



PASSPORT

A Publication of The Friendship Force of Lincoln
www.friendshipforcelincoln.org

NUMBER 167

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

MAY 2022

ALEX Visits FFL

BY ARLENE REA

Friendship Force of Lincoln was privileged to host students from around the world the first week of May. Approximately 600 students, who were selected to be exchange students to the USA for 10 months in 2021, were not able to fulfill their wish because of the COVID pandemic. Therefore, American Leadership Experience (ALEX) program was formed by the American Councils for International Education and the U.S. Department of State to give those students an opportunity to visit the United States of America in 2022. They spent a week in Washington, D.C., then another week, which included themes of history, community, entrepreneurship, education, and service, in some city in the vast United States.



FFL was proud to welcome 4 students from Slovakia: Lucia Domanikova, Dominika Murinova, Daniel Meitner, and Timotej Orsula, and 1 student from Hungary: Hanna Vraja. Their guide, Jana Figurova, was also from Slovakia.

Five students were also scheduled to come from the Ukraine, but the war made it impossible for them to participate.

The photo shows the FFL members Gayle and Milt Bayer, Arlene Rea, Sharolyn Sander, Judy Keetle and the ALEX visitors at the [Center for People in Need](#) as part of their experience in Lincoln, NE.

Lincoln Journal Star has published [an article about the ALEX visit](#) written by FFL member Maxine Moul on May 13, 2022.



From the FFL President May 2022



JUDY KEETLE, PRESIDENT

Time flies and 2022 is zipping by! We have found out how flexible and strong we are by making it through the Covid-19 pandemic. It is good to have things back to new-normal!

Friendship Force International (FFI) is still working with minimal staff, but they are organizing and planning for the future. Sign up for the [My FFI website](https://my.friendshipforce.org/) <https://my.friendshipforce.org/> to learn more about FF happenings throughout the world. If you are already registered, please, check your personal information too. To log in to the FFI site, you will need your email address and your password. The Friendship Force of Lincoln Board has been meet-

ing monthly – now in person and via Zoom - to keep things organized. We are now back to meeting in person for Breakfast and Conversation on the second Saturday of each month at Stauffer's, and LEO (Let's Eat Out) dinners every few weeks at various ethnic restaurants.

Although we are taking a break over the summer, TACs (Thursday Afternoon Club) get together via Zoom have been a good way to spend time together and discuss topics of interest. Outbound and Inbound Journeys are scheduled, small groups have been walking together a couple of times each month, Day Trips are fun and educational, and Virtual Tours are fun individually and together. Friendship Force of Lincoln is excited to be the first group to welcome ALEX students to the U.S.A. As you can see there is a LOT going on with Friendship Force of Lincoln. I'm looking forward to seeing you at one of our events soon.

In friendship,
Judy



Happy Birthday

Birthdays are special. It is a day to celebrate you.

Consider sending a card or an e-mail to someone who has a birthday between June through August. May birthdays were in the [February Passport](#).

June

- 2nd – Susan Pierce
- 7th – Lee Rockwell
- 16th – Sylvia Griffith
- 26th – Dal Ronnau
- 29th – Cathy Lund
- 30th – Dorina Mahler

July

- 1st – Nancy Comer
- 2nd – Richard Spencer
- 10th – Jim Ecklund
- 18th – Gayle Bayer
- 24th – Barbara Whittstruck
- 27th – Sharre Jahde
- 27th – Gretchen Olberding
- 28th – Betty Todd

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Happy Birthday

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August

- 9th – Richard Callaway
- 10th – Betty Starr
- 17th – Kathryn Neyens
- 24th – Kathleen Higley
- 28th – Carlene Keim
- 29th – Kay Straube

If we don't have your birth month and day yet, please let [Judy Keetle](mailto:jkeetle2@gmail.com) know at jkeetle2@gmail.com.



FFL Day Trips

BY JUDY KEETLE

Since not everyone can travel for extended periods of time, FFL is offering day trips to interesting cultural sites in and around Lincoln.

