

Friendship Force



Memphis, TN
December 1, 2025

<https://www.ffmem.com>



Memphis Friendship Force Christmas Party

Thursday, December 11, 2025

6:00 p.m.

Grissini's Italian Restaurant (Embassy Suites)

1022 S. Shady Grove Road

RSVP: sandy.martin@gmail.com

President's Greeting

What a wonderful season! Enjoy the cooler weather, holiday parties, yummy food, ballgames, board games, walks in the crunchy

leaves, hot peppermint mocha lattes, and good conversations and catch-ups with friends and family.

I hope we are all able to slow down long enough to appreciate the people who made this year better. I appreciate you so much as I have gotten to exercise at the gym with several of you, dine out with many of you at our LEO's, enjoyed hosting our ambassadors in my home and then partying with you and them at our welcome and farewell parties. I especially enjoyed being asked to play the piano which forced me to learn a few new blues pieces.

Think about it-how many wonderful moments start with a simple conversation, a quick reply or taking the time to connect? So this is me saying thank you for my two years as your president. (Am I repeating myself?) I really appreciate being part of your world, even in small ways. Before things get too busy this week, what's one thing you're grateful for this year? I'd love to hear what (or who) helped make a difference in your world. Looking forward to seeing you at the Christmas party at Grissini's, December 11. Until then,



"Keep smiling, keep shining
Knowing you can always count on
me, for sure
That's what friends are for
For good times and bad times
I'll be on your side forever more,
That's what friends are for"---

well, why don't we watch the video?



Slate of New Officers for 2026

President – Karen Bowyer

Vice President- Kathy Morgan

Secretary – Emily Vergho

Treasurer – Ray Rider

Program chair: (position to be filled)

Publicity Chair (invitations, RSVP'S): Sandy Martin

Social Chairpersons (organize LEO's, journey welcome and farewell parties, meeting food) : Shirley Kincaid, Cindy Law, and Carolyn Pierce

Newsletter Chair: Sharon McCall

Journey Coordinator: Richard "Rick" Thomas

Assistant Journey Coordinator: Karen Bowyer

Web Master: Ray Rider

Dues Increase Notice: Kathryn Gardner and Karen Bowyer

Friendship Force International (FFI) is raising dues next year. Dues will increase from \$30 per year to \$100 per year. As FFI continues to recover from the pandemic, total income remains about 23% lower than it was in 2019, and the cost of doing business continues to rise. Prior to the pandemic, FFI maintained an average annual budget of \$1.2 million. Today the operating budget is under \$850,000. Staffing has been streamlined and prudent expense management has helped FFI maintain

stability. With the dues increase FFI plans to shift from survival to growth. They are planning improvements in marketing and in the use of technology to grow membership and improve services to the members.

The Board of Directors of the FF of Memphis (Kathy Gardner, Karen Bowyer, Alice Campbell, Rick Thomas, Ray Rider, Sharon McCall, Shirley Kincaid, Sandy Martin and Carolyn and Woody Pierce) met on Sunday afternoon, November 9, to consider the dues increase. We decided to accept the dues of \$100 for FFI and \$15 for local dues. Local dues are not increasing. The dues to belong to the FF of Memphis in 2026 will be \$115.

We hope that you will pay your dues for 2026 by December 31, 2025. Some members paid their dues at the last LEO on November 13 and may now pay them at the Christmas Party on December 11. Please make your check for \$115 payable to The Friendship Force of Memphis. Thank you for keeping our Club strong and engaged in the important mission of promoting understanding across cultures. We believe that a world of friends is a world of peace.

New Journey Opportunity: Rick Thomas and Karen Bowyer



Friendship Force Veracruz is located in the city of Xalapa, Veracruz, México. Xalapa, the capital of Veracruz state, is filled with culture and history, music, and attractions to enjoy. The city is renowned as a cultural hub, thanks largely to the presence of the Universidad Veracruzana. Surrounded by rivers, springs,

streams, a natural lake, and green spaces reserved for recreation, Xalapa offers a beautiful natural setting.

DAY 1 - Ambassador Arrival

DAY 2 - Welcome Reception with the Municipal President ● Welcome lunch

DAY 3 - Visit to the Museum of Anthropology, the second most important museum in México. It houses the world's second-largest collection of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican art, as well as ethnographic exhibits showcasing the indigenous peoples of Veracruz state. ● Evening concert by the Xalapa Symphony Orchestra, considered México's oldest symphony orchestra, founded in 1929. Listening to this orchestra is a true pleasure.

DAY 4 - Tour of Xalapa's Historic Center, a place that transports you back in time with its cobblestone streets and colonial architecture.

