



March 2026

friendship force

CENTRAL
NORTH CAROLINA

Successful Outbound to FF Florida Suncoast

Our thirteen ambassadors had a wonderful time during their February visit with the Friendship Force Club of the Florida Suncoast. After a warm greeting in the St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport, our ambassadors were taken to the various homes of their host families.



The next day was the start of a six-day itinerary that including many of the activities mentioned in the previous newsletter such as the Dunedin History Museum, a trolley tour of St. Petersburg, the Dali Museum, the Tarpon Springs Train Depot Museum, the sponge industry, and the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. And there were also a couple surprising additions to the itinerary.

Who would have expected to visit the Waste Management Pinellas County Solid Waste Disposal facility? (You won't find that on a typical commercial group tour!) Pinellas County is the most densely populated county in Florida with over a million tons of waste annually. Our ambassadors watched a 45-minute slide show and took a 45-minute driving tour of the facility. A couple tips the group learned include not to waste water rinsing out empty containers, pill bottles are too small to recycle, and don't recycle drinking glasses. In order to minimize the quantity of garbage arriving at the Waste Disposal, other suggestions included donate unwanted clothing, take yard waste to yard waste processing facilities to be turned into mulch, take metal items to a scrap metal recycler, compost food waste at home, and more.

A couple of the activities on the itinerary touched on the history of the Tocobaga. About 500 years ago when Spanish explorers reached the northeast shore of Old Tampa Bay, they skirmished with the indigenous population now known as the Tocobaga. Their population declined significantly during the next century. As Florida transitioned to British rule in 1763, these Native Americans emigrated with the evacuating Spanish people. What remains in this area today are numerous mounds. The largest mound in Philippe Park is estimated to be 1000 years old. Recent studies indicate that significant portions of a Tocobaga village are still intact inside this 15-foot-tall temple mound and its surrounding midden areas. A shell midden area is an archaeological deposit primarily composed of discarded shells, animal bones, and other refuse left behind by prehistoric or early coastal populations.

For our newest member, Saeed Kazemian, this was his first Friendship Force journey. He shared with us that “this was a great opportunity. Our host was wonderful and I am looking forward to our next journey.” For FFCNC member Julie O’Neal, this journey was a first for her as well. “This journey was an excellent introduction to the Friendship Force ambassador experience for me. Our host was so attentive to detail, and more welcoming than I would have imagined anyone could be. The sites that we saw were lovely and were matched by the friendliness of the people there in Florida.”



You know you are traveling with Lundee Amos when everyone dons a red nose.

Make New Friends, But Keep the Old

If you were ever a girl scout you recognize this phrase. The song continues, “One is silver, and the other gold.” While in Florida Danny Crump and Lundee Amos visited Connie DuBois. Connie traveled with FFCNC to Moscow in June 2015. They enjoyed a pleasant reunion and reminisced about their visit to Russia. Sadly, Connie has lost her sight and can no longer travel.



Membership Update

As of February 28, forty-four FFCNC members have paid "full membership" dues of \$100 and six have paid the "social membership" dues of \$35. As a reminder, any members who may wish to travel on outbound journeys, international or domestic, should sign up for "full membership."

A final reminder and membership renewal form was emailed to all members who had not renewed earlier. If you have any questions regarding your membership status, please contact Ken Ostberg at ken.ostberg@gmail.com or 336-391-2752.

Wanted: Club Treasurer

FFCNC is still in need of a treasurer. This is not an extremely time-consuming role, requiring about 3 – 6 hours most months. Occasionally more such as when annual dues are remitted. However, it is a very important role that is essential to the club's operations. If you are detail oriented, please consider contributing your time to FFCNC's operation. You may contact Marta for a more detailed description of the role. Text her at 336-971-5747 or email her at rhodesmarta@gmail.com.



First 2026 Social Activity Coming Soon

If you have not already, mark your calendars now for Friday, March 20 when all FFCNC members are invited to hear more about FFCNC's journey to visit the FF Florida Suncoast club. Bring your favorite dish for our Potluck Dinner at Sherwood Forest United Methodist Church (5250 Silas Creek Parkway, Winston-Salem) from 4 – 6:30 PM. A Punchbowl invitation was sent on Monday. If you have questions about this event, you may contact Valerie Briggs at vjbriggs@gmail.com or 270-401-4557.

Outbound to FF Kumamoto, Japan

FFCNC's ambassadors who will be traveling to Japan had a wonderful Japanese Cultural Orientation at the home of Tomoko Thornburg. The program was led by Tomoko and Richard and Valerie Briggs. Tomoko is originally from Japan, and the Briggs shared insights from their extensive travel experience in Japan while living in South Korea. The information and food were both fantastic. Their departure is April 6, and everyone is excited about this journey.



FF Pikes Peak Journey

Members of the FF Pikes Peak club will visit the Triad in or around October of this fall. Dates will be finalized soon. There will be lots of opportunity to host, so please give that some thought. This club hosted FFCNC in 2013 and they put together a wonderful program for our ambassadors. In the meantime, if you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Roger Poplin at 336-337-4434 or rogerpoplin@gmail.com.

2027 International Journeys.



Many thanks to those who provided feedback to Roger Poplin regarding our preferred international outbound journey. On behalf of our club, Roger submitted Thailand as our first choice and South Africa as our second choice.