

Friendship Force of Kapiti Report for year 2020

This has been my final year as president as we have a two year role.

The last two years have flown by. Thank you to all those who have served on the Board over this time and those members who have also helped in other ways at events.

2020 has been a significant year in many ways. Covid-19 has thrown a spanner in the works for overseas travel. Some of our club members have resigned because they can see no travel for themselves in the future. A big thank you to them for their contributions over the years they have been in the club.

We have had a good number of new members who I'm sure will lead our club forward into a different future for Friendship Force. Our core values of promoting understanding, cultural education and citizen diplomacy through homestay Journeys and personal friendships are still valid. Through these exciting personal encounters, strangers become friends – and we know that by experiencing different views, you can discover common ground.

Fran and I attended the NZ Friendship Force National Conference held in Blenheim in February.

The conference was a chance to catch up with FF friends from around the country, to share ideas and also have some fun. We had lots of opportunity to chat with Jeremi Snook, CEO of FFI, and Kimberly Fraser, our Regional Support Manager and to discuss as a group the challenges facing Friendship Force now. It will be no surprise that the biggest of these worldwide is our ageing membership, and how to address this was discussed at length, with some innovative ideas coming forth. We need to think about how we talk about Friendship Force, how we explain what it is and what its mission is. Jeremi advised that FFI is looking at a brand refresh, i.e. the tagline, font, pictures etc. He reminded us that Wayne Smith said "A world of friends is a world of peace", and maybe this is the sentence that describes what Friendship Force is all about. I came away with lots to think about, and also energised, and inspired.

We were proud to accept the New Zealand Outreach Award trophy on behalf of our club. This award recognizes the efforts and initiatives made by our Club to present ourselves to the general public. Markets, website, newsletters, neighbourly posts and Facebook posts. Our FB page is a great way to see photos from our member's trips, photos from other FF groups inwards and outward trips and to keep up with FFI and our own club events. I am now connecting with 50 prospective members who receive our newsletter each month.

Feb 23 saw us host our annual picnic with the Wellington Club. What a fabulous venue Big Mac Slab has in Mazengarb road. The Owner Steph Smith made us the most beautiful quiches and bacon and egg slice and hot Easter buns. What a welcome we had and weather wise, the day turned out to be quite warm and the Wellington Club really enjoyed themselves with us as we looked at the gift range there and saw some of the artists at work.

And then along came Covid-19. We were expecting Raleigh North Carolina to stay with us in March. Much work had been put into this journeys programme by Alan and Beverley Taylor. This Inward journey was cancelled although there were 3 of The Raleigh Club already in NZ. Our clubs Outward journey to Brisbane and Bundaberg was also cancelled. Rhondda Harris had been organising this and many thanks go to both sets of Journey Coordinators.

Fran put out some extra Chatter Newsletters over the Covid Lockdown, Thanks Fran! The Board rang many of the single members to check how they were coping and offering help if required.

In Late May we started to meet again in small groups. Coffees and catchups!

June saw us have a LEO (Lets eat out) at Rangolia Restaurant. We had a good turnout for this.

In July we had our annual Soup Lunch which is a great fellowship time and mid-year business meeting. Soup, raffles and quiz kept us all busy. It was decided to donate \$1000.00 to FFI. This money will be kept in New Zealand and used to support Kimberley in Australia.

I was asked to attend the "Building Bridges" Day in Hamilton. This is the Upper North Island Friendship Force Clubs annual get together, much like our Nuts and Bolts Day. I presented on Marketing Friendship Force to attract New Members. Following the building Bridges Day a Focus group was formed. This is a New Zealand wide group of members from all clubs has been set up to inspire and help each other recruit more members. Fran and I have attended the first Zoom meeting on this.

In September we had a fun trip to Wellington on the train to see the Tulips in the Wellington gardens and lunch then a walk through the Bowen St cemetery with Joyce giving us some interesting history on the way down to the train.

Morning teas have been organised this year by the very capable Rhonda at a variety of local Kapiti Cafes so we can Be Visible. Big thanks to Rhondda as these are very well attended.

Thank you to Lois organising LEO events both during the week and the weekends to encourage those who work to have the opportunity to be part of our club. September was to Sunday Cantina in Raumati South and our Xmas Function was a lunch at the Waikanae Club.

Nuts and Bolts day in Fielding was well attended by a number of clubs we had 5 members attend, 2 being new members.

Thanks to Fran who organised an internal journey to New Plymouth and Whangamomona in November for our group. We had a wonderful time. It was good to see this well supported and Fran is working on another trip away for next year.

Fran has also kept herself busy this year as Newsletter Editor. Please do make sure you are reading the newsletter when it arrives as Fran puts a great amount of work into this for us all. All club events are advertised here and this is how you know what's going on in your club!

I need to also thank Alan Immediate Past President for his continued support and knowledge which he has imparted to me as needed.

Thanks to Margaret Swain who joined the Board mid-year and organised the stand at the Strawberry Fair.

Brian has been placing the free notices in our community newspapers all year and was a very jolly Santa at the Xmas lunch. Many thanks.

Our biggest Thanks must go to Peter our very capable Treasurer. Peter is letting go of the reigns after many years. We have been very lucky to recruit a new member through Volunteer Kapiti who has agreed to become our new treasurer. (Give Peter a gift)

WHERE TO FROM HERE??

FFI and FFNZ have been busy thinking of what we can do with no overseas travel in the near future. FFI have offered virtual journeys. The first video meeting will be like a 'Welcome Celebration' between the two clubs where one club will have an opportunity to share about their culture, perhaps show a short video or photos from their city and make introductions. Subsequent to the first video meeting, individuals would be matched virtually to engage in 2-3 weeks of getting to know each other, either by email, phone, letters or video chats. At the end of the experience, everyone would again come online for a "Farewell Celebration" through a scripted agenda to share their experiences and give the other club an opportunity to share a little about their culture and city.

A match for virtual journeys can be made by FFI or by the clubs themselves. We could do this by "re-visiting" a club we have visited in the past or as a precursor to a journey match that may have been postponed as a result of the pandemic. Or FFI can match us with other clubs globally who, like you, have expressed an interest in participating in a Virtual Journey.

Friendship Force (FF) Pen Pals is a new way to experience different views and discover common ground. FFI can match you with another Friendship Force member based on common interests or hobbies, a specific region or city of interest, or a foreign language you'd like to practise. Or be surprised with a random match!

FFNZ have offered three trips around NZ. Lower south island in which some of our group participated in November. We are hosting Island Hopping Journey in Feb which is 3 nights in Kapiti with a trip to Kapiti Island, Wellington Club 3 nights with a trip to Soames Island and then a hop across to Wairarapa Club.

Next year club wise we are exploring having a monthly meeting which will focus on other cultures. We may not be able to travel to different countries but we do have over 30 different nationalities living in Kapiti. We need to extend an invitation to these people to join us and tell us about themselves. We also have the different Embassies on our doorstep so we are going to make contact with them. I believe the Brazilian Embassy has a film theatre which we may be able to visit.

YOU are all the Friendship Force! Please give us your suggestions for speakers, travel and do invite your friends, neighbours to join us. There is an envelope for you all to take with you to keep in your bag or car so that you have something to give to a friend or family member with information for prospective members. We had about 12 new members last year which was mainly due to consistent marketing. Friendship is certainly a valid reason to join our club.

I wish you all an enjoyable Christmas, travel safe, and may you have Fun and laughter with friends and family.

Sue Harris

December 2020.