

Friendship Force of Cedar Rapids/Iowa City Yours in Friendship October 2010

The Friendship Force International Conference in Washington DC starts in less than two weeks, Connie and I are excited to represent FFCR/IC. Our goals: making contacts for future exchanges and promoting the Midwest (especially Cedar Rapids) to delegates from around the world. We will be involved with other Midwest leaders, promoting our part of the US in two special break out sessions. Vic and Pat Klopfenstein will also attend the conference and help spread the word. What a great opportunity to represent FFCR/IC, thank you!

Surprise, the Mystery Weekend visitors were from St. Louis. Twenty-one ambassadors reported they thoroughly enjoyed their stay in Cedar Rapids. Thanks to Dianne Pekosh and Tressa Youngbear as EDs and everyone who hosted and helped with this successful exchange.

Congratulations and gratitude to Steve Williams who lead the challenging global exchange to Azerbaijan. The members of our club who went all agree that this exchange was an adventure, the biggest cultural difference these seasoned travelers have experienced. Steve's willingness to accept and carry out this role reflects well on our club and we appreciate his work. You'll enjoy reading a summary of the trip written by a Lincoln, Nebraska couple attached to the newsletter.

We have some great news to share. Darby, our past president, was married in August. We are so happy for her, best wishes to Darby and Matt Winger.

Calendar

October 13, Wednesday, Let's Eat Out: 6pm at Hacienda las Glorias, 715 1st Ave SW, Cedar Rapids Call or email Connie Williams, 396-4747 or cmw1226@yahoo.com for reservations by October 11.

October 16-18: International Conference at Washing ton, D.C.

This is open to any Friendship Force member and gives the opportunity to see old friends, make new friends and to network with clubs from around the world. To register, go to <http://thefriendshipforce.org/> website for additional information and registration link.

November 7, Sunday: General meeting at the Clarion Hotel; Social with cash bar at 5 pm, Buffet Dinner at 5:30pm. Silent Auction, Election of Officers

Please RSVP by Nov 1st to Sandy Colton, 378-8971 or sandy1008@live.com

Menu: pork loin & sage stuffed chicken buffet, dessert & beverage. \$20/person

Don't forget to bring items for the Silent Auction! Be prepared to have an enjoyable evening!

Nominations for officers: Dave Detwiler – President elect; Dale Moore – Treasurer; John Haack - Secretary

**Change of the bylaws article 9 section 1 regarding finances will be brought up for discussion and vote at the November meeting. The following would be added
“New members joining after June 30th will pay half the annual membership**

dues for the balance of that year.” This would not apply to renewals of membership.

January 9, 2011, Sunday: General meeting, program & place to be announced

April 2011: Midwest Regional Conference in Lincoln, NE

June/July 2011: Incoming Exchange from Tokyo, Japan
Mary Stull, Exchange Director

August 26-30, 2011: FFI World Conference, Hamburg, Germany

November 2011: Outgoing Exchange to Costa Rica
Vic Klopfenstein, Exchange Director

Updates

FFCR/IC Receives Open World Award

On Sunday, September 26, Steve Williams accepted an award on behalf of our club for excellence in hosting Open World from Ambassador John O'Keefe, Executive Director of Open World. FFCR/IC was one of two organizations honored at this reception. Des Moines is currently hosting Open World judges visiting from the Ukraine.

Our club will continue to work with FFI to obtain added Open World assignments. Thanks to the many members who have made Open World successful in our club. During the recent Azerbaijan exchange, Steve renewed contact with Jeyhun Karamov, facilitator for the Open World delegation in 2009. Open World is anxious to continue contacts, so if you have contact with a former delegate, please let us know.

Annual dues are \$20 per person Please send your check to Marty Novak, Membership Chair, at 1253 Belmont Pkwy NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 Dues will be accepted at the November meeting, save a stamp!

