



# PASSPORT

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[www.fflincoln.org](http://www.fflincoln.org)

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June 2025

## Let's Eat Out Members Enjoy Ethnic Restaurants in Lincoln

By Bruce and Carlene Kein, LEO Co-Chairs

The May LEO was held at Taj Ali Middle Eastern Restaurant with 11 members present on May 15. Ali, the owner, explained that he came to the USA about 30 years ago. He came from Iraq about the time of the first Gulf War. While here he has been an interpreter and also an Arabic language instructor for college classes. It is a family restaurant that includes his wife who is from Paris and his son who also helped serve us. The restaurant's name comes from TAJ meaning crown and Ali being his first name of the owner.

Selections from the menu like Lamb or Chicken Tikka were exceptionally tasty. Ali recommended the Chicken Tikka which is made from chicken breast. The chicken Shawarma he told us was made from chicken thighs. Some members had the Falafel plate and the beef Kabob was also popular. I had a bowl of Lentil soup and it had a great flavor. Ali gave me some extra rice to add and gave it more body. The pita bread with the meal was very fresh and soft. Desserts included Kunafa and Baklava. The difference between them is that Kunafa is filled with soft cheese and Baklava includes nuts.

**Our next LEO will be a day trip to Omaha Benson.** The restaurant is Shaheen's Authentic Afghan Cuisine and will be on Wednesday June, 18th at 1:00p.m. We will meet at the Kohl's parking lot on 84th and O street in Lincoln at 11:30 a.m. Then carpool from there to 6021 Maple Street in Omaha. Email will come out closer to the date.

Hope to see everyone for a fun experience in Omaha Benson It is a vibrant thriving historic neighborhood in Omaha that has been revitalized.



FFL member Leslie Ryan displays food from Taj Ali.

## Ethnic Events are Planned This Summer Across Nebraska

**Swedish Festival** – Stromsburg, June 20, 21 and 22 Schedule at [Schedule of Events – The Swedish Festival](#)

**Juneteenth** - The Malone Center, June 21, Noon to 3 pm in Lincoln, Neb. Visit [malonecenter.org/malone-events/](http://malonecenter.org/malone-events/)

**Swedish Festival** – Oakland, NE, Sunday, June 22, See schedule at [swedishheritagecenter.org/](http://swedishheritagecenter.org/)

**The 2025 Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska's 159th Annual Homecoming Celebration.** July 24th - July 27th. Learn more at [winnebagoTribe.com/winnebago-pow-wow/](http://winnebagoTribe.com/winnebago-pow-wow/)

**Nebraska Czech Festival** on August 1-3 in Wilbur, NE. Visit [nebraskaczzechsofwilber.com/](http://nebraskaczzechsofwilber.com/)

**Latino Festival 2025.** Saturday, September 13 at Antelope Park, Lincoln, NE. See [elcentrone.org/latino-festival](http://elcentrone.org/latino-festival)

## From the FFL Vice President, June 2025

By Midge Dublinske, Vice President



Midge Dublinske

You might ask what are the duties of a club vice-president? They can be summarized by saying it can be like the movie, Everything, Everywhere, All at Once. Basically, a vice-president functions at the direction of the President and Board of Directors, and duties are as assigned. In my two years as your vice-president, I have chaired the Scholarship Committee and Bylaws and Policies Committee, attended scheduled Board of Directors meetings, met with members from Friendship Force of Wichita, assisted with inbound journeys, and attended club social events.

Being your Vice-President has been an honor, as it gave me the opportunity to meet and work with an exceptionally talented group of members, whose goals are to make a difference in the world we live in. Little did I know that when I accepted the position of vice-president that my duties as assigned would mean standing in for President Arlene Rea while she was not able to attend to her duties with the club.

With the strong support of the Board and many members who gave me insight, the goals of the club continued. I was happy to serve during Arlene’s absence. I firmly believe that when Friendship Force members all pull in the same direction and focus, good things will continue to happen. I am happy to share with the membership that Arlene is gradually returning to her duties as President and plans to chair the Board of Directors meeting in August.

