

Friendship Force
Changing the Way You See the World
<https://www.ffmem.com>



Memphis, Tennessee
April 1, 2026



General Membership Meeting

Thursday, April 9

6:00 p.m.

Central BBQ

4375 Summer Avenue

Memphis, TN 38122

**Program: Sarah Houston, Executive Director of Protect Our
Aquifer**

Game: International Foods Trivia

RSVP by April 6: sandy.martin@gmail.com



Sarah Houston Biography

Sarah Houston has been pedaling a passion for water communication for over ten years. Houston has a diverse background in the corporate, non-profit and academic worlds and believes everyone should know the source of their drinking water. After managing a water STEM field trip program in Austin, Texas she and her husband set out on an adventure with a purpose; through *Wander Like Water* they used bicycle touring to connect YouTube viewers from around the world with water science. While cycling down the Mississippi River, she learned of Memphis' unique water situation and diverse issues within the massive Mississippi River Valley. Houston relocated to Memphis soon after the bike tour to join the Center for Applied Earth Science and Engineering Research (CAESER) at the University of Memphis. She now holds a Masters in Earth Sciences and continues to learn, educate, and advocate for the importance of the Memphis aquifer.

President's Greeting by Karen Bowyer

I am delighted to report that we have 35 members in the Friendship Force of Memphis so far in 2026. Wendy and John Whaley have recently joined the Club. Many of us got to meet them at the well-attended and very successful Let's Eat Out at the Bayou Bar and Grill on March 12. Kathy Morgan, VP and Membership Chair, has encouraged us to invite friends to attend our events and meetings. Several prospective members/guests attended the 12th.



In this Newsletter you will see a proposed Point System for our club members to use. Please review it and bring any suggested changes to our next meeting on April 9 at 6:00 p.m. to the Central BBQ at 4375 Summer Avenue. We will vote on this Point System at this meeting . If it is approved, it will go into effect immediately and will be retroactive to January 1, 2026. The Point System will be used to determine who can go on journeys if more members are interested than hosts can accommodate.

I am very pleased that several of our members have invited us to attend events with them. Rick Thomas recently invited us to attend the film, *Natchez*, at the Crosstown Concourse theater. Sharon and John McCall invited us to join the First Baptist Church group on a Civil Rights tour. Harriet Skupin invited us to attend the Beethoven Club piano concert at Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

Harriet and others attend the concerts offered by Creative Aging. You are encouraged to order tickets and get on the mailing list: <https://www.creativeagingmidsouth.org/>. The next concert is by the Tropical Fusion Latin Band on April 8, 1:30 at the Salvation Army Kroc Center.

On April 10-12 the annual Art in the Loop Festival is being held on the Ridgeway Loop Road. This event features artists working in metal, glass, wood, clay, and fiber. Also, there will be jewelry, paintings, photography, and more. Admission is free. www.artintheloop.org

Our General Membership meeting in June will be held on June 4 rather than June 11 because of the availability of our speaker, R. Scott Williams. Scott grew up in Memphis but now lives in Union City where he serves as the CEO of Discovery Park. Before coming to Union City he was the CEO of the Newseum in Washington, DC. Scott will discuss his new book, *Townmania*, a nuanced portrait of Marcus Winchester and a larger

story of the settlers who gave Memphis its start. The meeting will be at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in their Fellowship Room in the basement. Parking is in the rear of the Cathedral on Rozelle.

Plans are about complete for the North American Conference of Friendship Force International to be held in Memphis on April 24 – 27 at the Hyatt Centric Hotel on the corner of Beale and Front Streets in downtown Memphis. So far eight of us have registered for the Conference. Those attending are Annette Bickers, Karen Bowyer, Elizabeth Brock, Kelley Funderburg, Geri Meltzer, Ray Rider, Rick Thomas, and Kathy Morgan. Please let me know ASAP if you are interested in registering.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the spectacular spring this year! Memphis always puts on a great show of beauty in March and April!

Journey Opportunities by Rick Thomas, journey coordinator

Friendship Force International: 2026 North American Conference



The Memphis club has been given the honor of hosting the 2026 Friendship Force International North American Conference. The event, scheduled for April 24-26, will involve around 200 Friendship Force members from the US, Canada and Mexico. Unlike a typical journey, participants will be housed downtown at the Hyatt Centric Hotel. The Memphis club is responsible for supporting arrangement planning, identifying speakers, scheduling excursions, preparing materials about the Memphis area, and manning the registration desk. Karen Bowyer is coordinating this event. We already have 8 Memphis members registered to attend and hope to have more.