Exchange director needed for an incoming domestic exchange with Las Vegas, May 2011. Please contact Steve Williams, Exchange Coordinator, before October 25, to apply. Email: swill1234@msn.com

Minutes from the September 26 meeting will soon be available on the website, <http://www.friendshipforcecr-ic.org/> ID is *friendshipforcecr* and password is *ff2008*.

Other Midwest Exchanges

January 13-26, 2011: Central Iowa (Ames) to La Libertad, Trujillo, Peru with Amazon Extension January 27-31. After the exchange, the group will tour Cuzco, Macchu Picchu and Lake Titicaca.

February 2011: Eastern Nebraska (Omaha) to Nor Peru, Peru

March (3rd week) 2011: Lincoln, Nebraska conducting their Sand Hill Crane Exchange

July 2011: Quad Cities to Munda Maya, Mexico

July 2011: Lincoln, Nebraska to Lethbridge, Canada

September 2011: Greater Milwaukee to Azrou, Morocco

November 2011: Minnesota-Twin Cities to South Taranaki and Kapiti Coast, New Zealand

Madison, Wisconsin to Uria of Greater Izmir, Turkey – date to be announced

As many of you expressed an interest in travel to Sweden at the September meeting, we will part with this Swedish proverb.

Fear less, hope more,
eat less, chew more,
whine less, breathe more,
talk less, say more,
hate less, love more,
and all good things will be yours.

Yours in Friendship,

Audrey & Connie

Exchange to Azerbaijan by Robert and Sara Friedman

Azerbaijan is an oil-rich country in Central Asia. Previously a Soviet Republic, it won its independence in 1992. It is bordered on the North by Russia and Georgia; to the West by Armenia; to the South by Iran and on the East by the vast Caspian Sea.

On August 30th we joined the Cedar Rapids - Iowa City club for a two-week visit to this ancient land. The make-up of our group was international, twelve from the United States (7 from The FF of Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, 2 from FF of Lincoln, 1 each from FF of Louisville, FF of Northern Illinois, and Charleston, SC), thirteen from Germany, one each from Canada, Australia, and England.

We arrived in the capital city of Baku. The Baku club is five years old and is still a work in progress. Things were unorganized at times, but this was offset by the friendly and helpful attitude of the members and the people of the country that we met on the street.

All the host families had at least one member (adult or child) that spoke English. Some of the members are English teachers. The language spoken is Azeri, which is one of the Turkic languages that constitute a language family of at least thirty five languages, spoken by Turkic peoples across a vast area from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean to Siberia and Western China. Western tourism has not yet taken a strong foothold in Azerbaijan and adults or children hawking various souvenirs will not accost you. The people are very friendly and it is perfectly safe to walk the streets alone. Whenever we took city buses, the children and young adults automatically got up and offered their seat to the elderly, pregnant, or handicapped. Some of the people attempt to try out their English with you, but most speak Azeri, Russian, and Turkish. You can, however, have a meaningful conversation with people by using sign language and having a good sense of humor.

We visited a natural history museum, with exhibits labeled in both Azeri and English. We toured the 15-century Shirvanshahs' Palace, one of the pearls of Azerbaijan's architecture. It is located in the Inner City that has preserved much of its 12th-century defensive walls. We visited the Fire Temple built atop a now-exhausted natural gas field, which once caused fires to spontaneously burn as the gas emerged from seven natural surface vents. Today, the fires are fed by gas piped in from Baku, and are only turned on for the benefit of visitors. Another site we toured was the Oil Producing Terminal in Sangachal where we not only learned about oil production but saw exhibits that exposed children to mind game puzzles. There was a display of dinosaurs and how archeologists locate them even though no dinosaurs have been found in Azerbaijan.

