



# PASSPORT

A Publication of The Friendship Force of Lincoln  
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NUMBER 123

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

JULY 2011



**Display of Nebraska map and sites in Ukraine grade school**

**Ukraine on Pathway to Democracy**  
**“There is no going back to the limited freedoms  
and opportunities of the past.”**

## Message from the President

by Gaylord Becker - President



**Y**ou know there seemed to be more noise and fireworks in Lincoln this past 4th of July. It reminded me a little bit of when I was a boy. The flags and festivities also raised my feelings of patriotism, a good thing. I hope you enjoyed the holiday as much as I did.

Let me bring you up-to-date on what is happening in FFL. First I want to welcome Gayle Bayer as the new Membership Committee co-chair

and Joanna Rogers, former Membership Committee co-chair, to chair of the new Community Service Project Committee. Look for more information about this committee in future Passports.

Thanks to Jeannie Zwiebel and her nominating committee for their work in recruiting the following to be voted on at the Annual Meeting: Nancy Comer, president; Jim Ecklund, vice president, Julie Albrecht, secretary, and Dorina Worthy, treasurer. Hope to see a large crowd.

It was great to see 48 of you in Elmwood for the play at the Loft on June 12. Unfortunately, threats of rain showers forced cancellation of the picnic at a nearby park. Instead, the group divided with half hosted by Jeannie Zwiebel and

half by Barb Ridder in their homes. Thanks to both.

In an effort to boost our ties to foreign students at the University of Nebraska, as encouraged by the Board, I and several others have made a point of participating in several sessions involving foreign students. Look for more FFL events in future involving foreign students like the great WFD celebration at the Ferguson House.

And finally, congratulations to Al Surkan for his selection as ED for the outbound exchange to Costa Rica in January 2012 and Barb Ridder for her selection as ED for the incoming exchange from Ft. Collins, The Friendship Force of Northern Colorado, planned for October 10 – 16.

## Membership News

By Mary Bryant, Membership Co-Chair

**I**would like to introduce the new Membership Co-Chair, Gayle Bayer, as well as thank her predecessor, Joanna Rogers for all her efforts. Joanna is the Chair of a new committee involved with Community Projects. Gayle, and her husband Milt, have been members of FFL since 2004. Gayle will be contacting prospective members to answer questions and, hopefully, recruit them to membership.

Members continue to provide referrals of family and friends. Send referrals to Mary Bryant at [ab62359@windstream.net](mailto:ab62359@windstream.net). Please include how you know the person along with their name, address, phone and email.

Think about how your life has been enhanced through your Friendship Force experiences, international and domestic exchanges, home hosting, small group dinners, and

participation in hosting activities. Help us promote Friendship Force; refer your friends and neighbors to us.

We are accepting dues for the 2012 -- \$30 Individual Membership, \$40 Family Membership. If possible, please renew by December 1st. A membership form is included elsewhere in the Passport.

# Don't Miss the Annual Meeting Friday, August 19

by *Jeanne Zwiebel - Activities Chair*



**T**he annual meeting will be held Friday evening, August 19, at St. Mark's United Methodist Church (8550 Pioneers Blvd.).

The program will begin at 5:30 with appetizers and socializing. Dinner will be served at 6:15. Members are asked to bring a food item large enough to serve 12. You may choose to bring an appetizer, main dish, vegetable, salad, or fruit.

Please indicate choice of dish on the registration form below. Sliced turkey breast will be provided by the club. There is no charge for this event. Guests are welcome.

As is our practice, members are asked to volunteer to decorate a table with a specific country theme that might include objects collected on past exchanges. Please indicate your interest on the registration form.

A short business meeting will follow dinner. Information will be provided on the 2012 exchanges and we will have the election of officers. The nominating committee's slate is President - Nancy Comer, Vice President - Jim Ecklund,

Secretary - Julie Albrecht, and Treasurer - Dorina Worthy.

Entertainment by the Lincolnaires, a barbershop group, will follow the meeting.

We have seating for one hundred people. Registrations will be taken in the order they are received.

Send registrations to Jeanne Zwiebel, 1025 Lamplighter Lane, Lincoln NE 68510 by August 10. Questions to Jeanne 402 489-1247 jz82924@windstream.net

Please send your reservation to Jeanne Zwiebel, 1025 Lamplighter Lane, Lincoln NE 68510. Questions to Jeanne 489-1247 or jz82924@windstream.net

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Guest's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons attending \_\_\_\_\_

 I will bring a/an:

\_\_\_ Appetizer, \_\_\_ Main Dish, \_\_\_ Vegetable, \_\_\_ Salad, \_\_\_ Fruit, \_\_\_ Dessert

I will provide a table centerpiece. Country \_\_\_\_\_

I will stay to help clean up. \_\_\_\_\_

# FFL Enjoys Hosting In Mexico

*By Pat King, Exchange Director*



**O**n Friday, October 22, nine FF members from Ohio, California, Wisconsin, Georgia, and Connecticut joined seven members from FFL in Mexico City to begin an exchange with The Friendship Force of Filobobos.

