

2009 Club and Exchange Policies

(Revised September, 2008. Items new for 2009 are in bold)

Club Charter Renewal Policy

To remain an active Friendship Force club, the club president should complete the Club Charter Renewal Form and return it to Friendship Force International (FFI) along with the club affiliation fees, according to the schedule provided by FFI. (Subscriptions to *Friendship* magazine are optional and may be obtained for **US\$12** per subscription.)

Club fees are US\$6 per individual and US\$10 per family. This is a club affiliation fee and is not an individual membership to FFI. "Members" belong to the club, with each club joining the FFI network through the annual charter renewal process and the payment of the club affiliation fee. Club fees are due at the same time as the Club Charter Renewal Form. Fees for 2009 are based on the number of club members in 2008.

Upon receipt of the completed Club Charter Renewal Form and the club affiliation fees, the club will then be authorized to conduct exchanges for that year and will also be eligible for the exchange assignment process for the following year. By signing this form, the club agrees to organize and conduct exchanges in accordance with the Friendship Force International Club and Exchange Policies. The club agrees to only conduct exchanges specifically authorized by Friendship Force International. Failure to submit a signed Charter Renewal Form accompanied by the club affiliation fee will cause FFI to consider the club inactive.

Exchange Policies and Fees

1. Exchanges: Friendship Force exchanges are typically composed of 20 to 25 ambassadors who travel to a host community in another country for a one-week (5-7 nights) homestay experience. After the first homestay, options exist for independent travel in the region, participation in a group tour,

or, where available, a second week homestay with a nearby club. Participation as an ambassador on an exchange is by application, with ambassadors and hosts carefully selected to ensure compatibility with the program. The ambassador club traveling on an outbound exchange is responsible for recruiting and preparing local citizens for the homestay experience. The host club is responsible for recruiting and preparing citizens from the community who will open their homes to the visiting ambassadors. Each exchange operates under the leadership of volunteer Exchange Directors appointed by the local clubs and in accordance with the exchange policies set by Friendship Force International.

- 2. Exchange Directors:** Exchange Directors (EDs) provide the local leadership required for successful exchanges. They are selected by the local club and report to FFI for exchange planning purposes. Clubs should take the appointment process very seriously, as the success of the exchange depends primarily on the quality of exchange leadership. Preference should be given to individuals with proven leadership ability and prior experience in exchange planning.
- 3. Earned Seat for the ambassador Exchange Director.** It is appropriate for an ambassador ED to "earn" part or all of the basic cost of the Friendship Force exchange that he or she is leading. Providing some or all of the exchange cost as an "earned seat" recognizes the responsibility associated with leading an exchange and can also motivate the ED to recruit a full exchange.
 - a. FFI Fees:** The ambassador ED will receive a pro-rated discount of the FFI fees if there are at least ten fully-paid ambassadors on the exchange. There will be a full waiver of FFI fees for the ED if there are at least twenty fully paid ambassadors.

- b. Other Fees:** Depending on the ambassador club's policy, an "earned" seat can include some or all of the following: (a) travel costs to and from the host community, (b) travel and tour costs that are a required part of the exchange; (c) Host Club Program Fees. It is not appropriate to include optional and personal expenses including passport, visa fees, etc.
 - c. Club Policy:** Each club shall adopt a written policy regarding the "earned seat." This policy should be publicized within the club so that all members are aware of the policy. EDs should price their exchanges in accordance with the club policy. Any member of one club that joins another club's exchange will be expected to accept the governing policy of the ambassador ED's club.
- 4. Recruitment Goal:** The goal is to recruit as many qualified applicants as can be accommodated by the host club(s), while maintaining a standby list. In most cases, the ambassador goal is 20-25. Exchanges recruiting less than 15 persons may continue to be conducted, pending consultation with the clubs involved and with permission granted by FFI.

EDs should look both within the club membership and to the broader community for the most qualified ambassadors and hosts. Prior membership in a club should not be a requirement to apply for an exchange, but clubs may, if they choose, ask new participants to become a club member when joining their first exchange.

Care should be taken to screen all applicants and to accept only those who understand the goals of the organization. Clubs should avoid a "sign up" process that suggests to club members that acceptance on exchanges is automatic. Applicants should demonstrate that they are physically fit for the living conditions in their host community and, *at the ED's discretion*, they may be asked for a physician's verification of good health, stamina and mobility. Please refer to the attached statement on Mobility and Health Limitations.

