



THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF GREATER ATLANTA NEWSLETTER



JULY • AUGUST • 2013

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○



Greetings to all!

The summer is flying by, and the members of Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta are flying with it! It seems that many of us have just returned from Peru, and now another group is preparing to fly off to Australia. These are both reciprocal exchanges with clubs that we have hosted in the past. And in April we will host the club from Turrialba, Costa Rica, where we were so warmly welcomed in January of 2011. I think this proves that friendships made across international borders can indeed be lasting ones, even though our face-to-face contact is brief.

Our new drive to have monthly club social activities has been a great success so far. On June 11, members of the FFGA dined together at the Green Ginger Asian Fusion restaurant and then visited the Shambhala Meditation Center in Decatur. The Machu Picchu restaurant on Buford Highway was our gathering site on July 14, where more than 40 FFGA members enjoyed Peruvian-style food and each other's company. On August 4, there will be a send-off dinner at the Outback Steakhouse for the FFGA ambassadors going to Australia. All members are invited to attend. Other activities are being planned for the fall, so read more about them in the newsletter and expect future news flashes from our noble scribe, Kent Vickers.

We are coming to that time of year when we will be electing new officers and looking for volunteers to serve on the Board of Directors in 2014. In order for us to continue offering social and exchange activities for the club, we need for everyone to contribute in some way, large or small, to the planning of these activities and the operations of the club. That way, the burden is not too great on any one member or small group of members. Please consider volunteering for an elected position on the Board (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) or serving on a committee (newsletter, website, social, membership and communications/publicity). We need everyone's help to keep the FFGA the wonderful club it has always been! Please be sure to attend the annual meeting at Mimi's on October 6 to vote for the club's leaders and to express your wishes regarding the outbound exchanges for 2015.

I hope to see you at as many FFGA activities as you can possibly attend! We are a group of amazing people, and we have great fun together! As always, if you have any suggestions or concerns about the club, please feel free to contact me by phone at (404) 351-5352 or by email at madamew@hotmail.com .

In Friendship,
Cynthia Williams
President, FFGA

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

In keeping with this Newsletter's tradition of spotlighting members of our club, this issue will introduce you to a family that has always supported the goals of Friendship Force both in spirit and by their deeds.



Bill and Marilyn Darmody joined the Friendship Force in 1978 during its heyday when the club had over 1,000 members. Both have served in a variety of positions on the FFGA Board of Directors, including President for Marilyn and Communications and Publicity chair for Bill. They are always among the first to step forward as volunteers when our club undertakes community service projects and are frequently in attendance at the various Friendship Force social events. As members they have traveled to Albania, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, New Zealand, Peru, Republic of Georgia, South Africa and Turkey. In addition to hosting ambassadors during 20 plus inbound exchanges, they have also hosted delegates during the Open World Leadership exchanges and the foreign military officers from Fort Benning during the three years our club participated in that program. As if that were not enough, they have also attended several of the Annual FFI World Conferences over the years. Bill says that they are still in contact with many of the people they have hosted or visited as members of the Friendship Force.

A native of Hammond, Indiana, Marilyn Kouris Darmody went to Purdue University located at West Lafayette, Indiana. When she turned 21 she fulfilled a life-long dream by becoming an Eastern Airlines flight attendant. During this time she lived in Manhattan and spent free time as a tour guide for Colonial Williamsburg. Marilyn has also worked as a travel agent prior to retirement.

William (Bill) Darmody was born and raised in Syracuse, NY. He earned a Business Administration degree at Niagara University, located in Lewiston, New York. Then he enlisted in the US Army for what he thought was going to be 2 years. Instead, he retired 25 years later as a Lieutenant Colonel. During this time he earned his Master's Degree in Business Management from the University of Richmond, in Virginia.

When Bill returned from duty in Vietnam, he and Marilyn met in Skaneateles, NY. They were married in July, 1967 in the chapel at Ft. Eustis, VA where Bill was assigned. They lived on army bases around the world, including Germany and Italy, until Bill's final assignment at Headquarters, Forces Command here in Atlanta, where he retired in 1982. Bill then joined Electronic Data Systems Corporation and worked there until 1996. He again retired and he and Marilyn decided to move to Peachtree City, where they have resided ever since.

