



friendship force
WESTERN
NORTH CAROLINA

Mountain Friends

Volume 26, Issue 4 June/July 2026

Diane Jennette and Dick Weaver, editors

President's Message / Tessa Levizon

Dear Members of the Western North Carolina Friendship Force,

Hear ye, hear ye! Our days ahead are brighter with your involvement, and without it, we risk fading away. Recently, at the Southeast Regional Conference, a pivotal question was raised: How can we not just survive, but truly thrive in today's world?

During the leadership workshop, club presidents united to explore strategies for resilience. We delved into real-world scenarios affecting clubs across the globe, collaborating with fellow leaders to craft innovative solutions. The energy and spirit in the room were palpable, igniting a sense of purpose that transcends mere survival.

As baby boomers, we've significantly shaped economic growth, culture, education, technology, and social change. Let's not stop now! I urge you to become actively involved.

Your participation in our club will cultivate friendships that bridge borders, enriching our community right here at home. This transformation into a true "Friendship Force" is built on shared values, collaboration, and a commitment to making a positive impact in our world.

Let's start by getting to know one another better. Together, we can move mountains.

Warm regards,

Tessa Levizon
President, FFWNC

Calendar at a Glance

June

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

6/4 (Thu) - **NO Happy Hour** this month - We wish our ambassadors well on their Journey to Ottawa!

6/7 - 6/14 **Outbound Journey Ottawa**

No **Pass the Spoon** in June due to outbound Journey to Ottawa

July

7/2 (Thu) - **Happy Hour** 4:30 – 6pm - St. Paul Mountain Vineyard 588 Chestnut Gap Rd. H'ville

7/11 (Sat) - **General Meeting/ Annual Picnic** noon - 2pm – at the Mills River Park Shelter. If you plan on coming, please **RSVP** to Lisa Breton by 1 July to help with planning.

7/14 (Tue) - **Board Meeting** 10 - 11:30am – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville

7/24 (Fri) - **Book Club** 1:30pm - FFWNC Quarterly Book Club will meet at Ivan Begg's house. He will lead the discussion on **The 80/20 Principle** by Richard Koch. New members are welcome. (see page 3 for info)

August

8/6 (Thu) – **Journey Coordinator Training** 2 – 4pm – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville

8/6 (Thu) - **Happy Hour** 4:30 – 6pm - location TBD

8/11 (Tue) - **Board Meeting** 10 - 11:30am – NC Coop Ext., 1000 Jackson Park Rd, H'ville

(Date TBD) - **Pass the Spoon** 11am – Chai Pani 32 Banks Ave, Asheville, exact date TBD, hosted by Ellen Brazauskas (second week in August)

General information about meeting dates is available at [Regularly Scheduled Club Events](#)

Local Membership Category Approved by the Board – “This is a game changer for our club ...”

As you know, the membership dues for Friendship Force International (FFI) increased to \$100 as part of the Membership for All initiative. Two-thirds of our membership responded to the challenge and remained members; however, this created two unintended consequences for our club.

1. Some members enjoy the friendship and local activities of our club but are no longer interested in outbound journeys because of age, health, or financial considerations.
2. It's easier to recruit some new members who can immerse themselves in our local club activities before joining FFI so they can participate in outbound domestic or international journeys.

The new **Local Membership** category addresses both issues. It allows members to participate in local activities only, **including all home hosting, dinner hosting, and daily activities for inbound journeys**. They must upgrade to full membership by joining FFI to participate in outbound FFI journeys.

This is a game changer for our club because it will help us recruit **and** retain members.

We need a commitment from each member to help us recruit new members. As an incentive, **Sue Gaston has offered to buy any member a drink of their choice at July 2 Happy Hour who refers a new member** to us using the [Prospective New Member Referral Form](#).

Will you accept the challenge?

Journey Coordinators Needed

Journeys don't happen without Journey Coordinators!

Haven't had the Journey Coordinator training? No problem. We have scheduled a training / refresher course on Thursday August 6 from 2 - 4pm.

Never done it before? Don't worry. We will schedule you with a veteran coordinator so you can learn the ropes! Please take advantage of this opportunity to make our journeys the **BEST EVER**! Contact Susan Harvey for further information.

Monthly Happy Hour / Karen Brown



Beginning in July, the Happy Hour will move to the **first Thursday** each month. The next Happy hour will be 4:30 – 6pm at St. Paul Mountain Vineyard, 588 Chestnut Gap Rd. in Hendersonville.

2026 Journeys Update Journeys / Susan Harvey

Fourteen Ambassadors will journey to Ottawa, Canada June 7-14. Many thanks to Nancy Wood and Ellen Brazauskas, Journey Coordinators, for their efforts to make it happen.

The Napa/Sonoma **Outbound** Journey, scheduled for September 17-23, has two openings!!! Sign up now with Susan Harvey, Journey Coordinator, to reserve your spot. Enjoy sunny California, taste some good California wine and see the beautiful Sonoma and Napa Valleys.

The **Inbound** Orlando journey will be October 6-12. There are plenty of opportunities to participate in home, dinner and day hosting. Many hands make light work—and more fun! Contact Harriett Hilton, Journey Coordinator, to get involved.

Nametag Suggestion

Have you ever forgotten to bring your Friendship Force nametag? Keep it in your car so it will always be with you.

Membership Focus / Dick Weaver

A successful membership effort starts with the **recruitment of new members** through a dynamic social media presence and member-driven referral of potential members.

Are you willing to identify at least one potential member each month? It's easy - just submit their name on the [Prospective New Member Referral Form](#) and let us do the rest!