On March 23 six FFL members had lunch together at Runza and then visited the American Museum of Germans from Russia, right here in Lincoln. We watched an informational video relating to the customs and traditions of people of German origin who finally settled in the U.S. The Museum has maps, furniture, clothing, musical instruments, and other memorabilia that German people brought with them from their native land. There is also a wealth of information for people who are investigating genealogical or other information about these brave people.

Our next day trip to Oakland, NE to learn about the Swedish people who settled in northeast Nebraska is scheduled on May 26th.

[Lee Rockwell](#) is our FFL Day Trip Chair.



Sharolyn Sander

Sharolyn Sander is new to Friendship Force and she already jumped in to host students from the ALEX Program. She welcomed two ALEX students from Slovakia and Hungary. Even though they were busy with a variety of daily and evening events, they still made time to become friends.

Sharolyn and her husband Reed met at Concordia University, in Seward, Nebraska. Reed and Sharolyn usually worked together in the same Lutheran school, with Reed as principal and Sharolyn as teacher, in various early childhood and primary grades. They enjoyed living in Hamlin, NY; Kearney, NE; Fremont, NE; and 22 years in Roselle, IL. Sharolyn loved to engage with children in the process and persistence of learning. Reed became the district executive for Lutheran schools in Northern Illinois in 2000.



Sharolyn still has strong ties to Concordia University, as a weekly volunteer, alumni activities, music and sports. Her daughter, Shanna Opfer, is the Director of Elementary Education at Concordia, and husband Jamie Opfer is a teacher and coach at Seward High School. They have three children: Korbin (12th), Addison (10th), and Trevin (4th).



Son Ty Sander lives in O'Fallon, Missouri. He is a civil engineer and Vice President of Aviation with CMT engineering. Ty has two daughters, Brooklyn (11th) and Lillian (7th). Ty and his dad enjoyed many rounds of golf until Reed lost his battle with cancer in 2018.

Sharolyn is now an active member at Christ Lutheran Church, where she sings in two choirs. She helps in the cancer care ministry, compiling and delivering care packages for patients. She is in a book club focusing on Nebraska authors, and she loves to go for walks. Friendship with Judy Keetle was the reason Sharolyn was attracted to Friendship Force - a strong reminder for us all to make friends locally as well as internationally.



Upcoming Journeys

BY WENDY HORACEK

Plans are underway for the outbound journey to the **Winston-Salem and Greensboro area of North Carolina** June 22nd – 28th. Three couples and two singles are signed up, but you can still join the group. We've also posted an invite to our regional clubs and we got a response from a Minnesota couple in the first hours.

The [Friendship Force of Central North Carolina club](#) is very active. They've already hosted an inbound this year and presently are on a journey to Holland. As soon as they return the first week of May, more detail plans will be shared with our club. It's a beautiful historic area with early American and civil rights museums and a Reynolds art museum to name just a couple.



The New Jersey club has been changing the date for the New Jersey inbound so they have an opportunity for another journey. If you would like to help the coordinators, Ann Quinlan (402)483-2603) and Marilyn Watson (402-423-9152, please, give them a call.

Maybe you can't travel to Central North Carolina but would like to travel on another journey. The [FFI website](#) is currently under construction but their newsletters and emails may inform you of other opportunities. That's how I learned about the Pacific Northwest, Coast to Mountains to Sound. I haven't traveled to Oregon or Washington yet so this will be a great opportunity to see this part of the United States. It's a two-week journey limited to 14 ambassadors.



LEO at McKinney's

BY BRUCE KEIM

It was a taste of Ireland for Lincoln Friendship Force's Let's Eat Out (LEO). On Wednesday, March 30 we had 21 members (including one new member) gather at McKinney's Irish Pub on a windy cool evening. After negotiating a flight of 17 stair steps we landed in the loft meeting room that overlooked the bar below. Tall topped round tables allowed us to be in groups of 4 to 5 for good conversation.

Nathan Stewart opened [McKinney's](#) in 2013. Nathan is of Irish descent tracing his ancestors back to the Belfast, Northern Ireland area. Nathan stated that they have 20 craft beers and 60 Irish Whiskeys available at McKinney's. All of the food he serves there is made from scratch.



Carlene and I started the evening out with a Harp draft beer as they had them on special for \$5.00 that evening. Harp is a cool blonde Irish lager, created in 1960 by the Guinness Brewing company in its Great Northern Brewery at Dundalk, Ireland. Brewing for the Harp brand has since moved to Dublin.

