

**MESSAGE FROM FFO PRESIDENT**

**JOAN KINNIE**

Friendship Force clubs rely on their members to facilitate the personal connections that are made during journeys. Now more than ever we need you to volunteer for one of the many varied and interesting activities that are being planned for both upcoming inbound Journeys from Western North Carolina, June 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> and from Western Colorado, September 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. You'll not only get to be a visitor in your own city BUT you'll get to make new friends too.

**Meet Sergeant Major Bill Stewart - A Life in the Saddle**

At the GM on **May 12th**, we are honored to welcome **Sergeant Major Bill Stewart**, a remarkable Canadian whose career quite literally put him in the saddle of history.



For nearly four decades, Sgt. Maj. Stewart represented Canada with pride as a member of the world-famous RCMP Musical Ride. Wearing the iconic red serge and riding before audiences across Canada and around the globe, he became a powerful symbol of Canadian tradition, precision, and excellence.

His journey extended far beyond the show ring. Sgt. Maj. Stewart trained riders for royal performances and participated in escort duties for visiting dignitaries - including memorable occasions involving Queen Elizabeth II both in Canada and in London.

In recognition of his distinguished service, he was invested in the Royal Victorian Order - an honor personally bestowed for service to the Crown, and one he considers among the greatest moments of his career.

With stunning photographs and captivating behind-the-scenes stories, Sgt. Maj. Stewart will take us inside the pageantry, discipline, and unforgettable experiences of a life dedicated to service.

➤ If you enjoy Canadian history, royal encounters, horses, or simply a great story well told - this is a presentation you will not want to miss!

**FFO BOARD 2026-2027**

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**CALENDAR OF FFO EVENTS**

**2026**

- Mar 24 FW at Summerhays. 11:30am-1pm.  
Speaker Paul Rochon: ***I took the First Step and the Camino Took Over***
- Apr 21-28 FFO Outbound to Leuven, Belgium
- May 12 GM meeting at Riverside UC - a **2<sup>nd</sup> photo session for members! LUNCH AT 12PM.**  
Speaker at 12:30pm, meeting to follow.  
Guest speaker & storyteller: Sergeant Major Bill Stewart
- Jun 07-14 Inbound FF Western N Carolina, USA
- Sep 21-28 Inbound FF Western Colorado, USA
- Nov 09-16 FFO Outbound to Perth, Australia

**VP MEMBERSHIP**

**LYNNE DEACHMAN**

**SMILE FOR THE CAMERA!**

Donna Nicholson and Vic Hudon have volunteered to update the photos of our club's members for the FFO Directory and for use in outbound journeys.

The camera will be set up and ready for you in the altar area of the church at the beginning and at the end of the GM meeting at the Riverside



United Church on **May 12<sup>th</sup>**. **Note: FFO will pre-order a sandwich/drink/cookie lunch for you for \$10.**

**VP JOURNEYS**

**BARB DAVIGNON**

**UPDATE: FFO OUTBOUND JOURNEYS 2026**

**a) Leuven, Belgium journey (April 21-28, 2026)**

**FFO Journey Coordinator: Joanne Curran**

Not having had success filling this journey with members from our own club, we have reached out to domestic and international FF members to recruit the 3 remaining ambassadors. Having other club members join an FFO outbound creates many more opportunities to make new friends and learn about different cultures.

**b) Perth, Australia journey (November 9-16, 2026)**

**FFO Journey Coordinator: Leonard Bonnet**

12 of 18 members (including 4 new members) have signed up and planning has already started for the pre/post journey travel. Our best estimate is that the club/FFI fees will amount to about \$575 CDN for the week. **Interested in joining this journey? There is room for 6 more! Contact [leonard@kinbon.ca](mailto:leonard@kinbon.ca).**

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**UPDATE: FFO INBOUND JOURNEYS 2026**