THE SOCIAL SCENE

A "Post Exchange Party" was held on June 9th at the beautiful Norcross home of Ron and Robin Scott. All of the participants who took part in the Peru trip to Lima, Cusco and Machu Picchu brought a dish to share in addition to several snapshots. A special commemorative plaque was presented to Glenda and John Wilhelm who served as co-exchange directors and did a marvelous job. Also in attendance were Marcia Bansley, Joe and Bonnie Evans, Eunice Luke, Joan Sankey, Erika and Kent Vickers and Cynthia Williams. Members of the group that went to Peru but were unable to attend: Wanda and Stan Bokoski, Barbara Beaman (UK), John and Cheril Elliot (Iowa), Liz Smith (also from Iowa) and Donna Jean Innis (Ontario, Canada).



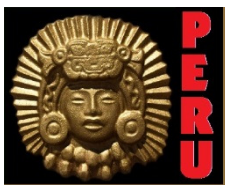


The **Evening of Enlightenment** held on June the 11th was attended by 23 FFGA members and their guests. The event began with an enjoyable oriental supper meal at the Green Ginger Asian Fusion Restaurant in Decatur. For a few of us it was our first time to experience such a wide variety of exotic choices. This reporter quickly found out that even though "wasabi root" may resemble a bit of avocado, that is where the similarity ends. The difference was quickly apparent, and I thank heaven that the waitress had supplied our table with a gallon pitcher of ice water. For those not aware, wasabi is prepared from the root of a pungent Asiatic herb and is similar in flavor to horseradish but ten times stronger.

Upon completion of our oriental supper we proceeded to the Shambhala Meditation Center, also located in Decatur. Here we were met by very pleasant staff members of the center and were requested to remove our shoes and accompany them to their classroom, a large clean and airy room with several thick pads on the floor. Those who were able were asked to sit on these with legs folded beneath or in front of them, backs straight and hands relaxed together in our laps. Chairs were provided for those who were unable to assume the position. After introductions all around we were instructed in the art of meditation and how to become at peace with our daily vexations and the world around us. We also learned how meditation is but a part of the Buddhist religion and a little bit about Buddhism itself. The entire orientation took about an hour and was followed by a question and answer period, refreshments and discussion with some of the members who regularly practice meditation techniques at the Shambhala Center. An invitation was extended to everyone to return and learn at their convenience.



Note: When an educational or religious institution devotes its facilities exclusively to our FFGA group and provides a tour or instruction without charge, it has become customary for our club to make a donation to that institution from the FFGA treasury. The amount of the donation is authorized by a vote of the club's Board of Directors and a letter of thanks is included with the check sent by our Treasurer.



Thanks to all of the 41 folks who turned out on July 14th at the Machu Picchu Peruvian restaurant for the "Peru Remembered Social Supper". A very special thanks to Bonnie Evans for the excellent job she did on putting together a really interesting slide presentation of the exchange to Peru. After the slide show, more than one person in attendance expressed regrets that they had been unable to travel with the club on that exchange.



Don't forget about the "Australian Send-Off Supper" at the Toco Hills Outback restaurant Sunday, August 4th at 5:00 PM. It is only \$15.00 per person for a full meal of Steak or Chicken or Salmon with Veggies, Potatoes, Dessert and a non-alcoholic beverage – Tip and Taxes included. Please see the Newsflash 08-13 previously sent to your Inbox on July 17th for directions and a reservation form. Although this reminder is



appearing here just days before the reservation is due you may be able to call Glenda Wilhelm, the social planner in charge, at 770-921-4333 and still make provisions to attend if you do so before Friday, 2 Aug.

IN THE FUTURE



This year's **Japan Fest** will take place at the Gwinnett Center located just off of Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth, GA. FFGA encourages all of its members to come out and enjoy this opportunity to view a unique look at another country's culture as a group. Tentative plans are being made for all who desire to do so to meet at a local restaurant for an early lunch at 11:00 AM on Saturday the 21st of September. After lunch the group will proceed to the Gwinnett Center and purchase their tickets, which are \$8.00 per person. There are many demonstrations of dance, martial arts, ceremony and taiko drumming as well as displays of Japanese products to be enjoyed so the group may choose to go separate ways at this time. A restaurant at which to meet is still being sought at this time, so please check your e-mail periodically for a Newsflash that will provide more details.



Folkloric Dancers



Taiko Drummers



Martial Arts Demonstrations



Flower Arrangements



We are shooting for Saturday, November 9th as the date to gather a group of interested FFGA members for a trip to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, GA. The 2,300 acre monastery is the inspirational home of Georgia's Trappist monks. The new Monastic Heritage Center – a 17,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art museum – is both interactive and educational. There is also a bonsai garden, store and a café where we may have lunch. At the Abbey Gift Shop, which is the largest Christian bookstore in Georgia, visitors can purchase monk-made biscotti, fruitcake fudge and honey, all of which the monks sell in an effort to be self-sustaining and feed the local poor. Arrangements are still pending and more information will be published in the future. There is no admission fee, and the Social committee is trying to get volunteers willing to carpool with other members for the one hour trip to the monastery. If you are willing to volunteer, please contact President Cynthia Williams by e-mail at madamew@hotmail.com, or by telephone at 404-351-5352.