In the meantime, there is much activity and planning going on within the club. Soon the club will host visitors from Romania as part of the Open World/Coil program, and Columbia Cascade (Portland, OR) members for an inbound journey. Friendship Force of Lincoln members have an opportunity for a club journey to visit with Friendship Force of Sarasota in November. Also, mark your calendars for the annual meeting on September 21 at the Walt Library from approximately 1:00-4:00 p.m. At this meeting new officers will be elected, and the direction of the club will be determined for the upcoming year.

In closing, I would ask all members to consider what talents and time can be shared for the continued work of the club. Many hands, make light work, so please consider being an officer, board member, committee member or volunteer for inbound journeys. The people that you will meet and the experiences that you will have will be well worth the time and effort.

**Remember, you can make a difference!**

## Happy Birthday to our Friendship Force Members

Pierce	2-Jun	BayerG	18-Jul	Johnstone-Hornig	22-Aug	Keim B	17-Oct
<a href="#">Grieger</a>	7-Jun	Wittsstruck	24-Jul	Neyens	23-Aug	Splichal	27-Oct
Rockwell L	7-Jun	Jahde	27-Jul	Keim C	28-Aug	Scott Larry	29-Oct
Lund,C	29-Jun	Dublinske	6-Aug	Straube	29-Aug	<a href="#">Bayer M</a>	31-Oct
Comer N	1-Jul	Sibal	8-Aug	Albrecht	30-Aug	Ridenour	2-Nov
Harp	15-Jul	Callaway R	9-Aug	Tonack	22-Sep	Larson, T	14-Nov
Wallen	16-Jul	Starr	10-Aug	Beam Callaway	1-Oct	Purtzer	16-Nov

## Phyllis Arth Interviews New FFL Member Ted Larson

### What drew you to Friendship Force?

I'm a guy that likes to learn about other cultures and places. I'll detour off the beaten path. I'll take the subway not a taxi, I'll find an off-street bar for visiting with locals. I like to rub elbows with the daily life. I retired from teaching; teaching history is all about culture. At Southwest High School I taught an AP course called Human Geography, getting students to think about interconnections of humans with their environment and how people shape their governments and social structures and cultures and economies and how those shape the people. My students brought life examples. I worked with a Sudanese lost boy, a student from a Bosnian concentration camp and kids with relatives in Ukraine.

I live on my farm in Martell. I'd like to share my rural experiences with international travelers. They would enjoy my miniature ponies and donkeys.



**Ted Larson on his Martell farm.**

### How has your use of technology changed over your travels?

In the 80's and 90's I visited more than 10 countries as a field and cross-country coach. I had started in track as a distance runner. I was hired to coach groups of exceptional high school track athletes. My athletes were from all over the USA, kids that excelled in their events, kids that cleared a seven foot high jump. I was coaching, doing travel arrangements and getting 40-60 male and female athletes where they needed to be. Around 1994, I was in Tokyo, communicating with Lincoln through dial-up connections. Emails and calls were routinely dropped and re-done. Later we were surprised to find each connection had a \$5 or \$6 fee.

### Tell about an unexpected travel event

As a young man I was in Austria. At a home dinner the host spoke of serving in the German army. He'd lost a leg at Stalingrad. He asked if my father served in WWII. I answered truthfully, hesitantly - Yes, he had. The power of human connection is strong, compassionate; we said good-by with tears in our eyes.

One time at a track meet in Austria we had an unexpected event. A custom is to exchange jerseys with the rival team. My athletes expected to exchange shirts, maybe later. The Austrian kids, boys and girls, more comfortable with nudity and the exchange routine, stripped down right there on the field and offered their entire uniform, shirts and shorts, to the amazement of my athletes.