The last day of our Baku home stay, the Ambassadors and members of the Baku club attended a conference that consisted of 18 Azerbaijanis, all of the Ambassadors, and a couple of VIPs. The purpose was to exchange ideas with this new club. An Ambassador from each country was asked to speak about their club. As ambassadors spoke, their presentation was translated into Azeri. Most spoke about exchanges they have hosted or on which they have been Ambassadors. Steve Williams, Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, ED, and Sara represented the five U.S. clubs. Sara gave a talk about The Friendship Force of Lincoln. She specifically spoke about our philosophy dealing with recruiting and maintaining new members, our new mentoring program, and our connection with Open World. We gave a handout of our specific step-by-step approach to recruiting. Members of The Friendship Force of Rheinhessen, Germany especially appreciated receiving this item.

After being hosted a week in Baku, we set off for another week to visit the cities of Sheki, Lankaran, and Masalli. These are all old cities and former stops along the ancient Silk Road trade route. We were accompanied on the trip by the club President, Vice-President, and Secretary, all of whom spoke English. There were also two teenagers that spoke English.

In Sheki we walked around the Market for a couple of hours. What made it a fun experience were the vendors and the people who wanted to talk about where we were from. Many allowed us to take pictures of them while some had us taste their products. Most items we have in the U.S. but conditions were different in Sheki; we saw slaughtered animals hanging in the market. We also visited the History Museum and the Museum of Applied Art.

In Lankaran we toured a museum that had been the home of a military hero, Isa Khan's palace and the Carpet Museum Gift Shop. This last location was substituted because the silk factory was closed since it was the last day of the Ramadan celebration. We spent an hour at the Caspian Sea because one of the Germans wanted to swim in the sea and she did in Sara's bathing suit! The rest of the group had not brought swimming attire so they walked the rocky, black sand beach or sat in the shade talking.

In Masalli the parents of the club's president prepared a traditional dinner for us. We also toured a factory where they were making laminated furniture as well as a brick factory. These factories were started after the country's independence from Russia. We were told that they did well because the owners sought advice from non-Russian countries. We visited a canning factory where they were processing pickles. The women put spices in the jars and then sent the jars to the next group of women who added the cucumbers. The work was done by women standing or sitting in groups rather than utilizing an assembly line as we noted in the other two factories. We were able to taste the pickles and they were delicious!

Housing arrangements differed with each host some having both an indoor bathroom and a warm shower (warm water was only available during limited hours). Others had their facilities in the next building. Some were lucky enough to have air conditioning in at least one room of the apartment as they were having a hot spell of weather. Some of us were in 6 floor walkups while others were lucky not to have to make the daily climb. Some hosts ate with the Ambassadors while other just served them. Some hosts insisted that the Ambassadors have the best accommodations while others put up folding beds with thin mattresses. Some had drinkable water while others had to buy water; all part of experiencing a different culture.

After leaving Baku, housing arrangements differed again. Believing we wanted host families, they had made "arrangements" for us to stay in "guest houses" which were more like male and female dorms of 15 people some with cots with one bathroom either indoors or down the steps outside the home.

There were some adventurous moments this week trying to order certain foods by only using sign language. What made the trip interesting were the people on the streets or wherever we went who wanted to "talk" and whom we communicated with using signs, gestures, smiles and handshakes. Those who spoke English were eager to practice. All wanted to come to the U.S. For example, one day we were walking back to our apartment and sat to rest in a park. Two men looked like they wanted to talk. They spoke little English. Next to them was an older couple that were listening and watching intently while across the way two-college age men appeared eager to join the group. Finally one of them came over. He said he had decided the only way to learn and practice what he had been taught in college was to approach anyone speaking English. He became the interpreter for our discussion that lasted about a half hour. Another man we met took us to an internet café and asked if he could email us to practice; we await his email. Wherever there was dancing in a park or a party, we were welcomed into the group. The other wonderful thing was the relationships we made with the people from the other countries who were part of the exchange. We shared ideas, customs, and even our rooms.

Our farewell party was held at an outdoor restaurant on the shore of the Caspian Sea, and the main course was fresh Sturgeon. Early next morning we set out for what was to be a very long day of flying.