EXCHANGE INFORMATION



Exchange Director Sue Mills has her Ambassadors all fired up with enthusiasm and ready to go. The itineraries for both Sydney and the Gold Coast of Australia have prepared excellent programs that should surely delight the most jaded of travelers. Tickets have already been purchased for those who wanted to attend a performance at the famous Sydney Opera House and Currumbin Sanctuary on the Gold Coast has spiffed up their Roos, Crocs, and Koalas in preparation for the Yanks' visit to their native wildlife preserve. Sue says she has seven of our club members and six members of other FF clubs meeting in Los Angeles for the onward journey. We wish a great trip for them!



Exchange Director for Atlanta, Ken McKinney, reports that he now has a sufficient number of volunteers to host the incoming Ambassadors from Kiev, Ukraine – thanks to those who signed on at the Peruvian dinner. However, he is also hoping that more members will volunteer to provide a small dinner get together for a Ukrainian Ambassador and their host. Some of the Ukrainians are still having problems obtaining clearances from their government and visas from ours. Hopefully these problems will be completely resolved by the October 22 - 29th time frame of this exchange. Ken may be contacted at (360) 914-2242 - (You may need to put a 1 in front of that if dialing from a landline telephone.) – You may also e-mail him at kenmckinney11@gmail.com .



The "Ticos" of Turrialba, Costa Rica are paying us a reciprocal visit in April of 2014 and we are still in need of an Exchange Director for FFGA. We had a great visit with them during January 2011 and it is now time to showcase our renowned Southern Hospitality in response to the kindness they displayed to us during our visit to their country. Although it is still eight months away, it is not too early to begin planning. for this inbound exchange. To volunteer to be the E.D. for this exchange please contact Vice President Eunice Luke at 404-633-2149 or by e-mail at ealuke@bellsouth.net .Most of the "Ticos", as Costa Ricans like to refer to themselves, speak excellent English, so communication should not be a problem. Mentoring help is available to any member who would like to accept the position of E.D. for this exchange.



In the very early stages of planning, is a Domestic Exchange to the Friendship Force of Eastern Washington and North Idaho in late May or early June. Typically domestic exchanges are conducted over a period of five nights. Host program fees are negotiated between the clubs' exchange directors and the FFI Ambassador fee is \$50. Transportation may be either independent or group travel to the host destination. An E.D. familiar with this area has already tentatively volunteered for this exchange and will be providing more details in future. You may contact Vice President Eunice Luke at 404-633-2149 or by e-mail at ealuke@bellsouth.net if interested in participating. Be advised that domestic exchanges to the western part of the U.S. usually fill up quickly, and this club normally hosts no more than twenty Ambassadors at a time.

ODDS and ENDS



FFGA Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting of the Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta will be held on Sunday, the 6th of October at Mimi's Café located at 1221 Ashford Crossing in North Atlanta near Perimeter Mall. A social period will commence at 2:00 PM and a luncheon will be served at 2:30 PM followed by the business meeting at approximately 3:30 PM, or as soon as possible thereafter. Members are not required to attend the social or the luncheon but are highly encouraged to attend the business meeting. Club officers for 2014 will be elected and destinations for the year 2015 will be selected during this occasion. Final details regarding expenses, and the selection of a nominating committee are still being worked out. Please monitor your e-mail periodically for a newsflash providing details.



To see the FFGA Board of Directors minutes from the board meetings held in June and July please depress and hold down the Ctrl key on your keyboard while clicking on the following links: For June <http://sdrv.ms/13JRpFN> and <http://sdrv.ms/18viHiJ> for July. In the event the links do not open the minutes for you, copy the links individually into the address bar of your internet browser. Please allow time for the link to open.



Dave Kelley has volunteered to assume the duties of FFGA's Web Master and has been working steadfastly at learning the necessary techniques involved in running the website. Please pay the site a visit on a regular basis at: <http://www.friendshipforceatlanta.com>. We also want to thank Steve Douds for the exceptional job he did in reestablishing the website after it was lost to the club.



CHANGE OF COMMAND - PART I

The following is an open letter to all of members of Friendship Force International from the former President and CEO, George Brown. (Some parts addressed to specific friends and events have been omitted to conserve space in this newsletter – Editor.)

