



friendship force  
WESTERN  
NORTH CAROLINA

# Mountain Friends

Volume 26, Issue 3 April/May 2026

Diane Jennette and Dick Weaver, editors

## President's Message / Tessa Levizon

Dear Members,

Let's embrace the sunshine and the chance to shake off those cozy blankets. Get ready for more fun, fresh activities, and the occasional "oops, I thought that was a flower!" As we embark on another exciting season together, I want to emphasize the importance of your involvement in our club's committees. Your preferences, recently published in our newsletter, highlight the diverse talents and passions within our group.

Let's make the most of this opportunity to connect and collaborate! I encourage you to dive into our upcoming activities and events. Together, we can create experiences that surpass even the best customer service—because we have the expertise and enthusiasm to make it happen.

Let's keep our club vibrant and thriving! I can't wait to see what we accomplish together.

Warm regards,  
Tessa

## Upcoming Journeys 2026 / Susan Harvey

Ottawa, Canada *OUTBOUND*: June 7 – 14, 2026,  
Coordinators: Ellen Brazauskas, Nancy Wood

Napa, Sonoma, CA *OUTBOUND*: September 17 – 23,  
2026, Coordinator: Susan Harvey

Greater Orlando, FL *INBOUND*: Oct 6 – 12, 2026,  
Coordinator: Harriet Hilton

When Journey applicants exceed the number of spaces available, the process for selecting Ambassadors is described in FFWNC Policies and Procedures.

[Ambassador Selection Procedures](#)

## Calendar at a Glance

### April

**4/14 (Tue) - Board Meeting** 10 - 11:30am – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville

**4/15 (Wed) - Happy Hour** 4:30 – 6pm Mills River Brewery, 336 Banner Farm Rd, Mills River (special date due to conflicts on 4/16)

**4/16 (Thu) - Pass the Spoon** 11:30am hosted by Ellen Brazauskas at Khao Thai Cuisine, 2145 Hendersonville Rd., Arden, RSVP to Ellen by 4/14

**4/24 (Fri) - Book Club** 1:30pm – *Miss Brenda and the Loveladies* by Brenda Spahn hosted by Larry Harvey

### May

**5/12 (Tue) - Board Meeting** 10 - 11:30am – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville

**5/17 (Sun) - General Meeting** 3 - 5pm – brown bag, Middleton Place Clubhouse, 2001 Middleton Pl, H'ville Be on the lookout for an email blast from Kay Manley for possible time change.

**5/21 (Thu) - Happy Hour** 4:30 – 6pm - location TBD. Be on the lookout for an email blast from Kay Manley on location.

### June

**6/2 (Tue) - Board Meeting** 10 - 11:30am – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville, rescheduled from 6/9

**6/8 - 6/14 Outbound Journey Ottawa**

**6/18 (Thu) - Happy Hour** 4:30 – 6pm - location TBD. Be on the lookout for an email blast from Kay Manley on location.

**(???) - Pass the Spoon** 11am - hosted by the April winner –location TBD. Be on the lookout for an email blast from Kay Manley on date, time and location.

## Pass the Spoon Lunch / Ellen Brazauskas

The "April Pass the Spoon" will be on **Thursday April 16** at Khao Thai Cuisine at 2145 Hendersonville Rd Arden, NC. Sitting will start at 11:30 am. If you are coming from Hendersonville on Hwy. 25 it is the 1st left after Post 25 Restaurant. There will be a large sign in Blue that says Skyland Springs, and My Eye MD. Please email Ellen by 4/14 if you are coming so she can reserve the correct number of seats.

## Quarterly Book Club / Harriet Hilton

The next meeting is at 1:30pm on **Friday April 24** at Larry Harvey's house. We will read **Miss Brenda and the Loveladies** by Brenda Spahn, which is about previously incarcerated women and their journeys and struggles to succeed once released.

All FFWNC members are welcome to join this book club. If interested, contact Harriett Hilton.