### Share some things you are proud of.

I received several awards for my teaching and coaching. In 1994 I was named the National High School Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year. I was the head cross country coach (at Lincoln Southeast) for 23 state champion teams. In 1999, I was a Milken Award winner, which is like the Nobel Prize for teaching.

### What are you enjoying now?

I now live on a small farm near Martell. I have a couple of Goldendoodles, several barn cats, and chickens. In the past year I acquired a couple of miniature donkeys that just love to have their ears scratched.

I play keyboard and sax in several bands. I've been playing rock and roll music since 1965. I'm from a very musical family. Currently I'm in several bands: Soul Dawg - funk and soul; The Raw Nerve - classic rock. And, the Wheezetones. We were Lincoln's top cover band in 2011 and were inducted into the Nebraska Performing Arts Hall of Fame in 2023. Join us the evening of July 2, at The Mill Telegraph. You can find each band on YouTube.

## New FFL Member Sylvia Crilly Answers Questions from Phyllis Arth



**Sylvia Crilly**

In 1993 my husband, son, and I had the opportunity to get out of life in the proverbial 'fast-lane' of the San Francisco Bay Area, and moved to Superior, NE where my husband had grown up. Last year, after my husband's death, I relocated to Lincoln to be close to my son, wife, and grandsons: a decision I have not regretted.

### **What drew you to Friendship Force Lincoln?**

In this time of hate and polarization in the world the idea of meeting people willing to connect with others in friendship and respect whether in Lincoln or internationally has become more relevant to me now than in any other period in my lifetime.

### **How has your use of technology changed over your travels?**

Technology has become the 'bete noire' of traveling for me. I have been traveling on my own since age sixteen but lately have constantly run into problems particularly overseas: My rail app only worked sometimes, cell phone was iffy, etc. For those of us not particularly tech savvy solo travel has become so much more difficult. My rail app only worked some of the time while I was traveling in Switzerland, Austria, northern Italy, and Germany last fall. My phone let me communicate to the US but could I text friends in the above mentioned places to say "pick me up at the train station at 5:15"...no such luck. Other travelers have told me they had issues as well.

### **What are some things you have realized you don't really need when traveling?**

Luggage. I manage a month overseas with a carry-on and a huge purse: the purse I use daily is in my carry-on usually filled with my socks. So long as I can wash clothes once a week all is well. Now, of course, if I am going to a famous opera festival, film festival, major business meetings, whatever, I will be stuck with taking a large suitcase or two. Regular concerts, plays, etc. don't seem to require fancy clothing in Europe or the States anymore in my experience.

### **What skills have been beneficial for your travels?**

Languages. I am bilingual German-English, have a functional knowledge of Spanish, but alas, my French is down to a few words. Knowing "please" and "thank you" in the local language is always a bonus. Traveling in the Nordic countries is easy: I think they speak better English than a lot of us do. Found that quite a few younger Japanese and Chinese people have also acquired good English skills which makes traveling on one's own a lot easier.

## Saturday Breakfasts at Stauffer's Enjoyed by FFL Members

### **By Marylyn Watson, Committee Chair**

One of the activities enjoyed by Friendship Force members is our monthly breakfast at Stauffer's Cafe on the second Saturday of each month. We average eight members joining us for lively discussions on topics like: "What is the first thing you notice when meeting someone", "Where do you get your news and why", "What is your favorite thing to do when procrastinating". We would love to have more members join us. We are usually there for an hour, starting at 8:30. FF: members could invite prospective members to learn about our club.

## Carol Johnstone-Hornig Is New FFL Member

### What drew you to Friendship Force?

Judy Keetle. She speaks with enthusiasm and affection for Friendship Force Lincoln. I have had “an exchange” of my own making. In Brisbane, Australia I stayed with a family. Then they came to visit me – twice. We enjoyed the State Fair, in Lincoln, and then drove on to Fort Rob; Mt Rushmore, Deadwood, Mitchell, Wall Drug and Yankton SD. Their second trip we toured Estes Park, the Rocky Mountains, the National Parks of Utah – and on to Las Vegas and Palm Springs, ending up in San Diego. Definitely not the experience of tourists. I’ve been enjoying FFL Saturday Breakfasts. The weekly question and answers are helping me get acquainted. I love to make new friends.

