



**friendship force**  
CEDAR RAPIDS-IOWA CITY

Calendar of Events

- January 21**      **General Meeting  
(Proposed date  
TBD)**
- Feb 25**            **World Friendship  
Day**
- March 15-23**    **Open World-Kosovo**
- Summer 2024**   **All Iowa Picnic**
- July 19-22**        **Inbound from Mil-  
waukee WI**
- August 19-26**    **Out going Journey to  
Edmonton, Canada**
- Late Sept or  
Early Oct**         **Incoming Journey  
Willamette Valley  
OR**
- Oct 7-9**            **Super Regional Con-  
ference Milwaukee**
- Oct 9-12**         **Outbound Journey to  
Milwaukee**
- 2024**                **Possible Journey to  
Kosovo**

**CEDAR RAPIDS-IOWA CITY  
FRIENDSHIP FORCE CLUB**

[www.friendshipforcecr-ic.org](http://www.friendshipforcecr-ic.org)

Follow us on Facebook:  
Cedar Rapids- Iowa City Friendship Force

**January 2024**

President's Message

Happy New Year to all! Let's resolve to make it an exciting and fulfilling one. I've barely had time to think about resolutions, which could mean it's time to take a breath before charging into what will be a busy year. But there's no time for that! Because Iowa weather is typically cold and unpredictable and many of our members have headed south in search of warmer temperatures, and less snow, we've decided to hold our first General meeting of the year on Zoom. Our guest will be Allison Lindsey, from Friendship Force International's Club Support team. You may have read about Allison's harrowing accident at the World Conference last October. She'll speak about her experiences with travel insurance. We've also asked her to talk about FFI's role in establishing a new club in Kosovo. At press time, we're still working on a confirmed date, but hope that it will be January 21. We'll send out a Sign-up Genius when everything is settled. It should be a fascinating discussion, so bring your questions!

We have reluctantly accepted the resignation of our secretary, Mary Carson. The internet connection at her home is unstable, producing speech that captured only about every 5th syllable. We greatly appreciate her willingness to serve but understand the impossibility of the task with such a poor signal. In her place, Nadine Stark has agreed to become our new secretary. We are grateful for both women who offered to help steer our local ship.

Mark your calendars for World Friendship Day, which we will celebrate on February 25. We'll add details about time and place in next month's newsletter. Until then, find someplace warm to be—even if it's in your jammies at home—and get ready for another year of meeting new friends as well as treasuring the already familiar.

In friendship, *Nancy York 2024 Club President*

## Annual dues for 2024

If you haven't yet paid your 2024 club dues please mail a check (\$45 per person) to:

**Friendship Force CR/IC**

**PO Box 1001**

**Cedar Rapids, IA, 52401**

## Up Coming Club Events

The club board is busily working on setting up several events for this year. We will be having a general meeting with guest speaker Lindsey Allison from FFI tentatively set for **January 21**. Look for a Signup Genius or blast email for details.

World Friendship Day will be celebrated **February 25**. Look for details in the next Newsletter.

Our club will be hosting the **All Iowa FF Picnic** this year. The date has not been set but will be this summer. More detail will be sent out at a later date.

An opportunity to go to **Kosovo** is being planned.

We have incoming friends from **Milwaukee and Oregon**, outgoing journeys to **Edmonton Canada and Super Regional Conference and Post Conference to Milwaukee**.

All this plus **LEOs and Club hikes** mean another fun, full year with your Cedar Rapids/Iowa City FF Club.

## BLOG BY DIANA NOKAJ FROM KOSOVA

Thank you Connie & Friendship Force International!

I met [Connie Williams](#) last year in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She was the ... organizer for the December 9-17 Open World Journey to Iowa. I learned through her and other members about the mission of Friendship Force, what it really means, and how dedicated they are to their community.