Clubs should educate their members to the reality that some exchanges require little physical exertion while others require a great deal. Therefore, recognizing that each exchange is different, long-time members should not assume they will be accepted just because they are loyal members of the club. Many clubs have elderly members who may not be capable of being good guests in host communities that require a lot of walking and use of public transportation. It is the responsibility of the ED to accept only those who are able to meet the physical demands of the exchange. Club presidents and board members should assist in this process by educating their members and providing support to the ED in making the sometimes difficult decision regarding rejection of applicants because they don't meet these requirements. Clubs that fail to abide by these requirements may be required by FFI to adopt new procedures to ensure that only well-qualified ambassadors and hosts are accepted.

- 5. Recruitment Deadline:** The ambassador list should be sent to the host club(s) and FFI 60 days before the exchange departs. The Ambassador Application and Agreement form must be completed and signed by each ambassador and host. The respective EDs retain this form. Failure to meet the specified deadlines can result in the postponement or cancellation of the exchange, with the hosting assigned to another club.
- 6. Visas:** In recent years some clubs have encountered difficulties obtaining visas for their outbound exchanges. As a result, some of the regular FFI planning procedures may need to be modified. It is important for the host club to recognize that these difficult situations are often the ones where the Friendship Force mission is most needed. Therefore, host clubs are encouraged to accept exchanges with clubs from these countries and to work with FFI and the ambassador club to carry out the exchange, even if it means adjusting some of the usual planning schedule.

It is the responsibility of the ambassador Exchange Director to determine what visas will be required, if any, to travel to the host club(s). This should be done as soon as the exchange is assigned. If there is the expectation that obtaining visas will be a problem, the following steps should be followed:

- The ambassador ED should meet with embassy or consular officials of the host country as soon as possible to determine what steps are required to apply for visas.
- FFI and the host clubs should respond promptly to any requests for documentation regarding the Friendship Force experience. However, the ambassador club should not expect that individual host families will be able to issue private invitations that includes guarantees of financial support.
- The ambassador ED should thoroughly screen all applicants for the exchange and reject any who may be a risk for not returning home.
- The ambassador ED should ensure that all qualified applicants apply for their visa interview as soon as possible in order to avoid last-minute decisions.
- Host clubs should recognize that visa decisions are beyond the control of the ambassador club and that often the decision is made at the last minute. In such situations, the host club is encouraged to keep open the possibility of hosting the exchange, but to avoid making firm commitments until the visas have been issued. In some cases this may mean waiting until just before the exchange to make the final hosting and program arrangements.

7. FFI Oversight and Monitoring of Exchanges:

To ensure that Friendship Force exchanges provide high quality cultural experiences for all ambassadors and hosts, FFI will monitor each exchange's planning and recruiting. This includes: (a) the timely appointment of all EDs and selection

of exchange dates, (b) the timely confirmation of a final itinerary and price, (c) recruitment of qualified ambassadors and hosts, and (d) payment of fees according to FFI guidelines. When asked, ambassador EDs should be prepared to submit to FFI detailed information regarding exchange details, recruiting progress, names and ages of the prospective ambassadors, and the status of the payment of fees. This information can be useful in determining if the exchange is progressing properly or if additional support is needed from the sponsoring club, other clubs and leaders in the region, or from FFI. In most cases, early intervention for an exchange in difficulty can lead to a successful exchange. If, however, it is determined that the ambassador recruiting is not satisfactory, FFI may cancel or postpone the exchange and reassign the hosting assignment to another club from the waiting list that is maintained by FFI.

