The FFGM Book Club has been going on since April 2017. This year we will read our 50th book!

We meet at 1:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of odd-numbered months We meet on Zoom in bad-weather months ((January, March and November) and in person in May, July and September). Everyone is welcome to come as often as possible, and you can still come even if you haven't finished the book (but it is recommended to do so!).

Books can be fiction or non-fiction and need to highlight a different ethnicity or culture or take place in another country.

In 2025 we'll read:

- *The Firekeeper's Daughter* (Ojibwe) by Angeline Boulley
- *Pachinko* (South Korea/Japan) by Min Jin Lee
- *The End of Drum-Time* (Lapp/Sami) by Hanna Pylvainen
- *The Lion Women of Tehran* (Iran) by Marjan Kamali
- *The Art of Losing* (Algeria/France) by Alice Zeniter
- *Wicked Milwaukee* (Milwaukee) by Yance Marti

The first book to be read is *The Firekeeper's Daughter* at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 8 on Zoom. Kathy Buenning will be the facilitator.

**UWM TOURS**, *page 3*

which holds a collection of two million items formerly housed in New York City.

At 11 a.m., you'll have lunch on your own at the Union dining area.

At 12:30 p.m., we'll tour the Thomas A. Greene Geological Museum collection (<https://uwm.edu/geosciences/greene-museum/>) at Lapham Hall, Room 168. The collection includes more than 5,000 fossils, rare and exotic minerals, and half of the largest meteorite to strike Wisconsin.

From 2 to 3 p.m., we'll visit the Manfred Olson Planetarium in the Physics Building, Room 139, (<https://uwm.edu/planetarium/>) where we'll see the "Scale of the Universe" program connecting us to the beauty of the night sky and the wonders of the cosmos.

Please bring \$6 with you that day to pay planetarium fee.

R.S.V.P. by Monday, Jan. 13 to Mary Wacker.

The tours are limited to 30 people.

The week before the program, a confirmation e-mail will be sent with a UWM map, parking information, Union food options and any carpooling meet-up info.



**FEB. 26: historic delafield**

A delightful little town packed with history and new growth awaits us just a bit to the west of Milwaukee. Sprinkled amid historic buildings, a riverwalk, boutiques, small specialty shops and restaurants abound. Delafield has nurtured a small New England atmosphere and is easily accessible from I-94.

On Wednesday, Feb. 26, we'll meet at 10 a.m. at Hawks Inn, 426 Wells St., Delafield for a guided tour followed by:

- 11 a.m. guided tour of the Lincoln Collection, a unique museum attached to The Historical Society next to Hawks Inn
- A noon lunch just down the street at The Lumber Inn.

A \$5 donation is charged at both tours, and lunch is pay on your own.

After lunch you can explore the many shops in Delafield or, if a guide can be found, we will tour St. John Chrysostom, a beautiful 19th century church on the north end of the town. Information was not yet available at this newsletter's deadline. We'll let you know.

**LEO**, *from page 1*

A different day of the week will be chosen each month in case you might have a commitment on a certain day.

You do not need to pay in advance, but you do NEED to contact Ann Line so she can tell the restaurant how many people to expect.

The first LEO will be at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16 at 12:30 p.m. at Wild Roots, 6807 W. Becher St., West Allis. The restaurant consistently has received good reviews, especially for its duck fat burger.

The February LEO will be at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 11 at Singha Thai, 2237 S. 108th St., West Allis. The restaurant has a large menu as well as a Thai and Chinese lunch buffet for \$13.

## holiday party



More than 60 members and guests attended the Dec. 15 Annual Meeting. At right, Mary Wacker on guitar joined with Gayle Best in leading Christmas carols.



New Vice President Stephanie Freier (right) with her aunt Vicki Walsh, mother Sue Freier, and grandmother Terry Peters, who helped start FFGM 34 years ago

### MITCHELL STREET FOOD CENTER

A small act can make a big difference! At the Holiday Luncheon/Annual meeting on Dec. 15, our FFGM members donated canned goods, cereal and other foods, as well as 83 Sendik and Metcalfe plastic bags. — bags that will save the Mitchell Street Food Center \$14.11. Every bag counts! Besides these bags, we also collected regular plastic grocery bags. These other bags allow us to put bakery goods and bread in them — another huge saving, as we do not have to use the expensive bags. Thank you all!



## LINE, HAAS AWARDED WAYNE SMITH MEDAL



Ann Line, left, and Rosie Haas were recognized with Wayne Smith Medals.

For their exceptional leadership in FFGM, Ann Line and Rosie Haas were recognized with the Wayne Smith Medal at the Annual Meeting on Dec. 15.