In July 2023 ...Friendship Force International... invited three members of the perspective Kosovo Friendship Force group, to attend the conference on full scholarship, a rare opportunity that I couldn't refuse. So, without hesitating, I said let's do this. Two months later I got my Croatian visa approved and on the 2nd of October, together with two other members Majlinda and Rozafa, we drove to the Croatian coast. It has been a fantastic journey, to say the least. If it wasn't for Connie, this wouldn't have happened. So thank you, Connie...



**2023 Friendship Force World Conference** - ...The Friendship Force World Conference was designed to increase interaction, engagement, collaboration, connectivity, and community, in a fun and safe social environment. There were 19 exciting workshop sessions, cultural presenters, and the usual opportunities for learning and sharing. We met people from 28 different countries and it was an honor to represent our small country and I made sure our flag was part of the spectacular conference.

***Starting January 1st, 2024, Kosova will be visa-free! Isn't it wonderful news?***

The Gala Banquet — was the highlight... The closing ceremony included entertainment, words from the CEO and host, and a traditional Friendship Force farewell. Dinner, live music, a lot of dancing and interactions. I received endless compliments on the red hat and embroidery shirt I was wearing. It was a wonderful evening filled with joy and laughter!

Everyone was so welcoming from day one, including the FFI staff and the participants. We also took a lot of pictures with our lovely friends from the US, Japan, Australia, Belgium, South Africa, etc. Our next goal is to establish a Friendship Force Club in Kosova. **We want people from everywhere to visit our beautiful land, experience the warm hospitality of our people, and try our delicious traditional foods.** <https://medium.com/@diana.nokaj/friendship-sun-dubrovnik-3476f9b1d413>

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Below is an excerpt from Jeremy's message on the International Website

### **From the Desk of the CEO**

Recently I attended a small event aimed to raise money and awareness for a new initiative being launched to bring the local international community together. Highlighting the event was the story of a friend who was granted asylum in the United States after a long and treacherous journey from Bosnia after being forced to evacuate during the war in the early 1990s. The room was silent as this accomplished University Medical Doctor talked about her Bosnian hometown being thrown into turmoil. Her town council hung onto the hope of brokered peace too long, while the bridge - the only way out of her city - was bombed and troops streamed into her town, systematically murdering her neighbors and friends in their homes. Her decision to cross the bridge that day saved her life and marked the beginning of a lifelong struggle to reconcile this experience with her new home and new life now here in the United States.

Her story of overcoming was inspirational, but it also served as a reminder that when we celebrate other cultures and people, we are also acknowledging their individual stories and lives. Going to another country is only the first step in our journey to truly understand the world around us. Every step beyond that is one step further away from the headlines and history books, and one step closer to truly understanding other people. For Friendship Force, this kind of story is a reminder of what we are about and why our journeys are making such a great impact.

At this very moment, wars continue between Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia, and in a dozen other countries receiving far less media coverage. As we finish 2023, let us try not to get swept up into biased headlines. Instead, let us remember that within the context of these tragedies are the stories of real people, just like us.

My sincerest thanks to each of you who hosted, traveled, led and coordinated journeys as a part of pursuing Friendship Force's mission. My thanks to the International Board of Directors and the FFI staff for setting direction and making sure our members and clubs were supported along the way. Happy holidays and see you all in the new year!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremi".

Jeremi Snook  
President and CEO  
Friendship Force International

## Open World-Kosovo March 15-23

Open World, run by COIL (Congressional Office of International Leadership) has accepted our proposal for a program on the topic of "Economic Development of Small and Medium Sized Municipalities". Content for the program can consist of meetings, panel discussions, job shadowing, lectures, community activities...anything pertaining to the top-



ic. There are 5 delegates, young professionals working in this field and a facilitator, usually from USAID(US Agency for International Development). If an interpreter is needed to assist with English skills, one will be assigned. Many times, the facilitator also acts as interpreter. At this point, we do not have bios on any of delegates or facilitator.

The group will arrive in Washington, DC, on March 13, getting some background information on the US government. They will fly into Cedar Rapids (CID) on March 15 and leave on March 23. While in Iowa, one day will be spent in Des Moines, where we will tour the Capitol, then visit with Fatmir Rrahmanaj and staff at the Kosovo Consulate. In addition to 28 hours of required content, there will be social opportunities to network and be hosts our guests. We will show the group Iowa hospitality, they will be interested in our culture as well.