Highlights include: ● The Metropolitan Cathedral, originally built in 1941 ● Parque Juárez, a green oasis in the city center offering panoramic views and cultural events ● Jáuregui Market, where you can breathe in the aromas of flowers and food while shopping for handicrafts ● Xallitic Magical Neighborhood, with its cobbled streets and narrow alleyways ● Callejón del Diamante, a narrow street filled with artisan vendors ● City tour aboard a tourist trolley, featuring the Paseo de los Lagos, several Universidad Veracruzana buildings, the Xalapeño Stadium, and more.

DAY 5 - Visit to Naolinco, a "Pueblo Mágico" (Magical Town) about 60 minutes from Xalapa. This charming town features well-preserved colonial architecture, cobblestone streets, and picturesque houses.

Naolinco is famous for its high-quality handmade leather footwear and clothing. You'll visit local workshops and enjoy traditional cuisine.

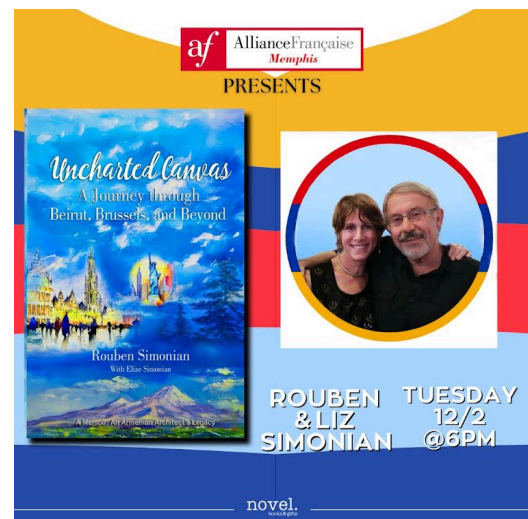
DAY 6 - Visit to La Hacienda del Lencero, a historic former hacienda offering a fascinating glimpse into colonial life in Veracruz. The property includes houses, a church, and a beautiful lake that provides spectacular views. ● Visit to Coatepec, a "Pueblo Mágico" known as the coffee capital of Veracruz. Explore coffee plantations, visit museums dedicated to coffee, mole, and orchids, and savor the rich local gastronomy. ● Farewell dinner for Ambassadors

DAY 7 - Ambassador Departure. This program is subject to Ambassador arrival and departure times. Tentative Price per person: USD270-USD300

Congratulations

Club members, Rouben and Liz Simonian have a newly published book! There will be a presentation and book signing at Novel, 387 Perkins Ext., on December 2nd at 6:00 pm.

Rouben Simonian's recently published memoir, Uncharted Canvas: A Journey through Beirut, Brussels, and Beyond, has a Memphis connection. The author, who immigrated in 1971, takes us down memory lane to past decades of the Bluff City as he settles here with pride in his adopted country. Rouben shares the inspiring story of his Armenian heritage and his transformative journey from childhood in



Beirut to a successful architectural career in America. As the son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Rouben comes of age along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. He continues his education in Brussels, encountering challenging and eye-opening adventures during Europe's counterculture years.

Rouben co-wrote the memoir with his wife, Liz, who encouraged him to share his story. All royalties from this memoir benefit the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, MA. The museum provided the authors with extensive material about Rouben's father's life, including his escape from the Genocide and his upbringing in an orphanage in Beirut.

General Meetings for 2026

As you begin to mark your calendar for 2026 please note the following dates for Friendship Force Meetings of all members. We will meet every other month starting in February on the second Thursday. Times of day will vary.

February 12

April 9

June 11

August 13

October 8

December 10

Sunshine News: Shirley Kincaid, as sunshine chair, enjoys sending cards and notes for birthdays, special occasions, and get well wishes, etc. Please let Shirley know who needs a card. shirley@shirleykincaid.com

Friendship Force Pledge: As a member of Friendship Force, I recognize that I can make a difference. I have a mission to be a friend to the people of the world. As I embark upon this adventure, I know that others will be watching. I know that through my example to my fellow citizens and the people of other nations, the cause of friendship, love and peace can be advanced. I can make a difference.



Friendship Force Song

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me;
let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, may this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

LEO Photo Gallery: Pacific Fusion Dinner, November 13, 2025

A group of around 20 Friendship Force members gathered at the Pacific Fusion restaurant in Cordova. This buffet-style dinner provided members many food options, and the service was very good! Some members elected to pay their dues for 2026 at the end of the dinner. Thanks to Carolyn Pierce and Shirley Kincaid for booking the reservation and providing a fun prize drawing.

