

## Friendship Force



**Memphis, TN**

February 1, 2020

Changing the Way You See the World

<https://ffmem.com>

Please join us:  
Membership Meeting and Potluck  
Tuesday, February 4  
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.  
Shady Grove Presbyterian



Program: We look forward to our program provided by the club ambassadors who went to Costa Rica.

## President's Greeting

Dear Friendship Force Members,

Well, we are off to a great start for the month of January. We have an Open World group coming January 24 - February 1. There will be four ambassadors from Ukraine plus a facilitator and a translator. The focus of this group is Health Care Advocacy. We had a group with a similar theme last spring, and it was very successful. Please try to attend some of the functions that are planned so you can get to meet these wonderful young people. Rick will be providing e-mail announcements as to those functions open to the group as a whole.

There is a wonderful group of volunteers right here in Memphis led by Federico Gomez, a Spanish teacher at CBU. Five times a day groups of 2-4 volunteers are meeting asylum seekers at the Greyhound bus station. Coming from countries such as Angola, Haiti, Honduras, and El Salvador, etc., these refugees have been released from detention camps and have been sent a bus ticket by a relative already living in this country. As the weather has gotten colder, it is often painful to see that they don't have proper clothing for where they are headed (Buffalo, NY or Hartford, CT). Volunteers give them a bottle of water and a peanut butter sandwich. Other items passed out (as needed) are clothes, diapers, medicines, and sanitary supplies. Although this is not much, it helps to ease their journey in a small way. If you are interested in helping (in any way) you can contact me.

Pen Pals: Remember when you were a kid and had a pen pal? Maybe it was someone in another state or even more exotic, it was someone in another country. I love to get Christmas mail and the cards that come in from former foreign students my family and I hosted many years ago. One of my favorites is from Peeko Sato. We hosted her in 1983!!! Now she sends pictures of her family and two college age sons. Who do you hear from??

Do you have an 'Emergency Plan' when you travel? I thought I was pretty well informed but a recent article in the January 2020 issue of Travel & Leisure opened my eyes to things of which I need to be aware. Some suggestions were: [patientsbeyondborders.com](http://patientsbeyondborders.com), which is a medical- tourism consultancy that works with national health departments around the world to maintain a short list of facilities that meet standards of care. Another suggestion was pack your highest-limit credit card. If you need surgery, some hospitals make you pay in advance because they don't have supplies on hand. You might want to invest in Medical evacuation insurance. Make sure any plan you buy includes transportation home not just to the closest appropriate facility. Medjet Assist (\$99 for an eight day trip) will fly you to the U.S. hospital of your choice.

Our next membership meeting is Tuesday, February 4 @ **5:30**. Please make note of all the **regular** meeting dates for the this new year: April 7, June 7 (picnic), Sept. 15, Nov. 10, and Dec. 6 (Christmas party).

Reminder: All Board meetings are held from 2-4 pm in the conference room at the KROC center (All are welcome to attend). Upcoming dates are: March 8, May 3, Aug. 9, and Oct.14.

To all members: We will be looking for new officers: president, vice president, and secretary for the 2021- 2023 terms. Please let me know if you are interested in this wonderful growth opportunity.

See you in February,  
Carolyn T



January 6: Charles Tilly  
January 9: Sharon McCall  
January 19: Sharon Roehrig  
February 10: Bette Tilly

#### **A Bit of History About Birthdays and the Census**

I don't know why I have so many friends with birthdays in January, but I do. The best thing to say to a friend on their birthday is, "Oh, you are a year wiser." However, be glad you were born in the 20th century or the 21st century. If you born before that period, your birthday didn't hold much importance unless you were the Pope or a member of royalty. After the Protestant Reformation, Western cultures celebrated birthdays of royalty, Presidents, and war heroes, but common folk seldom used the occasion of their own birth for special notice. Americans rarely kept records of age, and therefore did not observe birthdays except for special rites of passage, usually from childhood to adulthood. By the mid - 1800s birthdays began to be celebrated in families, especially with children. With this being a census year, I thought you might find it interesting to know that census taking contributed to your birthday being recognized. Once we became interested in demographics and started taking a census, the date of your birth became more public than ever before. We began having birthday parties, singing, and eating cake. Not only is your birthday important, every day that I get to spend with you is a special day for me.