If you have ideas, contacts or associates who might be interested in the planning and execution of this program, please let us know.

Connie Williams [cmw1226@yahoo.com](mailto:cmw1226@yahoo.com)

Christine Allen [callenivy@gmail.com](mailto:callenivy@gmail.com)

Judy Frascht-Miner [jjbm526@aol.com](mailto:jjbm526@aol.com)





# Journey Calendar by Judy Frascht-Miner

**“SIGN UP SOON”** if you are interested in joining a journey. Say **YES** to getting involved in our journeys, even if in a small way. There are so many ways to be involved whether you travel on a journey, help host visitors ( in home stay/home dinner/day host/transportation), participate in planning, or help with food in some way. It takes a village! Don't wait to be asked, contact me and discuss options: Judy Frascht-Miner [jjbm526@aol.com](mailto:jjbm526@aol.com) 319-540-1701

**MARCH 13th 2024-OPEN WORLD WITH KOSOVO - Connie Williams** is leading the planning committee

**JULY 19-22, 2024— Shared Inbound from Milwaukee** — The Quad Cities along with us, Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, will host Milwaukee. The journey will be divided between the two locations. Patty Potter is our Host Coordinator.

**Volunteers are needed for the planning committee, home hosting, day hosting, and dinner hosting.** Please contact Patty [pattyspotter1001@gmail.com](mailto:pattyspotter1001@gmail.com) or myself [jjbm526@aol.com](mailto:jjbm526@aol.com) if interested.



**AUGUST 19-26 2024 Outbound to Edmonton** — Jerry and Carol Burke will be the Host Coordinators. If you would like to join the journey please let Jerry and Carol or myself know soon. It is filling up fast. Jerry and Carol Burke, [jbcburke@yahoo.com](mailto:jbcburke@yahoo.com) or Judy Frascht-Miner,

**LATE SEPTEMBER/EARLY OCTOBER 2024 Incoming from Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley**— If you would like to be part of the planning of this incoming Journey contact Judy Frascht-Miner, [jjbm526@aol.com](mailto:jjbm526@aol.com)



**OCTOBER 9-12TH— Outbound to Milwaukee.** We have been invited to stay in Milwaukee a few extra days after the North American Regional Conference

**I look forward to traveling with many of you soon!**

# 2023 Cedar Rapids/Iowa City FF Officers

## **President**

Nancy York 319-929-8208 [stampingtonancy@gmail.com](mailto:stampingtonancy@gmail.com)

## **Past President**

Patty Patter 319-551-519 [pattyspotter1001@gmail.com](mailto:pattyspotter1001@gmail.com)

## **President-Elect**

Shirley Rosencrans 319-462-4132 [saroscncrans@yahoo.com](mailto:saroscncrans@yahoo.com)

## **Treasurer**

Sharon Bowers 319-533-2462 [sharonbowers533@gmail.com](mailto:sharonbowers533@gmail.com)

## **Secretary**

Nadine Stark 319-530-6535 [cnwstark@gmail.com](mailto:cnwstark@gmail.com)

## **Journey Coordinator**

Judy Frascht-Miner 319-540-1701 [jjbm526@aol.com](mailto:jjbm526@aol.com)

## **Activities Coordinator**

Connie Williams [cmw1226@yahoo.com](mailto:cmw1226@yahoo.com) 319-396-4747

## **Communications**

Mary Stull 319-393-6254 [mcdstull@aol.com](mailto:mcdstull@aol.com)

## **Membership**

Carol Burke 563-929-6067 [jbcburke@yahoo.com](mailto:jbcburke@yahoo.com)

## **Directors at Large**

Christine Allen [callenivy@gmail.com](mailto:callenivy@gmail.com) 319330-3536

Joan Lacayo 319-551-4725 [jmtlacayo@gmail.com](mailto:jmtlacayo@gmail.com)