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*Friends Connection*  
**Friendship Force of Sarasota**  
[www.friendshipforcesarasotaflorida.org](http://www.friendshipforcesarasotaflorida.org)

**March, 2011**

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**Presidents' Message**

We have recently completed another very successful inbound exchange. Congratulations to Ramona McGee and her entire committee on a job well done. We were even able to educate our Edmonton Ambassadors on the naming of Sarasota Bay. What a talented group of actors. Thanks to all of them for being such good sports.

It is imperative that we make every effort this year to bring new members into our club. We need more active members to help us with our inbound and outbound exchanges. We are ready and able to make Friendship Force presentations at your club house or to your organization. Let us know and we will arrange it.

Jack and Linda



**Calendar of Events\*\*more info inside\*\***

March 1	<b>World Friendship Day</b>
March 3	General Meeting 7P at Waldemere Fire Station**
March 23	Outbound Exchange to Brazil**
March	<b>No Board Meeting in March</b>
April 7	General Meeting at Waldemere Fire Station 7P
April 25	Board Meeting 7P at Katy Goodwin's home
May 4	Booker HS Spring Play 7PM & HobNob Fine Dining 5:30**
	<b>No General Meeting in May</b>
May 23	Board Meeting 7P at TBA

**World Friendship Day - March 1st, 2011 – General Meeting – March 3 7PM**

The theme for this year's World Friendship Day is "Make a Difference." Guests are very welcome at the March 3 meeting, especially any friends from other countries that would add to the spirit of World Friendship Day.

We have a special not-to-be-missed guest speaker. **Stephanie Fisher-Matthews** was born in Rio de Janeiro and grew up in Brazil. Her mother, Florence Fisher, was a respected professional singer who toured throughout Brazil, and she wrote the music reviews for the Sarasota Herald Tribune for many years. Stephanie's father was an American Foreign Service officer who served as consul in Rio. During his tenure there,

he promoted Brazilian primitive artists and obtained museum recognition for their art. Stephanie has worked as an interpreter in Portuguese and French for the US State Department. Currently she runs a business in Sarasota called Yummy Boxes. She will tell us about the Brazilian way of life and the Brazilian people. (See her bio on the last page of this newsletter.)



### Look What's Happening?

- It's that time again for the Booker HS Spring Musical. The play this year is **The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee** and will be performed on Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased from Babe Baptist. If you would like to join in on some 'fine dining' before the play, you are welcome to join the group at the HobNob Drive-in at the corner of 301 and 17<sup>th</sup> St. in Sarasota at 5:30PM. Everyone welcome!
- We have a new member to welcome, **Dona Brannan**, 4147 Oakhurst Circle W. Sarasota, 34233, ph - 941-377-5014. Email – [dobrannan@aol.com](mailto:dobrannan@aol.com).
- Get well soon wishes to **Helga Ponischil** who had a total hip replacement done earlier this month. She is home from rehab and doing well.
- The 2011 Minsk Belarus exchange has been postponed to 2012. The E. Central club was the E.D. for this exchange and was planning the timing to occur after the Hamburg, Germany home exchange which follows the FFI conference in late August. It is being postponed because of political uncertainties in Belarus but, the Minsk club is anticipating that 2012 will find things settled and they do want to host Florida members. Tentatively, the exchange will be planned for August, 2012. If you are thinking about joining this exchange, you will want to adjust your plans accordingly.

### Help Wanted

A secretary position on the Sarasota Friendship Force Board has opened up and we are looking to fill it. No experience necessary. Any gender and/or age are acceptable. Requirements are ability to read and write English and attend Board meetings once a month. Pay is non-existent, but benefits include pleasant working conditions with fun loving beautiful people.

If you are interested in helping out a great organization for the rest of this year, contact **Katy Goodwin at 941-379-9954** or Email [katygoodwin@msn.com](mailto:katygoodwin@msn.com).

We are an Equal Opportunity Club and this is YOUR opportunity to show support and enjoy friendships.

### BRAZILIAN DINNER

Currently there are 24 people signed up for the Brazilian Dinner on February 24. There is still room for 6 more people, and last minute reservations may be made by calling Linda Vendeland at 342-6278 or E-Mail: [linvende@aol.com](mailto:linvende@aol.com)  
The menu choices can be found in the February issue of *Friends Connection* on our website.

### **Exchanges**

#### **Outbound**

Sao Carlos – March 26-April 2 & Sao Paulo, Brazil – April 2-9 + extensions

18 Ambassadors will be leaving March 23 and returning April 12. Ambassadors should have received information about their home hosts in both cities. And they should have

submitted their online visa consulate and sent in their applications. There will not be a formal meeting of ambassadors, but ED Judi questions as well as sales of small gifts for hosts (Florida pins \$1.50 each) a half hour before the general meeting (6:30 pm).