You can start by sharing [What is Friendship Force?](#) with a friend.

Perhaps even more important to a successful membership effort is the **retention of new and existing members**. This includes new member orientation, mentoring, and engaging new and existing members in club activities and committees. Just being a friend with a common interest of promoting understanding, cultural education and citizen diplomacy through home stay journeys and friendships goes a long way in retaining our members.

Finally, check out this video of my presentation at our May general meeting. [Making Every Connection Count](#)

Club Member Birthdays

June

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

July

4 Larry Harvey
5 Sarah Poppenhouse
23 Marlene Beggs and Susan Harvey
28 Larry McGaughy

August

7 Betty Doll

Your Feedback is Important to Us!

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

Mountain Friends June/July 2026

July General Meeting

The next general meeting will be held during our annual picnic on Saturday, July 11 from Noon- 2 pm at the Mills River Park Shelter. Come join in for food, fun, and a short bit of business. The club will provide fried chicken, non-alcoholic drinks, paper products and utensils. Members are asked to bring a side dish to share. If you plan on coming, please **RSVP** to Lisa Breton by July 1 to help with planning.

One agenda item will be to elect one or more members to serve on the nominating committee. This important committee is charged with presenting a slate of officers and new board members at our annual meeting in November. Please contact Tessa if you are interested in serving on this important committee.



2027 Journeys Announced/ Susan Harvey

Inbound Journeys

- Special outdoor adventure journey hosted by Richmond, VA, Raleigh, NC and WNC. Dates TBD
- Lincoln, NE. October suggested

Outbound Journeys

- Mid-Willamette Valley, OR
- San Jose, Costa Rica

Quarterly Book Club / Harriet Hilton

FFWNC Quarterly Book Club will meet at Ivan Begg's house on July 24th at 1:30pm. He will lead the discussion on **The 80/20 Principle** by Richard Koch. The book offers insights and tips on an effective technique to manage your life and time. Ivan says he has used the method and the book's insights over a long period as an effective tool. Please let Harriett Hilton know if you plan to attend. We welcome new members.

From The Archives / Chuck Elston

FFWNC Named US Club of the Year for 1993

The award was presented at the Seventeenth International Conference held in Acapulco, Mexico, October 14-17, 1993. The commendation was as follows:

"Congratulations to the members of the Friendship Force club of Western North Carolina.

"From their very first shared charter to Berlin in 1980, this club has achieved the reputation of dependability, always meeting their commitment for at least two outbound and two inbound exchanges each year. Their success may come from the community life of their 244 members who are active, energetic participants in civic clubs, and in community volunteer efforts ranging from the homeless to art instruction and manning the Friendship office.

"Members come from two states and 8 Western North Carolina counties. The club is proud that their membership covers all walks of life, from medicine, law and politics to education, business and the media. They maintain a scholarship program which enabled two students to visit England and Japan last year.

"Perhaps their finest hour came last fall. Just before their inbound exchange from New Zealand was to end, the visiting Exchange Director from New Zealand suffered an aneurysm and was not expected to live. Happily, special air arrangements eventually allowed her to return home, but not before the club rallied around her and her husband with constant care and attention for several weeks. The club's own two-week exchange to New Zealand had a happier ending.

"We are pleased to present the...award to this longtime, dependable club which gave us so many happy memories when they hosted the annual Conference in Asheville in 1982. Congratulations!"

Volunteer(s) Needed

Chuck Elston has served as the Archives committee chair for several years and is stepping down. Please contact Chuck if you are willing to help with this important effort.

Pass the Spoon Lunch / Ellen Brazauskas

Ellen Brazauskas will organize the next Pass the Spoon at Chai Pani in Asheville (second week in August), which is the location where the luncheons started three years ago. **REMINDER:** There will not be a "June Pass the Spoon" due to the Outbound Journey to Ottawa.



Recap of Recent Club Activities

Information and pictures of recent club activities will appear on the **FFWNC Facebook Page**
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068029789039>

FFI Online Training for Leaders and Members

FFI offers training for new club 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 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

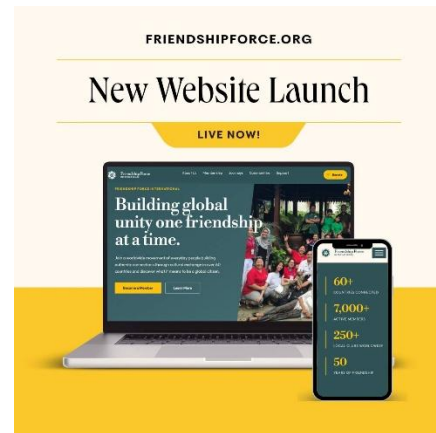
Kay Manley will send periodic email blasts to members for events that will occur within the next week to ten days. Be sure to include her email address in your contact file so you can receive these important emails.

Newsletter Deadline

Please submit your information to Diane Jennette **no later than** July 15 If you have Club news for the **August/September** newsletter.

Board of Directors and Committee Assignments

See the appropriate links in the **Important Links** section of this newsletter.



Important Links

Friendship Force International Links

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

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

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

Friendship Force of Western North Carolina Links

FFWNC Club Website: 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

Member Forms

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

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

Membership Application: [FFWNC Membership Application](#)

Member Contact Info: Available on FFWNC Club Website Member Page or in FFWNC Directory

[Regularly Scheduled Club Events](#)

[2026 FFWNC Board Members](#)

[2026 Committee Assignments](#)

Previous Mountain Friends Newsletters

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

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

April/May 2026 [Newsletter-2026-0405-web.pdf](#)