McKinney's menu included Irish items including Fish and Chips, Shepard's Pie, Irish Coddle, and Irish Stew. Carlene had the Rueben Sandwich while I had the Corned Beef and Cabbage.

Mine included potatoes and carrots with layered cabbage leaves covered with shredded Corned Beef.

Check out the [2022 Calendar of FFL events](#) for upcoming LEO destinations planned by Bruce and Carlene Keim and Sara Stephenson, LEO committee members, and join us!



News from the Midwest Leaders Meeting

BY JUDY KEETLE

About 15-20 leaders from the Friendship Force (FF) Clubs in the Midwest meet monthly via Zoom. Dale Moore of Cedar Rapids, Iowa has been the FF Midwest Regional Representative for the past four years and has led this group. As of late April, Bob Mitchell of Milwaukee, Wisconsin took over this job. We will want to invite Bob to attend one of our events in the near future.

During the **January meeting** we discussed the 2023 matching process, the Charter renewal process, ALEX program, status of 2022 journeys, and club calendars. I learned that most of the FF clubs have their annual meetings December, and their new officers assume duties in January.

In February Tom Scott of Twin Cities FF joined us from Bonaire in the Southern Caribbean and showed photos of his recent diving trip. FFI is advising clubs that it is best to contact other clubs to arrange domestic journeys. COIL is now the name of the program formerly called Open World. We learned more details of ALEX dates and available groups. Several people voiced frustration in working with the FFI website. Quad Cities announced they will be hosting a Global "Farm to Table" journey August 11-18, 2022. We also had a discussion on how to assist relocating Afghan families.

Allison Lindsey, FFI VP of Member Engagement, attended and shared news of FFI at the **March meeting**. She shared that FFI is operating with 3 full time staff (Jeremi, Allison, and Dana) and 9 part time staff working from 8 to 20 hours per week. There will be a world conference in 2023. Global Membership is a new category designed for persons desiring to be members of FF, but live too far to connect to a club. Global Journeys are now called Special Journeys. Drip Campaign initiative is a series of emails sent to persons showing interest in FFI membership to educate them about FFI one topic at a time, intended to prevent the candidate from drowning in information overload. If someone needs to be removed from a club's membership list, contact Allison who will handle it.

We also discussed that outbound request forms were due on March 18, 2022; clubs will learn of their assignments in May. Volunteer assistants are needed for English learning classes.

During the **April** meeting, we discussed that FFI will be reinstating a newsletter. 2022 policies document is available at friendshipforce.org, under [Policies and Club Documents](#) / 2022 Policies and Guidelines for Clubs and Programs. Policies regarding journey fees were emphasized. We talked about fun activities from other clubs such as Central Iowa - Earth Day Celebration, BYO picnic lunch, biking group, connect to foreign students at local college to speak about their country, and good speakers to attract members.



Virtual Tours

JUDY KEETLE, PRESIDENT

Sylvia Griffith, FFL Virtual Tours Chair, has introduced our club members to a user-friendly website, heygo.com—a tip-supported platform that helps participants explore the world via live online professionally guided tours.



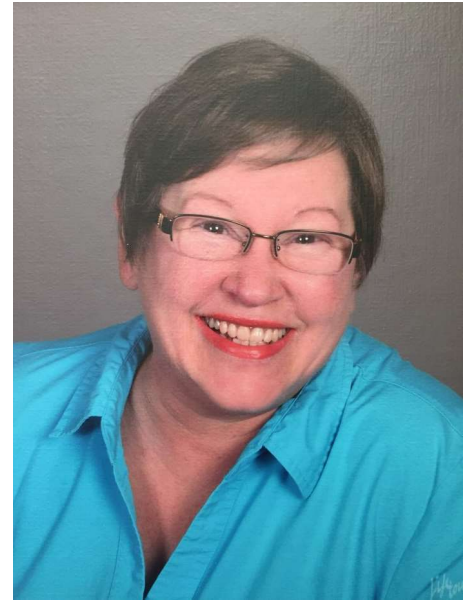
In late January, Sylvia recommended a program about the Siege of Leningrad, which included a live online tour of the relevant sites in St. Petersburg. Heygo tour guide Anna gave three tours on “The Siege of Leningrad”. Anna carried a camera and showed us the streets and buildings as she talked about them. It was very similar to actually walking along with her on a walking tour. Questions were asked via the chat option, and she regularly

checked and answered questions asked. After the first tour several FFL members met via Zoom to discuss what they had just watched. What a good way to spend time with and get to know other FFL members!