8. FFI Ambassador Fee: Each ambassador pays an FFI ambassador fee for a Friendship Force experience. The Friendship Force International Board of Directors approves these fees each year. FFI ambassador fees are due at FFI 45 days before the exchange departs. The FFI ambassador fees are:

- a. For first and second week of hosting: US\$115 per week for all ambassadors from countries outside the USA. For US ambassadors the fee is US\$140 per week. A week is considered 5-7 nights.
- b. For third week of hosting: US\$50 for all countries. This is available on a limited basis in countries with surplus hosting (Australia, New Zealand and the USA).
- c. For interclub visits and domestic exchanges: Visits of 1-3 nights between clubs within a country will be considered interclub visits and will have no FFI ambassador fees. Visits of 4-7 nights will be considered domestic exchanges and will have a US\$25 per person FFI ambassador fee. Interclub visits and domestic

exchanges should be supplemental to a club's regular exchange activity and should be scheduled after the dates for international exchange activity have been finalized

- d. For interclub visits within Europe: Visits of 1-4 nights between clubs within Europe will be considered interclub visits and will have no FFI ambassador fee. Visits of 5-7 nights will be considered regular international exchanges and will have regular FFI ambassador fees. European interclub visits are supplemental to regular exchanges and should be scheduled after the dates for all international exchange activity have been finalized.

9. Host Club Program Fees:

- a. **Host clubs will receive a Host Club Program Fee of US\$100 per ambassador, (including the ED) per hosting week (5-7 nights). The purpose of the fee is to provide a budget so the host club can prepare an interesting cultural program for the ambassadors.**
The fee can be used to pay for welcome and farewell parties/dinners, and for group activities that provide the ambassadors an excellent cultural orientation to the host city and region. The fee can also be used, at the host club's discretion, to enable the hosts to participate in these activities.
- b. In some cases the host ED may recommend activities that are not covered by the US\$100 fee. These activities should be optional. If the ambassador ED agrees that these activities should be included for all ambassadors, the Host Club Program Fee may be increased accordingly. **However, if the Host Club Program Fee is more than US\$100, the host ED will present a full budget of all activities—both the basic cultural program and the additional activities—prior to the exchange and a post-exchange accounting of the actual expenses.**

- c. **In addition to planned group activities, the host ED should ensure that the ambassadors have sufficient time with their hosts for individual activities, so the individual host can serve as guide to the local community and for the ambassadors to explore on their own. The costs of these individual activities outside the home should be paid by the ambassadors.**

- d. **The Host Club Program Fee does not cover the cost of transporting ambassadors from their arrival site to the host community and returning them to their departure sites or for any tour arrangements prior to or following the exchange week. If the host ED is asked by the ambassador ED to assist in these arrangements, the costs should be agreed to in advance and should be designated "transfer and/or tour costs." Transfer and tour costs are not considered part of the Host Club Program Fee, and should be treated separately with payment and accounting details arranged between the ambassador and host EDs.**

- e. Procedures for payment of Host Club Program Fees: Host club program fees should be transferred directly from the ambassador club to the host club in a mutually acceptable manner, unless otherwise authorized by FFI. The US\$100 host fee is non-refundable if an ambassador cancels from the exchange less than 45 days prior to departure and must therefore be transferred to the host club together with the fees for the participating ambassadors. In the event that the ambassador club fails to pay for all confirmed ambassadors, FFI will advance the fees to the host club and collect them from the ambassador club.

- 10. **Local Ambassador Club Budget:** Up to US\$25 may be added to the cost of an exchange to be retained by the ambassador Exchange Committee. These fees cover the costs of administering the

exchange at the local level and are collected and retained by the club, not by FFI. These fees are non-refundable if the ambassador fails to participate in the exchange or the exchange is cancelled.

11. Youth Ambassadors: Youth ambassadors will receive a discount of 50% on FFI club exchange ambassador fees. The discount does not apply to exchanges designed for youth ambassadors, which will have their own fees. A youth ambassador is defined as someone who is 18 years of age or younger or a full-time student 26 years of age or younger. Children under the age of 2 who participate in an exchange with a parent will not be charged any ambassador fees or host club program fees.

12. Unaccompanied Children: Any person under the age of 18 who is not accompanied by a parent must have a designated guardian during any Friendship Force experience. FFI provides master copies of the appropriate legal documents in the Exchange Manual. In addition, children under 16 must travel and be hosted in the same home with an adult relative or designated guardian.

13. Travel Insurance: All Friendship Force ambassadors are required to secure adequate travel and medical insurance to cover emergencies during their exchanges. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of the following ways: a) through the ambassador's existing insurance policy if it covers international travel, b) through the policy offered by FFI, or c) by purchasing a separate travel insurance package. The Ambassador Application and Agreement form includes the following statement: "I hereby agree to secure adequate travel and medical insurance for the duration of the exchange." At the discretion of the ED, an insurance waiver form may be signed by an ambassador and notarized for those who choose not to secure insurance.