By Darlene Glisson



Opening Ceremony at Friendship Force Peace Park  
in San Jose, Costa Rica

### **January 2020 Journey Report**

Rick Thomas, Journey Coordinator

Beginning November 6, ambassadors from our club, four members from the Austin club, and four members from other clubs spent a week with the West Alajuela club in Costa Rica. This was a great experience for all involved, with gracious home hosts and a lot of Latin hospitality. Costa Rica was as advertised with incredible scenery and various natural attractions. The “locals” were delightful and very happy to see us. Some of us extended the journey for three days to Manuel Antonio National Park where a variety of activities were available. Rick Thomas was the journey coordinator assisted by Margaret Dixon. Five of the Memphis ambassadors will report on the trip at the February general meeting.

We have a full schedule of activities for 2020. On January 24, we have an Open World delegation from Ukraine arriving in Memphis to study healthcare reform. There will be four ambassadors and two interpreters here until Feb. 1. Our home hosts are Charlotte Hayes, John and Sharon McCall, Mary Bullard, Demetra Lawrence, and Carolyn Taylor. Rick Thomas and Shirley Kincaid are coordinating this inbound

journey. Stay tuned for announcements of activities for club members in conjunction with the Open World program.

In April, we will host the Birmingham club for a short (4-day) journey. This is a “mystery journey”, for their ambassadors will not know where they are going until they get here! There will be 12 ambassadors and as of yet no one has stepped up to be a home host. We need to pin this down at the February meeting. Rick Thomas and Shirley Kincaid are co-coordinators.

In May, our club will be traveling to Chiapas, Mexico, for a week of home stays in Tuxtla. Chiapas is a major destination due to its natural wonders, indigenous population, and archaeological sites. The intention is to add an extension (probably on the coast) to the home stay. We have approximately 10 club members expressing an interest, and twenty ambassadors can be accommodated. The Dallas club has offered to piggyback on our journey and have already signed up several members. Memphis club members need to confirm their interest as soon as possible before we run out of slots. Rick Thomas and Margaret Dixon are coordinating this journey.

Plans are underway for a domestic journey to Raleigh, NC, to reciprocate their trip here last spring. The journey is tentatively scheduled for the second week in September, and we anticipate an extension to the Outer Banks islands off North Carolina. Since they are starting to plan on their end, we need to start signing people as soon as possible. Rick Thomas is coordinating this journey.

In September, we will be hosting the Newcastle, Australia club as they travel to Huntsville, St. Louis, and Memphis. We need to start signing up home hosts and initiate planning for their visit.

Since we now have few members with experience in planning journeys, we have requested that the staff of Friendship Force International come to Memphis and present a training session on journey planning. This activity is tentatively scheduled for February and attendance should be mandatory for board members and new club members. This will be a great opportunity to find out what goes into the production of a successful journey.

## **Open World Program Leads to Journey to the Republic of Georgia**

By Rick Thomas

Last year our club hosted a delegation of health professionals from the Republic of Georgia in central Asia under the auspices of the Open World program. There were five delightful young people and a charming facilitator who were offered an excellent program showcasing the myriad of healthcare resources in Memphis and describing the challenges of providing adequate healthcare to a diverse population.

Because of the relationships that we developed with the Georgian delegation, I was invited to Tbilisi in September to facilitate a workshop for the University of Georgia’s department of public health. I conducted a two-day workshop and gave a public presentation on the third day. The University of Georgia is a relatively new (16 years) private institution with about 7,000 students. Nearly one-third of their students are

international, and most courses are taught in English. English is so widely spoken that the Georgian delegates to Memphis did not need an interpreter. My hosts arranged presentations from all divisions in the public health department and the presentation to the healthcare administration program.

