



April 2025

# friendship force

## CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA

### Don't Forget - April Social Activity

Sandra Gramley, our Social Activities Coordinator, has planned an interesting outing for **Friday, April 25** for club members. We will visit the **Intergenerational Center for Arts and Wellness** in Winston-Salem. Our visit will begin with a tour and lunch in their café. Following that we will have a 15-minute Chair Yoga class then an Erasure Poetry class (which has a \$10 fee per person.) Our visit should wrap up about 2:00. Plan to **arrive at 11:15** as our tour will begin at 11:30. The address is 114 NW 30th St, WS, 27105. Their parking lot can also be accessed from 2895 Shorefair Drive. No rsvp is needed.

### FF Greater Harrisburg Inbound

On Monday evening, March 31 as scheduled a caravan of cars transporting the FFGH ambassadors arrived throughout the Triad to the homes of their various hosts. Among the Harrisburg group there were several ambassadors who were involved with FFCNC's visit in September 2024 to the Greater Harrisburg area and three ambassadors who traveled with Martha Brown and family in the Republic of Ireland in 2022. Old friendships were renewed and new ones forged. The official welcome dinner on Tuesday, April 1 at the Kernersville Community House was well attended, and the farewell dinner provided the opportunity to share many memories of both our visit to Harrisburg area and their visit here. Their four days of sightseeing were packed as they visited Old Salem, UNC School of the Arts, Mt. Airy, a winery, International Civil Rights Museum, Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, and more. At the farewell dinner of traditional North Carolina barbeque, many memories were shared of visits both here and in Pennsylvania.

### Open World from Moldova

Our next guests are scheduled to arrive at 2:12 PM on Friday, May 9 at the Piedmont Triad International Airport. All FFCNC members are welcome to join the host families and program organizers to greet our guests who are arriving on United Airlines from Dulles Airport in D.C.

The theme of this Open World (OW) program is "Rule of Law, Local Legislators." The group of five delegates includes two mayors and three members of city councils ranging in ages from 27 to 55. We will host three men and two women. As always, the group also



Peter Peiffer and Ray Kiszely hold the Moldovan flag while Daniel, our Moldovan guide for the day, explains the symbolism of the flag. 2014

includes a facilitator, a lady, also from Moldova. FFCNC families hosting our guests are Tamara Michael, Carolyn Dilda, Mary Davis, Don Woodward, the Browns, and the Poplins. An interpreter will join the group on Monday when the professional programs begin.

While the delegates are in the Triad, the professional program will include a visit with the mayor of Winston-Salem, Allen Joines. Winston-Salem is a sister city of Ungheni, a city in Moldova near the border with Romania and home to one of the delegates. Other professional meetings will include visits with mayors and county commissioners in the Triad.

Due to the theme of this OW program on Wednesday, May 14th the delegates will visit the School of Government on the UNC CH campus. When that program session ends, Friendship Force members of the Raleigh club will transport them to their Raleigh host families. There will be two more days of program sessions in Raleigh which will focus on state government. Saturday, May 17 they will fly home to Moldova from the Raleigh airport.

FFCNC has hosted more than a dozen Open World programs over the years, including several from Moldova. Ray Kiszely has played a major role in the development of most of them! When asked why he volunteers to lead these professional programs his response was, "I love to do this, because it is important and the work we do can have immense personal satisfaction for the delegates and create a memory for them that could last a lifetime. It is a peaceful process and one of voluntary service to my country at a time when we need to continue to develop friendships more than ever."

## **FF Sacramento Inbound**

Plans are progressing for the next domestic inbound journey arriving on June 3. With the assistance of Judy Greene and Nancy Edens, program details are coming together. The activities planned will be similar to those planned for FF Harrisburg; however, the visit will be two days longer (ending June 10) providing a "free day" for hosts and guests. The process of matching ambassadors with host families is underway. Additional day hosts and drivers will be helpful. To volunteer in either capacity, please call Roger Poplin at 336-337-4434 or email him at [rogerpoplin@gmail.com](mailto:rogerpoplin@gmail.com).

## **FF Denver Outbound**

There will be a nice size group of 12 – 13 FFCNC ambassadors traveling to Denver August 4<sup>th</sup>. This includes the Edens, Kiszelys, Johns, Cauthens, Poplins, Karla Shanahan, Marta Rhodes, and hopefully Melody Glick. It's not too late to assist with the planning for this journey if you are interested. Please contact Roger Poplin (contact information is above.)



## **FF Costa Rica Outbound**

The last, but not least, of our 2025 journeys is our outbound journey to visit the San Jose FF club in Costa Rica. Planning for this journey has begun in earnest. Those traveling will be the Johns, Edens, Poplins, Cauthens, Martha and Derek Brown, Barbara North, and Tomoko Thornburg. Unfortunately, The San Jose club can only host four couples, and four singles which has left a couple FFCNC members on a waiting list if one of our members needs to cancel. Planning for this journey will be a group effort led by Roger Poplin. The homestay visit will be September 5 – 12. Possibilities for extended travel are being researched.

## 2026 Journeys

News of our 2026 journeys arrived this week. FFCNC will be hosted by the FF Florida Suncoast club in May. This club is on the Gulf coast in the Clearwater, Florida area.

In October 2026 FFCNC will host the Pikes Peak (Colorado) club – returning the favor of their hospitality in 2016.

FFCNC has learned that our 2026 international outbound journey will be to the country of our first choice which was Japan! Specifically – Kumamoto, Japan in August 2026.

Kumamoto is the capital and, with a population of about 740,000, the largest city of Kumamoto Prefecture. This prefecture is the southernmost part of Japan (not counting a string of islands that terminates at Okinawa.) It is known for its historical castle (pictured here), Mount Aso, (a large, active volcano with the world's largest caldera,) and the adorable mascot Kumamon (seen below.) It's also a significant agricultural area with unique seafood and boasts numerous hot springs and natural beauty. So, check the expiration date on your passport and get ready to visit Japan with FFCNC!