Dear Friends,



In July of 1983, I met a man named Wayne Smith. he invited me to join the staff of Friendship Force International. For 23 of the past 30 years, what began as a job somewhere along the way became a fascinating and very rewarding career. But at the end of July, my journey as a member of the FFI staff will come to an end when I retire.

As I look back on my years with the Friendship Force, I am amazed at what this great organization has been able to accomplish. Year after year, tens of thousands of our members reach out in friendship to strangers, using home hospitality to break down the barriers that normally separate us. I've seen this happen so many times...and I've experienced it myself.

Since announcing my retirement, I have been asked what I plan to do? I'm hoping to do some writing, including but not limited to my Friendship Force experiences. I'm particularly intrigued by the universality of "hospitality to strangers" across all the world's cultures. This is what I believe has made the Friendship Force possible, and remains a powerful force for good in the world. I'll begin this by trying my hand at writing a blog on the Internet. The great thing about blogs is that they are short and they are interactive. I'll take the lead by sharing some travel experiences and ideas and invite whoever is reading to respond with their own experiences and journeys. It is easy to join. Just drop me an email at my new email address so we can keep in touch and so I can tell you how to follow my blog: george@gtbtravel.com.

We all like journeys, but we also know they have a downside...saying goodbye when they come to an end. Having to say goodbye, just when we feel we're getting to know each other. For the better part of 30 years, I've been on a journey with the FFI as a member of the staff and for the past nine years as your president. Now it is time to say goodbye, which makes me sad. The sadness in saying goodbye, however, is tempered by the knowledge that there are friendships that will continue over the years ahead. I'm retiring from FFI but not from Friendship Force friends!

Just as I will continue my international friendships, I know you will do the same. And as you move through your life's journeys, I know you'll continue to value the connections that the Friendship Force has made possible. There are great opportunities ahead for the Friendship Force and I know that you will provide the same enthusiastic support to the new president that you provided me all these years. The Friendship Force has been strong for 36 years because people like you have believed in its mission. Keep up that good work in the years ahead!

In friendship,
George



CHANGE OF COMMAND - PART II



From: Jack Mullen, Chair, FFI Board of Directors - Dated: July 3, 2013

As the chair of the board of directors of Friendship Force International, it gives me great pleasure to announce the appointment of Joy DiBenedetto as FFI's fifth president and CEO. Joy brings a great deal of experience to FFI from her years at Atlanta-based international news agency CNN and CARE Organization, the non-profit based in Atlanta that works to end poverty in the world. Those on the search committee who met her feel that she has the skill and vision to lead our organization through the next phase. Joy will begin her work here on July 15, 2013, and we will formally introduce Joy to the club members at the world conference in New Orleans.



Joy DiBenedetto

Joy is the founder and former CEO of HUM: Human Unlimited Media, the world's first and only 'all-nation' content and information agency. An award-winning 20-year media veteran, she has covered every major global event in successively senior positions, from the television studio and in the field; domestically and internationally; as a producer and manager. Until March of 2008, she was the global vice president of network booking and research for the CNN News Group, where she oversaw guest coverage for CNN's domestic and international news networks, managing a worldwide staff.

Throughout her career she has strived to promote the importance of global understanding and to unite the world's people. With Turner Broadcasting, CNN and HUM she made positive change towards "closing the Geographic Gap" in media coverage. She has also pursued various humanitarian efforts with CARE, the Fugee's Family and the United Nations.

DiBenedetto is a world trekker who often bicycles to work and who has survived Dengue Fever. I know you will welcome her and give her the support that the President will need as we strive to grow in our mission. It is only fitting to give a big thanks to the CEO search committee who worked for the last 7 months to bring us to this day where I am able to make this announcement. Again, I welcome Joy to the FFI family and I know you welcome her too!



Joy DiBenedetto began as FFI President and CEO on July 15, 2013.

Her biography appears below:

She has a bachelor's degree in speech pathology/audiology and is a graduate of Marymount Manhattan College. In addition to being a recipient of a George Foster Peabody award, an Alfred I du Pont Columbia Broadcast News award, and a Jack Myers Media award for Innovation, she is also a Marshall Memorial fellow and a UN Foundation Global Health Press fellow who sits on numerous advisory and directorial boards. She often speaks publicly about the media industry, international business strategy, and on what unites people across the world.

Joy DiBenedetto believes strongly in the Friendship Force mission and in the signature program of home hospitality, which encourages personal friendships among global citizens. "This is an authentic message and method of worldwide cooperation that, in our data-driven digital age is often overlooked; and one which I am eager to help elevate and represent on behalf of the incredible mission and purpose of Friendship Force International," DiBenedetto said.

In Friendship,
Kent G. Vickers
Newsletter Editor