The other two tours explored more sites and information related to the WWII siege in the town now called St. Petersburg.

It is very easy to sign up for this site to receive emails alerting you to tours in which you may be interested. They have a listing of tours, which usually are 54 minutes to 1 hour in length, from morning until night every day. When you register for a tour, they send reminders of the tour with the time it starts in your area. I have visited Cinque Terre, a private family museum in St. Petersburg, churches and cathedrals in Edinburgh, and two tours in Ireland. I’ve found heygo to be a good virtual way to visit places that I have traveled to in the past or I will travel to in the future.

Thanks to Sylvia for introducing me to this fun, educational, easy way to travel virtually!



Sylvia Griffith

If one were to ask Sylvia Griffith why she joined FFL, she would say that she likes the premise of Friendship Force - explore other countries, make friends of home hosts, and learn about different cultures from the inside.

She first learned about FFL in 1998 when her parents, Jim and Bev Griffith, hosted in-bound visitors from Australia.

When COVID made travel impossible, Sylvia continued to “travel” using on-line options and she became involved in stitch.net, a world-wide online community for folks over 50.

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FFL—Things to Know

Breakfast and Conversation

FFL members and guests get together other at Stauffer's Café, 5600 S. 48th at 8:30 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. B&C Chair, Linda Kistler sends a question or topic to be discussed each month. If you know of someone who wants to learn about FF, bring them to the next B&C!

Courtesy

If an FFL member is ill, achieves something noteworthy, experiences a death of a loved one, etc., FFL Courtesy Chair, Gayle Bayer would like to send a card. Let her know at bayergayle@gmail.com.

Dues

Friendship Force International dues will be \$30 per person in 2023. 2022 FFI dues were \$25 per person.

Remember: 2023 FFL dues (which include FFI dues) must be paid by December 31 of 2022. Hope this reminder helps you plan ahead.

LEO

LEO (Let's Eat Out) is a Friendship Force activity where several times a year members will meet at different ethnic restaurants in Lincoln. LEO's are a great way to meet other club members or just have great conversations with old friends. LEO committee members are Bruce and Carlene Keim and Sara Stephenson.

Membership

People wanting to know about Friendship Force and how to join FFL should contact Membership Chair De Tonack at dtonack@neb.rr.com or 402-525-4264.

TAC

TAC (Thursday Afternoon Club) is an FFL activity where members meet several once a month during the cold months of the year via Zoom. Participants prepare themselves some drink(s) and engage in heart-warming conversations with other FFL members. [Dorina Mahler](#) is the virtual TAC host.

Walking Group

It is fun to walk and talk with friends, as well as getting to know fellow FFL members. Watch for email notifications of FFL walking opportunities a couple of times each month.



A Home Called Nebraska

BY NANCY COMER

A large group gathered at Cornhusker Bank, 83rd and O, on a blustery Monday evening to discuss resettlement of Afghan refugees and soon to arrive Ukrainians.

The event was “[Movies that Matter](#)”, sponsored by OLLI and Let’s Talk Alliance and offered free and open to the public.



The program began with ‘A Home Called Nebraska’, a 1 hr. 39 min. film, developed by Lutheran Family Services to educate about the resettlement process. Participants learned that the vetting process for refugees is quite complex and takes a while before those applying can even be allowed into the U.S.A.

Then, when accepted to come to Nebraska, the local communities begin finding ways to make these refugees (recently 500 Afghans) at home in a new country and culture. The most difficult problems to overcome are finding suitable housing and transportation.

