



# friendship force

## INTERNATIONAL

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Friendship Force International celebrates fifth annual WORLD FRIENDSHIP DAY

Atlanta, Georgia The tradition of World Friendship Day began in 2005 as a way for Friendship Force International, and its 360 clubs around the world, to have a specific day to commemorate the organization's birth.

Friendship Force International was launched at a White House ceremony on March 1st, 1977, with the endorsement and support of President Jimmy Carter.

A resolution honoring Friendship Force International, and recognizing March 1, as World Friendship Day, was introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2007. The work of FFI was recognized with a 1992 nomination for the Nobel Peace prize.

March 1, 2009 marks the fifth annual celebration of this important day acknowledging the groundbreaking work of Friendship Force International. FFI's signature program is the home stay, bringing people together at the personal level.

The idea for the organization was born in the imagination of Wayne Smith, a visionary who understood the potential of friendship to overcome the prejudices of culture, color, language and religion. Today, FFI is a worldwide organization, headquartered in Atlanta, with chapters, or clubs, in more than 350 cities and 60 countries.

Friendship Force Clubs are community-based volunteer organizations that work to increase international understanding through the process of home hospitality. Clubs organize travel, called 'exchanges' to another country where members are matched with local hosts in whose home they live for a short time. Each year, more than 5,000 citizen ambassadors travel with FFI changing the way they see the world by exploring other countries from the inside as temporary citizens. Living with a host family, sharing everyday life brings a profound understanding of another country and culture.

In 2008, FFI launched its newest program, 'themed exchanges'. Traveling ambassadors can now choose to focus their experience on culture, education, humanitarian or environmental exchanges, still based around the home hospitality experience. Also in 2008 more than 4,500 Friendship Force citizen ambassadors traveled on exchanges, with thousands more serving as home hosts.

In 2009, FFI will be extending the hand of friendship to Morocco, Jordan, Turkey, Ireland and Japan.

The end result of a Friendship Force exchange is a group of ordinary citizens returning to their home communities with an increased global awareness and commitment to make a positive difference in the world, fulfilling the FFI mission:

**To promote global understanding across the barriers that separate people.**

We believe passionately that the work of connecting people at the personal level is the way to make a significant positive impact on world relations.

Now more than ever we need the force of friendship at work in the world, reaching across the barriers that separate people.

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