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### Edmonton Exchange Wrap-up

Our 22 Edmonton, Alberta FF Ambassadors departed on Feb. 13th, via bus to Miami Airport, and then continued to Colombia. I believe it was a most rewarding exchange! Many of the Canadians commented how much they learned about our area & how they enjoyed their hosts and the overall experience. Being from western part of Canada, they had never visited Florida. All especially enjoyed the day spent visiting the SE Guide Dogs School, lunch at the Ybor Grill and visit to the Manatee Viewing Center at Big Bend Power Plant. This was a first for some of us as well, seeing the numerous manatees in a natural habitat.

This was all made possible by the 54 persons, with several helping in various positions. There were several volunteers who are not FF members & a couple from a Michigan FF Club who spend a few winter months in Sarasota, plus others who hosted or helped in various ways for the first time. New people being active are what we must have to keep our club going! A special thanks to Dona Brannon who came to her first meeting on Thursday evening, joined the club & by Friday she had volunteered to home host due to an illness. Then she wondered what she had gotten herself into, but quickly found it was a wonderful experience when her ambassadors arrived.

A big "Thank You" to all Committee Members, Home Hosts, Day Hosts and Dinner Hosts. Each of your participation made this exchange more enjoyable and easier for me. It was wonderful having over 50% of our club involved in this exchange to make it great success!

THANKS & HUGS to ALL!

Ramona, ED



### NEWS FROM THE WEB

You can see pictures of our recent inbound Edmonton Exchange on our web site in the Photo Gallery. I would like to have more pictures, so, if you took pictures during the exchange, please send them to me and I will make sure they are included in the Photo Gallery. Also, check out the video of the skit which some our members performed at the Farewell Party. Next performance will be in Brazil!



**STEPHANIE FISHER-MATHEWS**  
**Some background info.**

I was born in Rio de Janeiro, GB (Guanabara), Brazil when it was still the capital. My parents were Americans serving abroad in the U.S. Foreign Service. Children born abroad of U.S. citizens in service for their government were automatically deemed U.S. citizens. For some reason my father thought it would be fun to register me with the Brazilian government as well, thus granting me dual citizenship. Because I was not a male, I didn't have to declare my loyalty to one country or the other in order to serve in the military. So I grew up with two passports, two homelands, and two native languages.

After serving in Rio for 10 years with an eighteen month hiatus back in NYC during the McCarthy era, we were transferred to Paris, France for two years where I learned French both in school and on the streets by playing with the concierge's kids from across the street. Next we were assigned to Saigon, South Vietnam –what a culture shock, especially since we were coming from urbane, polished Paris in a spectacular two-story apartment. Saigon was considered a hardship post in the Foreign Service, yet the second language was French, so we had a leg up on communicating with the locals. We did strive to learn some Vietnamese by hiring an instructor who came to our house at lunch time, but because that was the hottest time of day when most people used the break for a siesta before going back to work, we eventually gave in and gave up the lessons. I still know how to count to ten, greet people, and remember a few practical phrases (which surprise the Vietnamese manicurists in town)!

After my father suffered a heart attack in early 1960 and the Viet Cong's (communist North Vietnamese) activities became too violent in the south, we were transferred to Washington, D.C. where we lived for about six years. That was another culture shock for me because the D.C. school I attended seemed huge and the classroom structure was very different. Overseas I was used to having the teachers rotate through our one classroom but now I had to find my way from class to class; catch up on more advanced math; make new friends and get used to riding public buses to school.

I went as far as 5th year French and then had to choose between Latin and German as they didn't offer more advanced French classes, so I chose German to finish the language requirements my senior year.

I attended Georgetown University's School of Languages and Linguistics where I majored in Portuguese and minored in French. As luck would have it my parents were transferred to Brazil once again, so I was able to take my junior year abroad at the University of São Paulo and live at home. It was a bit heady living the privileged diplomatic life with all the wonderful cultural events and fancy parties; maids and cooks to do your bidding, chauffeurs to drive you, oh my!

Back in D.C., I worked summers at the Voice of America, got retail experience at a department store, taught English as a Foreign Language, then taught Portuguese at a language institute.

After graduation I worked as a translator at the OAS in D.C. and used my four languages (I acquired Spanish along the way), worked at conferences in various Latin American and Caribbean member countries and had eye-opening experiences in countries I wouldn't have chosen to visit on my own. Went back to G.U. for graduate school while working at the OAS, got married, divorced, moved to Florida, opened a cake and dessert bakery, and wound up working for the U.S. Department of State as a contract Portuguese interpreter. I have revisited São Paulo several times to see friends and reconnect with my native country, and that is how I stay fairly current with both the language and evolving customs. It doesn't hurt to frequent our local Brazilian restaurant, either.

I have been based in Sarasota since 1979 and still need the excitement of travel –it is forever in my blood!

*Explore – Understand – Serve*