### How has your use of technology changed over your travels?

I am relieved by notifications on my airline app. My first use of Apple air tags was on a trip to Italy. In Milan we could see our luggage traveling all over the airport – but not connecting with us. On a recent trip to Costa Rica I used my bird identifying app. It can listen to a song and ID the bird, it can use my photo and provide species information. Very fun. I enjoyed birds as I walked in a coffee plantation and while touring a fresh produce farm.

Harvey and I were married during Covid, we only had eight people attending. Our Pastor mentioned four times during our ceremony we were the oldest couple he had ever married! Our church live streamed the ceremony and over 175 friends, including our Aussie friends, were able to be with us - virtually.

### Tell about an unexpected travel event.

I did not expect to get sick in Costa Rica. It was awful. And bouncing on a bus ... yuck. I missed anticipated tours and spent two days in my hotel room. I was in a coffee producing country and was too sick to drink coffee. (I did ship beans home.) In Lincoln I saw a doctor and was reassured I had mended.

### Share some things you are proud of.

Two loving marriages. I am twice widowed. Mark Johnstone died in 2014, Harvey Hornig passed in 2024. Eleven grands and 12 great grandkids: I keep Dollar Tree in business! I worked at a medical office for 22 years. Some of my friends are people I met 54 years ago. I am active in Christ Lincoln church. In our Cancer Care Ministry I make bags containing a hat, footies, candies, puzzles, lotions and a New Testament Bible. I also participate in Grief Share. I am proud to keep serving others, to continue to enjoy living.



### What are you enjoying now?

Duplicate bridge. Cooking. Some of my house plants are 40 years old; when I moved from Crete to Lincoln I brought many plants with me. I nurture deck flowers. Wine. I’m in three wine clubs. Twenty years ago Mark and I toured California wine country and joined wine clubs, they send six bottles a few times a year. I am reading “A Ship of Brides,” by JoJo Moyes. I’m reading her series of historical fiction! Some days I’m up and out before 6 a.m., joining outings with my birdwatching group. I have already purchased my tickets for The Lied Center’s Broadway ‘25-‘26 season. I’m looking forward to touring Alaska this fall. I’ll be joining Kevin and Michelle Sjuts – again - I’ve loved previous tours with them. This journey will include flying into Anchorage, motorcoach to Denali and Fairbanks, railway to Skagway and cruising the Inside Passage.

Carol Johnstone-Hornig

## Diversity Committee Connects with Asian Neighbors

By Janet Walters, Co-chair, for the Committee

Some FFL Diversity and Community Service Committee members visited with friends made during our 2024 effort to become better acquainted with our Muslim neighbors in Lincoln at a gathering at Phyllis Arth's home. We plan to stay connected through meeting and supporting their work in the Muslim community where we can.

Various committee members also reached out to the Lincoln Asian Community and Cultural Center in May to see how we might connect with them in the upcoming year.

After sharing and discussion some ideas generated were:

- Creating a way to "Make a First American Friend"
- Being a guest in a Lincolnite's home for a meal
- Focusing on the need for a sense of connection across ages
- Considering welcoming new international students soon after arrival
- Knowing all new arrivals have a need to understand the Lincoln culture (food, traditions, expectations)
- Knowing that all new arrivals have a keen interest in having their voices heard
- Knowing that sharing and learning about food is key to successful gatherings
- Building awareness of the many Lincoln cultural events where understanding can be built.



**DCSC members at the Asian Center are Linda Kissler, Maxine Moul, Phyllis Arth, Janet Walters and Vickie McDonald.**

The committee will meet to discuss how our group might help meet some of these needs as we gain more understanding about our neighbors in Lincoln.