## Monthly Happy Hour / Karen Brown

FFWNC will welcome spring with our Happy Hour on **Wednesday April 15** at 4:30 pm (special date due to conflicts on 4/16). We will meet at Mills River Brewery located at 336 Banner Farm Rd. Mills River. The group will look for an outside table, weather permitting! Come join the fun and let's share some time together! **NOTE:** The Happy Hour will go back to the **third Thursday** each month beginning on May 21. Be on the lookout for an email blast from Kay Manley on location.

## Club Member Birthdays

### April

- 2 Susan Gaston
- 20 Kay Manley and Jack Mullen

### May

- 1 Dick Weaver
- 20 Gary Ader

### June

- 8 Harriet Hilton
- 14 Teri Kayne
- 18 Ellen Brazauskas
- 24 Tessa Levizon

## Meet Our Newest Member

### Michelle Davis



I grew up in New England. I have had the good fortune of being able to travel to many places. When my children were younger, I took in foreign exchange students (South Korea, Spain, Norway) as a way to expose them to different cultures. I took them to Quebec and England to immerse them in a foreign language and culture as well. I've always been fascinated with different cultures and ways of living, thinking, and being. I worked in contracting work for the Navy and DOD before and after active duty as a P-3 sonar tech. I graduated with a Bachelors in Organizational Communications/ Public Relations. I had a wedding business in NH, and as a Justice of the peace performed ceremonies for many different venues. I love being active and outside, being in nature. I volunteer at Warrior Canine Connection training dogs to become service dogs, and at Blue Ridge Humane Society, spending time caring for their dogs too. Yes, I'm a huge dog person. I'm heading to Portugal this April with EF tours for 10 days. And now that I'm retired, I'm ready to travel the world. **We welcome you, Michelle!!**

## May General Meeting

The next general meeting will be held on **Sunday, May 17** from 3 - 5pm at the Middleton Place Clubhouse, 2001 Middleton Place, H'ville. This is NOT a potluck, but feel free to bring snacks. Beverages will be provided.

## 2026 FFWNC Board Members

**President** - Tessa Levizon

**President-Elect** - Vacant

**Past President** - Vacant

**Secretary** - Kay Manley

**Treasurer** - Susan Harvey

**Directors 2024-26 Cohort**

Susan Gaston, Marti Wilmering

**Directors 2025-27 Cohort**

Sue Davis, Larry McGaughy

**Directors 2026-28 Cohort**

Dick Weaver (new)

Vacant

## Membership Focus / Dick Weaver

The membership committee has narrowed our focus to three areas for 2026: **identifying** potential members, **sharing** our story, and mentoring those who join through an onboarding program. Four new members have joined so far this year, and our goal is to recruit at least ten more!

**You can help** by identifying friends who might relate to our mission to promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people. Those who

- like the challenge and excitement of new people, places, and experiences.
- believe that friendship among people of different nations and cultures can make the world more peaceful.
- have a curiosity about the world and enjoy learning about other cultures and ways of life.

**Are you willing to identify at least one potential member this month?** It's easy - just submit their name and let us do the rest! [Prospective New Member Referral Form](#). You can start by sharing [What is Friendship Force?](#) with a friend.

## Regularly Scheduled Club Events

**Board Meetings** - usually held on the second Tuesday of each month, **except June 9 meeting will be on June 2**

**General Meetings** - usually held on the third Sunday of odd months, **except Sept. 19 meeting will be Oct. 11**

**Annual Picnic** – usually held on the second Saturday in July with the general meeting.

**Book Club** - usually meets quarterly on the fourth Friday (Jan, Apr, Jul, Oct).

**Happy Hour** - usually meets at 4:30 pm on the third Thursday of each month at a local brewery or winery. **It will be held on Wednesday, April 16 due to a conflict with other FFWNC events.**

**Holiday Party** – usually held the second Sunday in December

**Pass the Spoon (lunch)** - usually held on even months; dates and hosts vary.

## Your Feedback is Important to Us!

We want to make our club more responsive to members but need your help. [FFWNC Suggestion Box](#)