Afterwards, there was an opportunity to ask questions of a panel of experts: Matt Martin, LFS Assistant Vice President of Community Services, Dr. Kariim Gharzai, himself an Afghan refugee, spoke of his own experiences coming to Lincoln in 1979, and Suzi Qudus, a UNL student representing the Afghan Student Association. Suzi is the niece of Farida Ebrahim, also an Afghan refugee, and the UNL Afghan group’s sponsor who helped organize the program.

Two take aways:

1. Refugees and immigrants are hardworking, good neighbors and our communities are better because of them.
2. The world is facing the greatest refugee crisis in history. The United States needs to step up and increase the numbers of refugees that can be accepted here in our very large country.

We Stand for Welcome!



Historian Report January to April, 2022

BY BETTY STARR

The beginning of 2022 saw the continuing of the COVID Pandemic and its variant, but with the planning of new journeys for the year. Breakfast and Conversation and the monthly board meetings continued Saturday's by Zoom for the first part of the year. In March it was suggested to try a hybrid board meeting at the church as well as Zoom for those preferring to view the meeting online.

Activities were scheduled throughout the winter and spring. Members enjoyed a Thursday Afternoon Club (TAC) which met by Zoom from January through April. A discussion topic was suggested by the host, followed by dinner plans, and ending with a "Toast with Friends" for the evening. All members can join in their discussion with the e-mailed Zoom link.

Calling lists were revised and continued to reach all the members with updates and questions for members suggestions on journeys and procedures.

Members continued to walk at Gateway Shopping Center and around Antelope regularly.

In January, the club had a Day Trip to the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, but was cancelled and rescheduled for March, followed with a lunch at Runza.

Virtual Tours including "The Siege of Leningrad" were presented by signing up at heygo.com.



Our LEO events were continued with the first dinner of the year at McKinney's Irish Pub.

The club contributed to FFI's campaign to donate \$45 in honor of the 45 years of FFI. We also received a letter renewing our charter for 2022, which was shared with all board members. Copies of the Charter are available for those who request it. Members can sign up and receive notifications from FFI on their Friendship Force – Member Portal. A book club, recordings of virtual experiences, finances, meet the new board members, finding pen pals, and results of a FFI 2021 survey, among other resources, are available for the members through the portal.

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Historian Report January to April, 2022

BY BETTY STARR

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Open World Program has changed their name. It now will be called ***Congressional Office of International Leadership. (COIL)*** Several projected programs were cancelled due to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.

Plans were underway for the ***ALEX (American Leadership Experience)*** Program which was held April 30 – May 8th for youth groups of 8-10 delegates and adult group leaders. This is a new program for FFI hosts that consists of American History and Culture, Communications, Entrepreneurship and Volunteerism experiences. Home hosts are required background checks and students are required to take a COVID test. The ALEX program is funded by the US Department of State and the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs administers it. Unlike COIL, ALEX is for global high school students between the ages of 17-19. Like COIL, participants may be from former USSR countries but also from the less-served areas of the Middle East and Africa. ALEX is less structured and strict than COIL but it does have a required element of interaction with same-age youth. Like COIL, the delegation spends several days in Washington DC before traveling to the host city/club. There are COVID requirements that need to be followed and it receives FFI-funded support.

Because of the situation with Ukraine and Russia, a letter was sent and signed by Ukrainian alumni of the Open World Program urging the US Congress to impose sanctions on Russia Federation and each individual that stands behind this inhumane aggression. The letter was signed by many of those who participated and were home hosted in Lincoln with FF of Lincoln. FFI sent a joint letter to U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Friendship Force International Clubs in Ukraine and Russia urge the two leaders to seek a diplomatic solution to a war that could engulf the entire region, if not the world.

In June we scheduled a domestic journey to Central North Carolina and incoming Southern New Jersey Club is planning a visit in October. The New Jersey date was changed and moved to September 18-24. Hopefully, as we plan for these journeys during the year, we will be ready when all travel restrictions are lifted.

Outbound Destination Requests were sent to FFI for the 2023 season using the responses received from FFL members during their scheduled phone conversations.

The Midwest FF Leaders met again monthly via Zoom with decisions and discussions concerning the midwestern USA. These clubs included: Central Iowa, Des Moines, CRIC, Lincoln, Madison, Milwaukee, N. Illinois, Quad Cities, St. Louis, and Twin Cities. Our President, Judy Keetle was a part of this group. 