Outbound Journey to Omaha, Nebraska

The Memphis club is scheduled for an outbound journey to Omaha, Nebraska, May 23-29. This will be a typical one-week Friendship Force journey and the 10 members participating are excited about the opportunity to see someplace new. Although Omaha has not historically been considered a travel destination, it now has a wide range of attractions for visitors. Among the planned stops are:

- Lewis and Clark Trail Museum
- Union Pacific Railroad Museum
- Joselyn Art Museum
- Pioneer Courage Park
- Durham Western Heritage Museum
- Omaha Zoo (voted #1 in one poll)
- Bertrand Steamboat Museum
- Boy's Town tour and museum
- Wildlife Safari Park

An extension will be offered after the week in Omaha that involves driving to South Dakota to visit the Badlands and Mt. Rushmore (with a stop at Ashfall Fossil Beds in Nebraska). Rick Thomas is coordinating this journey. The entire cost of the Omaha journey is around \$520, including FFI fees and Omaha club fees.

Outbound Journey to Pecs, Hungary



The Memphis club has been offered an outbound journey for early September of 2026 by the club in Pécs, Hungary (pronounced “pagh” in Hungarian and “pecks” in English). This is a rare opportunity to take advantage of international travel at a reasonable cost. This would be a typical one-week Friendship Force journey with home stays at what some consider the most charming city in Hungary. Pécs is known for its architectural landmarks. In 2010 the city was chosen (along with Istanbul and Essen, Germany) to be a European Capital of Culture. The Pécs club has not yet determined the number of ambassadors they can accept or the club fee. However, a dozen Memphis members have already expressed an interest.

An extension is typically offered for a journey of this distance, and Pécs is located a short distance from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Rick Thomas and Karen Bowyer are coordinating this journey. If you would like to join us for this journey, please contact Rick Thomas or Karen Bowyer as soon as possible to be put on the waiting list. (Note that with the turbulence in the Middle East and likely increases in gas prices there is some concern about the viability of traveling to Hungary at this time. A go/no-go decision will be made in the near future with regard to this journey.)



Other Journey Opportunities

Please explore this Journey to Guatemala: Where Mayan Tradition Meets Modern Life.

<https://friendshipforce.myshopify.com/products/26453-guatemala-where-mayan-tradition-meets-modern-life>

In future months the Memphis club will be considering outbound journeys to Canada, California and the United Kingdom. Members will be provided updates as new information becomes available.

We have also begun scheduling outings to local events and sites that require little effort on the part of members. So far this year, members have attended the lantern festival at the Memphis zoo, the program on Memphis civil rights history, a movie about Natchez, Mississippi, at the Crosstown Concourse, participated in Creative Aging events, and other activities. We are also planning a book club for Memphis members. Be on the lookout for upcoming opportunities to attend programs with other FF members.

Please note: The friendly jaunt that was planned for March to Nashville and environs unfortunately had to be cancelled. There were not enough interested members to make this trip worthwhile. Hopefully, it can be rescheduled for later this year.

Next Friendship Force Board Meeting: Hosts Sharon and John McCall, 3209 Cloar Cove, Memphis 38111. This meeting will be Saturday, May 2 at 2:00 p.m. Snacks and coffee will be provided.

Upcoming Meetings and Events for the General Membership

On April 10, 11:00 a.m., there is a Brown Bag Lunch at Germantown United Methodist Church, 2331 South Germantown Road. Enter the main entrance under the canopy on the west side of the building. Andy Pouncey, City of Germantown Historian and Former Chair of the Tennessee Historical Commission, will speak about Frances Wright and Nashoba, an Experiment to End Slavery.



On April 22, 7:00 p.m., there is a preview performance of *Noises Off*, Theatre Memphis, Tickets cost \$12.51. Order tickets at <https://www.creativeagingmidsouth.org/>

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.

Looking Ahead: General Membership Meetings

April 9

June 4

August 13 (LE0)

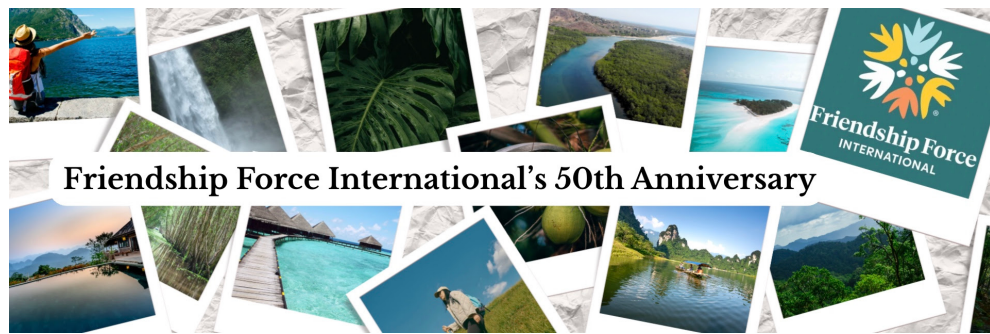
October 8

December 10

Cajun Bayou LEO Held March 12th

Around 25 of us enjoyed a LEO at the Bayou Grill in Overton Square. Members and guests were greeted by Shirley Kincaid and Carolyn Piece, our social chairs, with beautiful green beads and shamrock good luck coins. As usual there were several prizes as well!