**a) FF Western N Carolina, USA (June 7-14, 2026)**

**FFO Journey Coordinator: Petra Friedrichson**

15 ambassadors have registered to visit Ottawa. We still need 2 back-up night hosts, as well as couple of day hosts for the week and dinner hosts. If you are available to volunteer for this journey, please contact Mary Jane Kelleher before March 20<sup>th</sup> by email: [mjkelleher@bell.net](mailto:mjkelleher@bell.net)

**b) FF Western Colorado, USA (September 21-28, 2026)**

**FFO Journey Coordinator: Pierrette Benoit**

FFO is welcoming 12 ambassadors from FF Western Colorado. We are exploring spending a delightful day in Wakefield, QC enjoying the fall colors and attending the City of Ottawa's Block Party to commemorate the founding of Bytown on September 26, 1826! There are still opportunities for you to participate either on the committee or as hosts. Please contact Pierrette Benoit ([benoitp@ncf.ca](mailto:benoitp@ncf.ca)) to join in the fun!

**A FFO POEM FOR THE FF LEUVEN HOST CLUB**

**From FFO Ottawa to FF Leuven**

From Ottawa we come, with smiles and a cheer,  
Fifteen friendly FFO ambassadors, delighted to be here  
Across the wide ocean, from our land still with lots of  
snow,  
To this place with cobblestones, bells, and a gentle spring  
glow

We bring greetings from Canada - vast, calm, and kind,  
Where the maple leaf dances and winter still lingers in  
mind

Our FFO Group is small, but our hearts are stretched wide,  
Like our Rideau River in summer or in winter with skaters  
in stride

We've heard of your city - of learning and light,  
Where students & scholars have gathered for centuries -  
isn't that right

Of Leuven's old halls and the bells overhead,  
Marking time as ideas - and friendships - are spread

We've heard too of Belgium with dual languages in the air  
With brews carefully crafted with patience and care  
With many bicycles on streets and chocolate without end  
And tables where meals with strangers become meals with  
friends

Thanks to our hosts, who open their doors,  
Not just to their homes, but to something much more  
To daily routines, to customs and care,  
To moments that say, *we are welcome here*

So today let us say what the journey is for -  
New friendships, shared meals, and a few stories more  
With curiosity ready, and gratitude too,  
We're grateful, dear FF Leuven, to be here with you!

*Rosemae Blackwood*



Leuven Town Hall or (Stadhuis). Late Gothic architecture. 235 statues on the exterior.

**BARB & MARK SMITH - HONORARY FFO MEMBERS**

In recognition of Barb and Mark Smith’s longstanding contributions to FFO, the Board is making this exceptional couple: *Honorary FFO Members.*



**Barb and Mark Smith:**

*“Mark and I are delighted to become Honorary members of our club. We appreciate being recognized for our contributions to our club and its activities. We look forward to being of any help that we can be.”*



**Pierrette Benoit**, who knows the couple well, wrote:

“Barb and Mark, **founding members of our club**, have enthusiastically led and provided support to FFO when needed. They have consistently given their time and energy to organizing both inbound and outbound journeys as well as stepping up countless times to night/day/dinner host. They have also hosted over 80 international students and a few international teachers which attests to their giving nature and dedication to helping others.”

**Linda Steingarten** commented: “Barb and Mark Smith exemplify the essence of Friendship Force: the force of kindness, good will and of taking responsibility while offering warm smiles and a welcoming home.”

**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT FRIENDLY WANDERERS PAUL ROCHON: Mar 24<sup>th</sup>, 11:30-1pm at Summerhays**

**I Took the First Step and the Camino Took Over**

Paul will share with FFO his experiences walking the 700 km camino in Portugal and Spain in the fall of 2025.



Paul has said that walking the camino is “addictive” and

that must be true, as this was the 4<sup>th</sup> time he made the journey, sometimes with family members and other times on his own. Each year, 500,000 people make the pilgrimage using various routes, staying in hostels, and making new friends along the way.