## Committee Assignments 2026

### Standing Committees

Bylaws/ Policy & Procedures – Dick Weaver, Terri Kayne, Jan Partin

Communications - vacant

- Email Blasts - Kay Manley
  - Publicity – Marlene Beggs, Karen Brown
  - Newsletter – Diane Jennette (chair), Marlene Beggs, Pat Malinak, Dick Weaver, Marti Wilmering
  - Social Media
    - FFWNC Website – Dick Weaver, Sabrina Pittillo
    - FFWNC Facebook – Dick Weaver, Marti Wilmering,
    - FFI Website – Tessa Levizon, Susan Harvey, Dick Weaver
  - Photographer – Diane Colvin, Karen Brown
- Journey – Susan Harvey, Larry McGaughy, Jan Partin
- Membership - Dick Weaver (chair), Marlene Beggs, Susan Gaston, Harriett Hilton, Margie Weaver
- Nominating - vacant until Summer 3-5 members, 1 person has stepped up for now.

### Other Committees

Archive – Chuck Elston, need 1 more

Grant - Ellen Brazauskas, Ivan Beggs, Sabrina Pittillo

Social Activities - vacant

- Book Club – Harriett Hilton, Sue Davis, Terri Kayne
- Happy Hour – Karen Brown
- Holiday Party (December 13) – Lisa Breton, Diane Jennette, Terri Kayne
- Hospitality – Lisa Breton, Betty Doll, Susan Harvey, Sarah Poppenhouse
- Outdoor Adventures – Pat Malinak, Margie Weaver
- Pass the Spoon – Ellen Brazauskas, Betty Doll
- Summer Picnic (July 11) – Diane Colvin, Pat Malinak
- Sunshine – Sue Davis
- World Friendship Day (March 1) – Tessa Levizon

## Recap of Recent Club Activities

Information and pictures of recent club activities will appear on the [FFWNC Facebook Page](#)

## FFI Online Training for Leaders and Members

FFI offers training for new cub leader orientation, new member orientation, travel insurance Q&A, general club and journey Q&A. For more information, click [FFI Online Training](#) and select 2026 at bottom of the sheet.

## Contact Information for Club Members Listed in this Newsletter

To protect privacy, contact information for club members is available on the member page of the FFWNC website [www.ffwesternnc.org](http://www.ffwesternnc.org) or in the **2026 Membership Directory**. Consult the directory for information about how to access the website or ask another member.

## Look for Email Blasts for Upcoming Events

Kay Manley has volunteered to send periodic email blasts to members for events that will occur within the next week to ten days. **Be sure to include her email address in your contact file so you can receive these important emails.**

## Newsletter Deadline

We have shifted to a bimonthly newsletter. If you have Club news for the June/July newsletter, please submit your information to Diane Jennette no later than May 15.

## Special Journey #26453 Guatemala: Where Mayan Tradition Meets Modern Life



**We have been asked by FFI to publicize the following special journey November 8-16, 2026:**

Let's explore the rich diversity of Guatemala with its Mayan traditions and history, the charming 16th century Spanish colonial city of Antigua, the cultural sites of Guatemala City, the vibrant textile markets and the stunning volcanic landscape around Lake Atitlan. Modern Guatemala culture blends its colonial heritage with its Mayan traditions. We'll learn how migration, indigenous rights and current events are shaping life today. Check out the full itinerary and what is included/not included [here](#). \$2795 per person double occupancy based on 13-15 ambassadors; single supplement \$670.

## Important Links

FFI Website: <https://friendshipforce.org/>

FFI Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1419216651619189>

FFI Orientation and Training: [FFI Online Training](#)

FFWNC Club Website: [www.ffwesternnc.org](http://www.ffwesternnc.org)

FFWNC Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068029789039>

FFWNC Mailing Address: FFWNC, P.O. Box 384, Hendersonville, NC 28793

FFWNC Newsletter, Website, or Other Ideas: [FFWNC Suggestion Box](#)

New Member Referral: [Prospective New Member Referral Form](#)

Member Contact Info: FFWNC Member Page or Directory

### Previous Newsletters

January 2026 [Newsletter 2026-01.pdf](#)

February - March 2026 [Newsletter 2026-0203.pdf](#)