Dear Friendship Force Members,

Many of you have been waiting for the announcement of the dates for our 50th anniversary celebration, as you being planning your journeys and travel for next year. The anniversary gathering is an important milestone for our global community, and we realize that the timing influences travel plans for some of you.

As our staff team was working on our anniversary plans, the conflict in the Middle East began to unfold. After careful consideration, we believe the most responsible course of action is to pause the final decision about our event and allow some time to see how the global situation develops. This will allow us to make the right choice for our members and avoid committing to significant venue deposits until we are confident in the timing and location. Over the next twelve weeks, we will continue evaluating our options so that we can move forward with clarity and confidence.

One decision we have made is that the 50th Anniversary celebration will be in late 2027, most likely in September or October, avoiding major national and religious holidays. This is the period in which our major global gatherings—our World Conferences—have traditionally taken place. We apologize for any inconvenience to folks hoping for a celebration earlier in the year. Events in the wider world are, of course, beyond our

control, and our priority is to make decisions that are thoughtful, safe, and in the best interests of our global membership.

Our 50th Anniversary is a once-in-a generation celebration of the friendships we have built together over five decades. We want to ensure that when we do gather, it is in a setting and at a moment when our members can travel comfortably and fully enjoy the experience. We will share another update in twelve weeks. Thank you for your understanding.

By FFI International Board of Directors

"True friends stay with you no matter the distance or time that separates you from them," Lance Reynald.



New Logo Colors

You may have noticed that the Friendship Force Logo in this newsletter is somewhat different. FFI is updating the logo with new colors that will provide a fresh and more updated look.

POINTS SYSTEM FOR THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF MEMPHIS

BI-MONTHLY REPORT FORM FOR 2026

Name: _____ Date: _____

Report for the following months of 2026: _____

Board of Directors - Points Per Year

- _____ President – 12 Points
- _____ Vice President – 8 Points
- _____ Secretary – 8 Points
- _____ Treasurer – 8 Points
- _____ Journey Coordinator - 12 Points
- _____ Assistant Journey Coordinator - 6 Points
- _____ Data Manager – 5 Points
- _____ Social Media Administrator (FFI, local website ffmem.com, WhatsApp) – 5 Points

Standing Committee Chairs - Points Per Year

- _____ Program – 6 Points
- _____ Social – 6 Points
- _____ Publicity – 6 Points
- _____ Newsletter – 10 Points
- _____ Sunshine – 6 Points

Journeys – Points Per Journey

- _____ Assistant Inbound/Outbound Coordinator per visit – 3 Points
- _____ Home Hosting – 2 Points per guest per night
- _____ Day Hosting as a driver - 2 Points per guest per day
- _____ Dinner Hosting – 5 Points
- _____ Host for Welcome or Farewell Party – 5 Points
- _____ Journey Booklet Preparation and Printing– 4 Points
- _____ Participate in an Outbound Journey of another club – 3 Points
- _____ Participate in an Independent or Special Journey –3 Points
- _____ Attend a North America Regional Conference –3 Points
- _____ Attend an International FF conference – 5 Points

Other Service Opportunities

- _____ Host Board Meeting at Member's Home – 5 Points
- _____ Organize a Day Trip or Local Activity– 3 Points
- _____ Serve as Mentor/Buddy for New Member – 3 Points
- _____ Attend Friendship Force Events* and/or Local Activity** - 1 Point each
- _____ Present a Program for a General Membership Meeting – 3 Points
- _____ Bring Prospective Members to FF Events - 1 Point for each prospective member
- _____ Your Prospective Member Joins Friendship Force – 3 Points for each new member

*Events are the following: General Membership Meeting, Board Meeting, New Member Orientation, Let's Eat Out (LEO), Friendly Jaunts, Day Trips, attendance at any Inbound Journey event

**Local activities include the following with a Friendship Force group: movie nights, concerts, theater performances, lectures, exhibits, festivals, and similar activities.

It is the Member's responsibility to submit points bi-monthly to Data Manager. Reports are due at the end of February, April, June, August, October, and December. Points earned will be retroactive to January 1, 2026.

This Points System will determine participants for travel if a journey is oversubscribed.