**Location: Summerhays Grill, Private Room**

**1971 Baseline Rd. Ottawa** (across from College Square)

➤ **RSVP BY SUNDAY MARCH 10, 2026 @ 4:00 PM**

➤ **[Eventsffo@gmail.com](mailto:Eventsffo@gmail.com)**

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**FRIENDLY WANDERERS REPORT - FEB 10, 2026**

**James Powell: OTTAWA'S HISTORY THEN TO NOW**

Did you know that in the 1850’s, Ottawa was a rough and tumble, lawless, lumber town where no one wanted to live?

In his presentation on Ottawa's history to FFO members on Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, James Powell from the Historical Society of Ottawa stated that, despite these negative aspects, on December 31,1857, Queen Victoria selected Ottawa as the capital city of Canada, due its strategic location and defensible position. It was a distance away from the Americans, on the other side of the river from Hull, Quebec, and it had water links for transportation purposes.

The Parliament Buildings officially opened on June 6, 1866, and Ottawa was on its way to becoming the major administrative center of the country. Today, Ottawa is Canada’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest city.

## MEN DISCOVER NEW INTERESTS & NEW FRIENDS

### Men's Shed Groups

A Men's Shed is a group of men who come together in their community to develop new skills, discover new interests, and make new friends. For many men, aging and retirement can lead to loneliness and a loss of purpose - and that's where Men's Sheds come in. Originally founded in Australia in the 1990s, the grassroots Men's Shed movement has since expanded to more than 15 countries around the world.

#### Park Place Men's Shed Group

The Park Place Men's Shed Group (the Sheddies) has been operating in our condominium apartment building for just over a year. It provides a welcoming environment where male residents of Park Place can connect socially, share interests, and take part in activities that benefit both group members and the wider Park Place community.



We currently have 18 members from a wide range of backgrounds. The group meets for weekly coffee-and-chat mornings and a monthly off-site breakfast. We also organize snooker/billiards and darts sessions, and host "Shed Talks" that are open to all residents.

A number of members also volunteer as part of our odd-jobbers service, helping residents of Park Place with small handyman tasks they may not be able to do themselves and that can be difficult to get tradespeople to take on. While we do not charge for these jobs, residents may choose to donate to a fund used for the benefit of Park Place. **This initiative has been successful: so far, the odd jobbers have completed over 70 jobs and raised more than \$1,800.**

Our experience at Park Place has shown that many men are looking for opportunities to make new friends and spend time together. We encourage men seeking male companionship to look for additional Men's Sheds in Ottawa through [Canada Shed Groups](#).

*Richard Hatherill*  
*Sec/Treas - Park Place Men's Shed Group*

## BUILDING BRIDGES - Here is the 4<sup>th</sup> story in CapCon's new column about making friendships.

### Building a Connection

Seldom do you meet folk that you just know will be lifelong friends, bridging continents and cultures. Such was our experience when we spent a week with FF Cottbus, experiencing everyday life in East Germany and coming face to face with their history and stories of their life behind the iron curtain. As this exceptional journey ended, we agreed to meet again on this side of "the pond" so our hosts could experience the reality of all we had told them about our vast country of Canada. The following September we welcomed them to Ottawa and spent a week that included the pleasures of many swims in multiple bodies of water, savoring gelatos, kayaking in cottage country and touring the Thousand Islands, following which they headed to a journey with FF St Mary's and then to the Pacific coast for more swims, hiking and mountain exploring (and more gelato!).

As these special friends departed Canada, they extended a warm invitation for us to join them once again for a week's tour of Germany to showcase the beauty of their homeland. We are now in the planning stages of preparing for this to take place in early May.



During these tumultuous days, we find ourselves saddened to the point of being overwhelmed to see so many of the world's "bridges" being threatened - economies, geographic boundaries, cultures, diversities, trust - but at the same time we are ever hopeful and encouraged by the fact that friendships like this one can build bridges between countries that were once at war with each other. Let us all continue to support FFI and our club in their mission to build bridges and world peace one friendship at a time.

*Donna Nicholson*