

CEDAR RAPIDS/IOWA CITY FRIENDSHIP FORCE CLUB

OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to October! Octo means eight, yet October is the 10th month of our calendar. Originally it was the 8th month, but changes were made, January and February were added, but the month name remained the same. This is the month that many will drive to see the colorful leaves. It is the month of the harvest moon. It is also the month that we are going to show the members what a wonderful trip we had in Peru. Mark your calendar for Sunday afternoon Oct 18th at Hiawatha from 12:30-3PM.

See you in October

Stephanie Schulte 2026 Club President

CALANDER OF EVENTS

October 16	Club Zoom Trivia 7:00PM
October 18	General Meeting Hiawatha Public Library 12:30PM
November 8	Annual Meeting Lawrence Anamosa Community Center 1PM
May 2027	Inbound Journey from NEW HAMPSHIRE SEACOAST
June 2027	Outbound Journey to SPOKANE
Aug/Sept 2027	Outbound Journey to GEORGIA/AZERBAIJAN
Sept 2027	FFI 50 th Anniversary Conference
2027	Possible Open World
2028	Possible Outbound Journey to Ghana

General Meeting October 18th

Hiawatha Public Library



Twelve FF members went to Peru under the direction of our leader, Christine Allen. She prepared 3 weeks for us to enjoy the country including 5 days in Lima, 7 days on the Amazon, and 5 days in Cusco and Machu Picchu. We are going to show some of our pictures to let you see what we saw in this beautiful country. The first week was the coast and large city. The second week was cruising up and down the Amazon and tributaries in the rain forest. The third week was in the desert area. WOW, not often you have the chance to see three different parts of one country. Come to Hiawatha Public Library at **12:30pm on Sunday October 18th** to get a chance to see some of what we saw. Questions will be welcome.



ZOOM TRIVIA NIGHT

The next Trivia Night will be **October 16 at 7:00 PM**. Look for the email invitation to participate. If you have never joined us, give it a try. It is a fun time with friends, and you might just learn something.



Annual Meeting of the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City FFC

The date, time and place of the annual meeting of the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City FFC have been set. It will be at the **Lawrence Anamosa Community Center, 600 East Main St, Anamosa, IA 52205. The date is November 8 at 1PM.** There will be wonderful catered chicken, mashed potatoes & gravy, green beans, coleslaw, rolls & butter from Sally's on Broadway. The cost will be \$20.00. During the meeting election of officers will be held.

The following is a list of those nominated for the elected offices.

President	Patty Potter
President Elect	Sandy Meyer
Treasurer	Tom Hess
Secretary	Marilyn Bengel

The following are the people on the board and the position they have agreed to fill.

Journey Coordinator	Gretchen Dixon
Activities Coordinator	Shirley Rosencraz
Communications	Lynda Bordwell
Membership	Barb Steggall
Director at Large	TBD

Journey to Lima, Peru and Beyond



On the morning of August 24, 2026, twelve Cedar Rapids-Iowa City Friendship Force ambassadors, under the leadership of Christine Allen, boarded American Airlines planes bound for Lima, Peru, a city of approximately 11 million people, to meet our host families. We were about to experience the culinary capital of South America, along with its rich culture and welcoming people. Lima sits on steep cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It is a desert city that receives about half an inch of rain each year, yet it has surprisingly high humidity and often experiences misty, gray skies. The city has lovely parks and street medians filled with trees and plants that are drought-tolerant and adapted to the ocean fog. Kris Warford-Henry helped us communicate because she speaks Spanish. After being greeted by some of our hosts, we traveled by bus through the sprawling metropolis to meet our very welcoming hosts, who took us to our residences for the week.



Vicky, a 74-year-old civil engineer working for Peru's civil defense agency, and her 19-year-old niece were my hosts. They lived an hour or two from our destinations, so I experienced the challenges of Lima's traffic firsthand. Ride-share drivers skillfully navigated bumper-to-bumper traffic, with motorcycles squeezing between cars just inches apart. The traffic was unbelievable, and fewer than 1% of the drivers were women. Our phone translation apps were extremely helpful in communicating.

From Vicky, I learned how seriously El Niño was affecting Peru and how it had contributed to flooding in Lima. She was also working emergency hours because of serious earthquakes that primarily affected poorer areas to the south. She planned to retire in January. Apparently, retiring at age 75 is not unusual. Karina was waiting for the results of her university entrance exams - education is important. I also learned that Peru's population is a blend of Indigenous people (45%), Mestizo people (37%), Europeans, Africans descended from the past slave trade, and people of Chinese and Japanese descent who were brought to the country as workers and treated poorly.

On our first day in Lima, we explored Miraflores, an upscale area with a lovely walk along the Malecón, a series of interconnected



parks overlooking the Pacific Coast that extends 14 miles in Lima. The highlight of the walk was Love Park, which features a large kissing sculpture that several of our couples happily imitated. At lunch we learned about toasting with Pisco Sours - Yum! Later, we visited Barranco, the city's arts district.

On the second day, we visited the Historic Center to see the cathedral and



several lovely museums. On the third day, we toured Real Felipe Fortress, a massive 18th-century Spanish fort built to defend the port and Lima from pirates. On the fourth day, we visited the beautiful Larco Museum. That afternoon, we enjoyed Brisas del Titicaca, a cultural center and theater where we had a Peruvian lunch, watched traditional folklore performances, and enjoyed a wonderful band. Everyone had the opportunity to dance the afternoon away. What fun!

Our final day included a lovely catered farewell dinner, along with, of course, more dancing. Our hosts took us to the airport, where we sadly said our goodbyes.