My Georgian hosts Mariam and Miranda at the university could not have been more gracious. They arranged meetings with all of the delegates who came to Memphis and the facilitator. They provided a feast every day and introduced me to the range of Georgian dishes. They took time from their schedules to show me the amazing local attractions—the location where Tbilisi was founded, a Georgian Orthodox church founded in the fourth century, the old city with buildings dating back even further, and an outdoor museum that included historic buildings representing various time periods in Georgian history and various regions of the country.

I spent two nights in the home of the president of the Tbilisi Friendship Force club, and she was eager for us to bring a group to visit. Georgia is a small country—about the size of Tennessee—with only three million residents. Despite its size, it offers an incredible variety of cultures and geographic features. Its western border is the Black Sea with its various resorts. A six-hour train ride to the east takes you to the ski slopes. While a great travel opportunity in its own right, its location adjacent to Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan makes it a great jumping off point for much of central Asia.

I plan to maintain an on-going professional relationship with the Georgian delegates and will certainly be returning to the country at some point. We need to consider putting together a delegation of our own for a reciprocal visit in the near future.



Reunion with Georgia Delegates and Facilitator

**THE BEST**  
**TIMES** *The Monthly News Magazine*  
*for Active Mature Mid-Southerners*

Article Submitted by Margaret Dixon

My introduction to Friendship Force began when an acquaintance called and asked me to be her roommate on a journey to Turkey. With some reluctance I inquired about why I would want to go there and stay in someone's home for a week. She convinced me that it would be an incredible experience and afterwards we would tour around the country for 9 days.

Thus, my first "journey" was set in motion and many have followed! These journeys have provided a different way of traveling with the benefits of getting acquainted with the hosts, learning about the country, culture, food, religion, etc, while traveling with friends on a lower budget program.

The Memphis Friendship Force is a part of the Friendship Force International, based in Atlanta, GA and was started in the 1980's with the support of Jimmy Carter. It remains a cultural exchange program with over 300 clubs around the world, each one hosting, as well as traveling!

Our club usually hosts twice a year, and we try for an international journey and a domestic one. We also host young professionals from Russia for a week of learning about our medical services and government through the Rumsfeld Foundation.

In October we'll be hosting a group from the Napa Valley who will be treated to a welcome party in a member's home on the river, a Beale St. experience, a tour of Graceland, and tours of St. Jude and the Civil Rights Museum as well as dinner parties in homes.

Our club will travel to Alajuela, Costa Rica for our international journey and an extension in Manuel Antonio National Park in November. Our next domestic journey will be in Raleigh, NC. And so it goes!

Memphis Friendship Force meets on a regular basis at Shady Grove Presbyterian Church for a dinner and general meeting. The board of directors meets every other month as well. We are open to receiving new members who desire to travel or host! There's always much to be done to accomplish our goals of entertaining and forming friendships around the globe!

Our dues are \$40 a year and with that membership, one is eligible to join other clubs on their journeys if they do not fill their quota. We also plan local events and short trips of special interest.

Our most recent journey was to Bogotá, Columbia where we felt right at home since their club had visited us the year before. Therefore, with the companionship of old friends, we were able to experience the sights, like the Salt Cathedral, a colonial city, and the Bridge of Boyacá, in that distant country and learn about it from their perspective. My host was a physician who had traveled by rivers to remote regions at the beginning of her career and went into exile for a few years during the period of violence.

There's always so much to be learned and experienced in this way of travel!



A LEO was held at Caritas Village in Binghamton on Thursday, Jan.16. Ten members were present for lunch and were able to enjoy an inexpensive delicious meal. The director/financial manager gave an overview of how the center assists the community, including the homeless in the area. It was a pleasant outing and contributed to a worthy cause.

Margaret/Rick



#### Health Update by Darlene

Good news, bad news--Today, I met with Dr. Toy at Campbell Clinic. He will be doing my hip replacement. The bad news is that he is booked until mid-April. I have been put on a wait list in case someone cancels. I may also have to have a right knee replacement, but the hip has to come first. Thanks to all of you who have been patient with me during this time.

**Reminders: Please email Shirley Kincaid if you have any sunshine news.**  
[shirley@shirleykincaid.com](mailto:shirley@shirleykincaid.com)