14. Exchange Evaluation: Within 30 days of the completion of the exchange, each Exchange Director shall complete and send to FFI a final Exchange Evaluation using a form provided by FFI. If there are substantial negative comments, FFI will contact the club(s) involved and will work with them to implement corrective action. The results of the evaluation may be taken into account by FFI in determining future assignments for the club. Clubs with consistently excellent exchanges will be given priority in their choice of future exchanges. On the other hand, clubs with consistently poor evaluations will be closely monitored by FFI. If the problems are not solved, FFI may suspend exchange activity until such time as the club can demonstrate its ability to carry out proper Friendship Force exchanges.

15. Cancellation from a club-to-club exchange: If an ambassador cancels more than 45 days before departure, FFI will refund all FFI ambassador fees paid. If an ambassador cancels 45 days or less prior to departure FFI will refund 50% of the ambassador fee paid. If FFI cancels an exchange, all ambassador fees paid will be returned to ambassadors. For specialized exchanges see paragraph 16.

16. Specialized Exchanges: Friendship Force International recognizes that an alternative to club-based exchanges can be attractive for Friendship Force members and non-members alike and plans a number of specialized programs accordingly each year. These range from programs with a cultural focus without home-hosting to mission-based or themed programs. The fees for these specialized programs are set by FFI and sometimes include airfare and a comprehensive program; in some cases there are fees for a land-only program. The cancellation fees for specialized programs will be advised to the Exchange Director based on the penalty plans we receive from our travel suppliers and vendors.

Payment Procedures

Exchange and club affiliation fees are quoted in US dollars. In Japan, the United Kingdom and Australia, separate banking arrangements have been made, and payments should be made according to the procedures established by FFI for these countries. For all other countries, payment should be made in US dollars and may be made by check or by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express) to the following mailing address: Friendship Force International, 233 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 2250, Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

Bank wire transfers may also be used, with payments made to: Wachovia Bank, Atlanta, Georgia; Routing Transit No: 061000227; Swift Code: PNBPU333; Beneficiary: Friendship Force International; Operating Account No: 2000-12809- 8785.

All transactions should include full information to identify both the source (club or exchange) and the purpose of the payment.

Policy on Mobility and Health Limitations

Ambassador Exchange Directors are responsible for ensuring that ambassadors on their exchanges understand and certify that they can comply with the physical requirements of the exchange program. While Friendship Force exchanges are not considered unusually demanding, ambassadors need to be able to keep up with the typical daily activities of their hosts. Walking for extended periods of time, carrying luggage, riding public transportation, and climbing stairs are all normal activities within any exchange. Participants also need to be alert, capable of following directions, and able to fulfill the goal of The Friendship Force as an ambassador of friendship and goodwill.

Ways in which ambassador Exchange Directors can screen potential ambassadors include:

- Review the health section of the ambassador Application Form with the applicant and make sure that any potential or current health or mobility problems are adequately noted.
- Ask applicants direct questions about their daily routine, travel habits, and level of physical and mental abilities and explain the nature of activities proposed on the exchange plan.
- If the applicant has traveled previously with FFI, check with the applicant's most recent Exchange Director regarding any reasons why the applicant should not participate on the planned exchange. If the applicant is new to FFI, ask for a reference who can speak knowledgeably about the applicant's level of physical and mental capabilities to fulfill the requirements of the exchange.
- If concerns remain, provide the applicant with a list of the planned activities for the exchange and ask for a letter from their health provider indicating if the applicant will be able to meet the requirements of the exchange.

FFI does support the participation of ambassadors with health limitations and physical disabilities. However, without exception, ambassadors can only be accepted on an exchange upon full disclosure of their limitations to both the ambassador and host Exchange Directors and written agreement from the host exchange community and/or travel suppliers that they are able to accommodate the limitation.

During an exchange, if either the ambassador or host Exchange Director finds that a physical or mental limitation, which was not fully disclosed in advance, interferes with the ambassador's ability to participate fully in the exchange program, including the home-stay, then that participant can be asked to depart the program or be moved to an alternate housing arrangement at his/her own expense.