First Add-On Trip: The Peruvian Amazon

Our first add-on trip gave us the opportunity to experience the Peruvian Amazon aboard the PaPerla cruise boat and visit the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve. We began by flying to Iquitos, a city in the northern jungle with a population of about 300,000 that is accessible only by plane or boat. Tuk-tuks are the main form of



transportation around town. As expected, the temperature and humidity were high and uncomfortable.

We saw pink and gray river dolphins, several kinds of monkeys, many birds, and caimans. We also tried our hand at fishing for piranhas. We visited a female shaman who had studied in the jungle for eight years, living on a diet of fish and plantains. She now lives with her family, including her three children. In Peru's Amazon area are small "settlements" with house built on stilts to stay safe with the seasonal river levels. They are nomadic people of different ethnic groups having their own languages, moving as the river changes. We willingly bought their unique crafts.



We helped transfer eggs from yellow-spotted Taricaya turtles to an artificial beach, where they could be kept safe until the hatchlings were ready to be released into protected areas. This effort helps protect the turtles from poachers. At the Pilpintuwasi Butterfly Farm, we released butterflies with some being raised for international sale. We also planted trees at another site.

The boat offered excellent food,

wonderful dance music, amazing staff, and knowledgeable, wonderful guides.



Second Add-On Trip: Cusco and Machu Picchu



For our second add-on trip, we flew back to Lima and then continued to the lovely town of Cusco, high in the Andes. We stayed in the Sacred Valley for a couple of days to acclimate to the altitude before traveling to the Machu Picchu area to hike and explore the ancient Inca citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

if they spit.

With the help of a remarkable and knowledgeable guide, we learned so



much about Inca history and Lore.



He thought we worked well together as a group, much like a family. The biodiverse cloud forest ecosystem was truly gorgeous.

Returning Home

We flew back to Lima and had the opportunity to see the ancient pyramid of Huaca Pucllana before heading to the airport to leave Peru.

It was quite an adventure and a wonderful learning experience. Along the way, we met so many wonderful people and experienced the rich culture, history, and natural beauty of Peru. It was a trip we will always remember. –

**Come to the October 18 General Meeting
for more information on this fabulous journey**

FFI Midwest Regional Report

There are several items from the Midwest report that affect all of us.

First is Allison being no longer with FFI. Her position was communications and there is a hiring freeze until January. That means it will take longer to get answers. In fact, you will now need to leave voicemail and FFI will return your call as soon as possible.

Also there still is not a date for the 50th anniversary in Porto. It is sometime in August or September. Lauren Cline is the new support for Asia.

Currently there is no support personnel for Europe, Africa or the US. FFI is still pushing for each member to go online to renew their membership.

Remember your renewal is one year from the date you renewed this year.

FFI wants all clubs to add their journeys to the Journey Marketplace.

Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) Report

The following SWOT report was prepared by Jim Steggall, Mary Stull and Sandra Meyer.

The #1 strategic planning priority for the Club is Membership, Recruitment and Retention. The short term (90 day) specific action is to identify resources and uses to prepare a CR-IC marketing video.

The purpose of the video is to highlight the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City area and testimonial from our Club leaders. We will put together a summary of the topics to be included. A local videographer will be hired to assemble and publish the video.

Please let Jim know if you would like to be part of this effort, **(319) 651-1092**

STRENGTHS– internal, what we’re good at:

1. Hosting – both international and domestic guests

2. Willing to travel – internationally and domestically
3. Willing to participate in FFI events – regional Zoom meetings; annual regional meetings
4. Flexible in scheduling – open to hosting and traveling at various times during the year
5. Communications- newsletter, website, board minutes, Sign-up Genius
6. Knowledge- diversity of experience
7. Commitment to the mission- cultural exchange

OPPORTUNITIES – external – what could help us:

1. More international hosting opportunities
2. Leadership development of future board members
3. Include many members in Journey activities
4. Reaching out to younger groups/demographics
5. Prepare a CR-IC marketing video

OUR #1 PRIORITY (circle below)

- Membership; recruitment and retention
- Host families and /or journeys
- Leadership, succession and/or burnout
- Mission, identity and relevance
- Something else entirely

ONE SPECIFIC 90-DAY ACTION WE COULD TAKE-

Identify resources and uses to prepare a CR-IC marketing video_____

WEAKNESSES- internal, what we struggle with

1. Recruiting and maintaining a diversity of members- people with a variety of interests and flexibility in scheduling

2. Identifying new board members
3. Continue to expand footprint to include Iowa City members

THREATS – external – what could hurt us

1. Political climate in the US, which makes FFI members reluctant to come here
2. Political climate in the world which makes FFI members reluctant to travel
3. Continued lack of support from FFI, including dues increase

Journey Calander by Gretchen Dixon

To get involved contact Gretchen Dixon Gretchen

1218@gmail.com 319-491-6123

May 20TH-27TH 2027 - INBOUND from NEW HAMPSHIRE SEACOAST

#27312 Christine Allen is Host Coordinator. More specific info will be coming. If you are interested in this journey contact Christine callenivy@gmail.com. 319-330-3536

June 22ND- 29TH 2027 - OUTBOUND to SPOKANE #27305 Marilyn Bengel is the Ambassador Coordinator. More specific info will be coming. If you are interested in this journey contact Marilyn lbengel@southslope.net 319-540-2114

AUG/SEPT 2027 - OUTBOUND TO GEORGIA/AZERBAIJAN - Mary Ann and Larry Nelson are the Ambassador Coordinators. Initial Contacts have been made, and more specific info will be coming. If you are interested in this journey, contact Larry or Mary Ann. mrsmanelson@gmail.com 319-899-2681 or mrlwnelson@gmail.com 319-362-8078