Both have served as president and vice president, coordinated inbound and outbound journeys, helped with the newsletter.

Ann also has co-chaired the Book Club, started the W.H.E.T. (Walking, Hiking, Eating, Talking) hikes, and created interesting and well-attended events as a co-chair of the Activities Committee.

As the club's historian, Rosie has kept track of all activities, journeys and member contacts. She has been the central hub of communications — most email announcements go through Rosie. As a long-time member of the Membership Committee, she for years has created the Membership Directory.

In letters to Ann and Rosie, FFI CEO and President Jeremi Snook said that “Friendship Force would not be where it is today without amazing members members and leaders like you.

The award is named after Friendship Force International Founder Wayne Smith.

## BLAZCHS HONORED WITH PEACE AWARD

Long-time FFGM members Bob and Jan Blazich were honored in November with the 2024-25 Agent of Peace award by their Rotary District 6270. Peter Bosch, District Governor, said in a letter that the prestigious recognition “celebrates your exceptional efforts to foster international understanding and goodwill, which have contributed to building peace on a global scale.”

Bosch cited the couple's 22-year-long membership in Friendship Force International, where they served as exchange directors and ambassadors to many countries.

The couple has visited about 60 countries during their 60-year marriage.

Bob also served as the Russian Leadership Program/Open World, directing delegations from former Society Union countries and raising funds for Ukrainian delegates. Most recently, he has helped raise thousands of dollars to send to Kharkiv physician Olena Malyhon, whom Bob and Jan hosted as part of a 2022 Open World delegation to study the U.S. blood donation system.

The couple also has hosted Rotary Youth Exchange students and



Jan and Bob Blazich

coordinated student activities, as well as contributing to the Adult Literacy Center of Ozaukee County, Peru's E.I.G.E.R. School and the Guatemala Medical Relief Project.

## journey down under



**Seven** FFGM members — Clarine Furey, Carol Gau, Jo Anne Behling, Mary Wacker, Sharron Ronco, Bonnie Fredrickson and Chris Vogel — visited Friendship Force of Wairarapa, New Zealand. Five continued on for a week with the Tweed Valley, Australia club.

Highlights? Lots of hiking and lighthouses, watching sheep being sheared and cows being milked by robots, visiting a honey operation and wineries, eating “slice” (cake, to you) at several morning and afternoon teas, swimming in the Pacific Ocean, petting kangaroos, a boat trip on the Tweed River, awakening to the sound of kookaburras, bottle-feeding lambs, hunting poison toads in our hosts backyards, and so much more. The New Zealanders and Australians made us feel right at home.



## activities: exploring fort atkinson



History was in the spotlight on Nov. 14 when 15 members of FFGM visited Fort Atkinson's Hoard Museum and Dairy Street Shrine, toured the Jones Farm and Market, and had lunch at Paddy Coughlins's Irish Pub. Afterward, people took off on their own for more history and shopping.



### **MANY THANKS**

Members of the Activities Committee recently created 44 thank-you cards to send to local places the club has visited. From left, Gayle Best's cousin Lisa Mann, Donna Malone, Mary Cimbalknik, Ann Line, Mary Wacker and Gayle Best.



## RICK PIRAINO

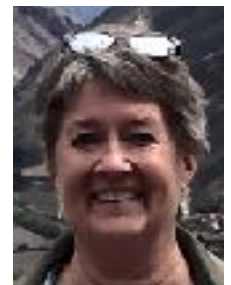


Rick grew up in a military family so was a traveler from the get-go with tours in Japan, France and Hawaii which, back in 1961 was more like a foreign country than a state. His family always came back to Milwaukee as home base.

His professional life began as an educator working in Door County as a high school English teacher. He then moved into the psychology field and was a clinical therapist for 18 years before his last career chapter working as a leadership development trainer and coach from which he is semi-retired.

He has lived in Waukesha since 1981 and has two daughters and one grandson living in Milwaukee and Madison. He is a dedicated golfer, gardener and cook and loves to host dinner parties.

## LYNN LANCE



I am a retired Physical Therapist Assistant. I have three daughters, four grandsons, three grand dogs and three or four grand cats. They live in Montréal Canada, Truckee CA and Hartford CT, so I get my share of air travel.

A friend introduced me to FFGM, and I was especially drawn to the group's mission to meet, learn about and understand different cultures.

I have participated in a number of the local outings and found them to be exceptionally well-organized and very informative. The great meals are always appreciated.

I enjoy the company of the other "adventurers." Their stories are inspiring.

I look forward to meeting new friends and new adventures.