2022 Calendar - Friendship Force of Lincoln

FFL Board Meetings 1st Monday of each month at 1:00pm, except no meeting in July
Breakfast and Conversation 2nd Saturday of each month at 8:30am
LEOs and TACs several times each year

May

- 9th – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00 via Zoom
- 12th - LEO at [El Potro](#), 3410 S 10th, 5:30pm
- 14th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer's Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.
- 26th – Day Trip to [Oakland, NE](#) (Contact [Lee Rockwell](#))

June

- 6th – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00 at [First Lutheran Church](#)
- 11th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer's Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.
- 18th – Spend the day with FF of Omaha and their guests from FF New Hampshire Seacoast
- 22nd-28th – Outbound journey to Central North Carolina (Contact [Wendy Horacek](#))

July

- No FFL Board Meeting in July
- 9th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer's Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.
- 19th – LEO at [Koen Japanese BBQ & Sushi](#), 2601 Jami Lane, Suite 100, 5:30pm

August

- 1st – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00pm at [First Lutheran Church](#)
- 13th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer's Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.
- 14th – Annual Meeting on Sunday, August 14th afternoon. Nominations list due to board 60 days prior to annual meeting and to membership 30 days prior to annual meeting.

September

- 6th – LEO, [Napoli's](#), 5571 S 48th, 5:30pm

October

- 3rd – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00 via Zoom
- 8th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer's Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.

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2022 Calendar - Friendship Force of Lincoln

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October

- 13th - TAC via ZOOM, 4:30pm – 5:30pm; topic “Let's remember dear ones that are no longer with us.”

November

- 7th – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00 at [First Lutheran Church](#)
- 10th - TAC via ZOOM, 4:30-5:30; topic: “What are you thankful for this year?”
- 12th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer’s Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.

December

- 5th – FFL Board Meeting, 1:00 at [First Lutheran Church](#)
- 8th - TAC via ZOOM, 4:30-5:30; topic: “Let's talk about winter holidays and traditions!”
- 10th – Breakfast and Conversation, 8:30am at [Stauffer’s Café](#) , 5600 S 48th St.
- TBD – Holiday Party



Sylvia Griffith

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A retired psychiatric nurse and nurse educator, Sylvia now provides occasional health care support in the community although she usually introduces herself as “an SSWG” - short for “Singer/Songwriter with Guitar.”

Although COVID-19 has limited her ability to entertain, she still sings popular songs from the 1920s to the 1950s in senior-care facilities and retirement communities on occasion. Sylvia is a long-time member of First Plymouth Church and she sang with [Abendmusik-Lincoln](#) for 13 years, visiting Austria, Italy, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia during choir tours between 1997 and 2006. She released her first CD of original songs in 2005. Lincoln, NE is Sylvia’s favorite of the 28 communities she has called home. She values the sense of belonging she has in Lincoln, where she has lived for over 30 years.

Sylvia enjoys community theater, playing Mah Jongg, volunteering with AARP and jamming with other local musicians. Sylvia is close with both her daughters and her granddaughter, who also live in Lincoln.



FFL Board of Directors 2022

- Judy Keetle, President, Passports
- Maxine Moul, Vice President
- Ann Quinlan, Secretary
- Milt Bayer, Treasurer.....
- Arlene Rea, Past President, Passports, ALEX
- Linda Kistler, Breakfast and Conversation.....
- Betty Starr, Historian
- Wendy Horacek, Journey Resource Coordinator
- Carlene Keim, LEO (Let’s Eat Out)
- Bruce Keim, LEO (Let’s Eat Out)
- De Tonack, Membership Chair
- Gayle Bayer, Membership Courtesy
- Arlene Rea, Membership Directory.....
- Julie Albrecht, Open World.....
- Publicity/Marketing.....
- Nancy Comer, Service/Diversity
- Julie Splichal, Social.....
- Sara Stephenson, Social.....

If you know someone interested in learning more about FFL, please, share their name(s) and contact information with our Membership Chair [De Tonack](#).

Past editions of ‘Passport’ are available on the [FFL website](https://friendshipforcelincn.org/): <https://friendshipforcelincn.org/>



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