In June, Janet Walters and Vickie McDonald met with Lisa Guill, the Director of Communications for the Asian Community and Cultural Center. Lisa is also the Welcoming Communities Coordinator for the Cultural Centers of Lincoln. We talked about ways FFL might learn more about the varied cultures that make up our Lincoln community. Lisa shared information on the upcoming Welcoming Week which is a worldwide annual celebration that invites communities of all sizes to celebrate inclusive societies and deepen their commitment to creating places that are welcoming to everyone, including immigrants and refugees.

This year Welcoming Week is September 12<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. According to their report for 2024, Lincoln Welcoming Week celebrated a record-breaking 41 events with over 7,000 people in attendance across a wide variety of events. This year they are seeking partners who would like to host a Welcoming Week event (large or small).

We want to consider if and how FFL might play a role in Welcoming Week. In line with our current work, offering several small-group dinners, helping new arrivals better understand the Lincoln culture based on our members long-time residency in Lincoln, becoming a citizen friend, or hosting an information table on FFL at one of the bigger events all seem options we can consider.

Lisa invited Janet and Vickie to attend the monthly New American Task Force Meeting to become more informed on the various Lincoln agencies and needs in the Lincoln community. Once we know more, the DCSC will meet to discuss how to move forward.

## Pizza Ranch Social Held With Friendship Force Kansas

By Nancy Comer

It has been a few years since FFL had contact with the Kansas Club, but when they invited us to meet again, we joined them Monday, June 2 for dinner and socializing at Pizza Ranch in Lincoln. Whether we knew the group from Kansas or not, we came to reconnect or make new friends. There was no formal program, just talk which got louder and louder as the evening wore on!

One really important take-away was that the Kansas club was using the road trip to Nebraska as a recruiting tool for gaining new members. This 2–3-day trip provided opportunities to visit sites and museums around the Lincoln area and experience travel, except for a home stay, as a member of Friendship Force.

FFL hosted the Wichita Friendship Force in March 2010 for an exchange called “The Good Life of Nebraska” that included visiting the Sandhill Cranes. There were 35 ambassadors and 31 of us hosted them.

In 2013, FFL went all out with a themed exchange. Our own Betty Starr was the Trail Boss. She had to coordinate four clubs, Omaha, Lincoln, Wichita and Oklahoma City, as each organized activities for ambassadors as they traveled through their state. The theme: Taming a Harsh Land: Pioneers, Cowboys, Indians & Culture of America’s Great Plains.

This led to the Friendship Force International World Conference in late fall 2013. Lincoln and Wichita traveled together by bus to the New Orleans destination. FFL was named “Club of the Year”.



Friendship Force Kansas stopped at the Capitol during their recruiting trip to Nebraska.

## Calendar of Events for Friendship Force of Lincoln

**June: 18--June** L.E.O. trip to Omaha Benson Shaheen’s Authentic Afghan Cuisine, 6121 Maple St., Omaha, NE. Car-pool at 1:00 p.m. for shopping and dinner. Parking behind building.

**July: 11—July** Breakfast and Conversation at Stauffer’s Restaurant, 8:30a.m. Bring a guest.

**August: 4—August** FFL Board Meeting Walt Branch Library 2:00-4:00 p.m.

**8-16 —August** Open World/COIL: Romania

**9—August** Breakfast and Conversation at Stauffer’s Restaurant, 8:30a.m. Bring a guest.

**September: 8—September** FFL Board Meeting Walt Branch Library 2:00-4:00 p.m.

**13-September** Breakfast and Conversation at Stauffer’s Restaurant, 8:30a.m. Bring a guest.

**21—September** FFL Annual Meeting Walt Branch Library, 1:00-4:00p.m.

**23-30—September** Inbound Journey and Hosting for Columbia-Cascade (Portland, OR)

## 2025 Journeys Match FFL with Columbia Cascade, Sarasota

### By Pat Novak, Journey Resource Chair

Our second visit from a domestic FF club since COVID will be September 23-30, 2025, when we will host the Columbia Cascade Friendship Force (CCFF). A preliminary itinerary has already been planned (subject to revision as needed), contact has been made with the CCFF and they are already generating interest in this exchange. I will serve as coordinator for this exchange to oversee the event with needed home hosts, day hosts, and small dinner hosts. Check your calendars to see if you can help with this exchange and contact Pat Novak ([mutanu123@yahoo.com](mailto:mutanu123@yahoo.com)) ASAP so we can move forward.

Some of the planned highlights of the visit will be a welcome dinner at the Wellington Greens club house with historian Jim McKee presenting a history of Lincoln. September 25 will be devoted to our Unicameral with a tour of the Capitol and a luncheon and tour of the Governor's Mansion. Former State Senator Al Davis will give a history of our unique one-house, non-partisan Legislature.

Other events will be visits to Innovation Campus and the International Quilt Museum, Larson Tractor Museum, Arboretum on East Campus and the Dairy Store. Homestead Nation Monument, Speedway Motors and the Henry Doorley Zoo in Omaha (a special request of our visitors).

We are anticipating 10-15 visiting ambassadors so we need your help for a success.

About Columbia Cascade: "The Southwest Washington Friendship Force Club" took part in one of the first-ever Friendship Force exchanges in 1977. In those early days, ambassadors in large groups of 150-400 traveled on chartered planes to the hosting country. The empty plane then returned to the USA with ambassadors to the original city. In 1982 the club received one of the first charters granted to Friendship Force Clubs. As more members joined the club from Oregon, they assumed the name "Friendship Force of Columbia Cascade" because of the location near the Columbia River and Cascade Range.

### Sarasota, FL Outbound Journey

An outbound exchange is planned with the Sarasota, FL club November 4-9. We have six Ambassadors interested in going. There is the chance that we might be joining members of the Birmingham, AL FF for this if our numbers remain low. The fees to Sarasota are estimated at \$325-\$375 but airfare is changing daily.

I have been there and they do a great job of showing us around the area. Also, put the word out to your friends to see if you can generate more interest.

Also, and most importantly - is there anyone who would be willing to serve as Journey Coordinator for this? I will be more than happy to help with logistics and communication,

If you are interested in serving as a leader, or just going as an ambassador and enjoying Florida in the winter, let Pat Novak ([mutanu123@yahoo.com](mailto:mutanu123@yahoo.com)) know ASAP.

### Indonesia Outbound Journey for June 2025 Cancelled

Maxine Moul, Journey Coordinator for the FFL Journey to two clubs on Java, Indonesian, cancelled the trip at the deadline for full payment for Ambassadors. Only our three Lincoln club members were willing to continue. Other potential Ambassadors cancelled, citing the length of the flights (from 21 to 32 hours, depending on the itinerary chosen), the cost of the flights and a reluctance to travel overseas currently. This was the second year we had to cancel because of lack of interest, for various reasons.

**The Friendship Force of Lincoln Membership Application**  
**Friendship Force International and Friendship Force of Lincoln Dues**  
**\$50 per person**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewing Member \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: Month \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Would you like to receive an electronic birthday greeting? Y N

Does Friendship Force of Lincoln have your permission to use your photograph in brochures, media articles, website, Facebook, etc. to promote the Organization? Y N

New Members receive a complimentary name badge. Circle your choice: Pin Magnetic

**Ways I can help:** (Circle as many as you like)

Club supporter

Inbound Home Host

Activities Committee

Inbound Dinner Host

Open World (COIL) Committee

Journey Coordinator

Computer/Internet Skills

Officer Nominating Committee

Diversity & Community Service Committee

Passport Newsletter Formatting

Feature article writer for Passport or Neighborhood Extra

Speakers' Bureau

Social Committee

Future Officer

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to: Friendship Force of Lincoln.**  
**Send to Friendship Force, PO Box 30334, Lincoln, NE 68503**