Ambassadors began with two days of sightseeing in Mexico City. All got acquainted over breakfast and then walked to the National Palace where among other things they admired murals of Diego Rivera. In the afternoon there was a stop at the Aztec ruins of Teotihuacan and several climbed the imposing Pyramid of the Sun. The next morning was spent at the Museum of Anthropology followed by a visit to the floating gardens of Xochimilco where the group enjoyed a meal aboard a boat that featured Mariachi music. Then it was back to the museum for the Folkloric Ballet with its beautiful costumes and traditional dancing which

everyone enjoyed. Monday found the group in Taxco, the silver city, where they enjoyed a delicious meal and shopped for silver. On the way, ambassadors visited the magnificent cathedral in Cuernavaca.

On Tuesday, it was off to the Filobobos area by way of Puebla. On the way, the group had a chicken dish with mole pueblano, the dark, spicy chocolaty sauce for which Puebla is famous. That afternoon, ambassadors met their hosts, mostly educators, and were taken to their homes.

Day one of the home stay started in the Altotonga Square, where the group toured the local church, visited the high school, and met the mayor who awarded each a certificate of honorary citizenship. A welcome party followed at an open-air restaurant near the Filobobos River.

The next morning the group was greeted with a downpour so plans had to be changed. A scenic and quiet drive to the Gulf of Mexico would fill in. On the way, there was a stop at a beautiful park where ambassadors donned life jackets and helmets and paddled by raft to a magnificent waterfall. Later the group continued to a remote deserted hotel where one had a choice

to either swim in the Gulf or the hotel pool. The swim was followed by a seafood dinner and a trip to an ecological preserve, where ambassadors took turns naming green baby turtles, kissing them farewell, and releasing them into the Gulf.

The next day saw a trip to Xalapa, the capitol of the State of Veracruz. Xalapa features one of the finest archaeological museums in Mexico, and has a Friendship Force club that at the time was hosting 16 ambassadors from Niagara, Canada, a club that will be visiting FFL in 2012.

Some spent the final day of the home stay with their host family, while some visited a banana plantation. Then it was a six-hour trip to Oaxaca for a flight to Mexico City and home. In Oaxaca, the group visited the Olmec ruins, learned about rug weavings, and made a few purchases of souvenirs and gifts. There was also an opportunity to visit a cemetery and view the elaborate decorations made for the Days of the Dead.

The only disruption in an otherwise successful exchange was the delayed flight from Oaxaca to Mexico City resulting in several missing the connecting flight home.

# FFL Received Warmly by the Quad Cities

*By Betty Starr, Exchange Director*

**T**hirteen FFL ambassadors headed East on May Day to visit the Quad Cities (Moline, Davenport, Bettendorf, & Rock Island). First stop was the Machine Shed Restaurant near Des Moines. Then, it was on to QC to meet home hosts.

One of the highlights of the 4-day exchange was a visit to the world headquarters of John Deere. The group learned that the steel building was designed by Finnish architect Eero Saarinen and built in the same medium of the original John Deere plow. Saarinen did not live to see his creation finished, which today is known to the locals and the corporate world of JD as the “rusty palace.”

Ambassadors were also able to view lock and dam activity on the Mississippi River. Eight barges of coal made their way through the locks, and the arsenal bridge, which provides transportation for both train and auto over the locks, swung 180 degrees to allow the barges to pass. Part of the operation was under repair owing to flooding before the group arrived. Functioning long past its replacement date, the structure is another example of deteriorating infrastructure in the US.

The Rock Island Arsenal, on the National Register of Historic Places, is an active US Army facility located on a 946-acre island in the Mississippi River. The Arsenal is location of the 2nd largest government-owned residence in the U.S., the home of Colonel Davenport, for whom the City of Davenport is named. The White House is, of course, the largest residence. The group paused for a picnic lunch and then visited the home where docent and FFQC member, Chet Doyle, explained all about the Colonel, his life and life on the island.

Ambassadors also enjoyed an unexpected stop at Boetje's Mustard Company. The family-owned business with one full time and two part-time employees manufactures mustard for the Amana Colonies, Iowa Machine Shed and other local small businesses. The Company won the 2011's best mustard competition and provided a tasting opportunity.

Another stop was at Isabel Bloom's, manufacturer of magnificent clay sculptures. The art objects make excellent gifts and Ambassadors took several home with them.

A special traveling exhibit at the Putnam Museum provided a personal look at the

Titanic tragedy. Visitors are given a card with the name of person who boarded the ship for the ill-fated voyage. Each was informed of their person's family situation, the purpose for their trip, and who they were traveling with. At the end of the exhibit, each found out whether their person had survived. I managed to survive, so did my cousin, and maid, all of whom were traveling with me in first class. Husband Duane was the assistant to the ship's designer, who boarded in place of the designer in a last minute change. He did not survive. As part of the exhibit, the group also saw the I-MAX film *Ghosts of the Abyss* which provides a look at the computer modules designed to investigate the ship and its contents 12,000 feet below the surface.

A farewell sit-down dinner aboard the *Celebration Belle* brought the exchange to an end and provided a last look at the majestic Mississippi.

On the trip home, there was a stop in West Branch, Iowa to visit the gravesite, presidential library and early home of President Herbert Hoover and a short tour of the Amana colonies. Needless to say, a good time was had by all.

# Ukraine on Pathway to Democracy

*By Julie Albrecht and John Comer*



**F**riendship Force of Lincoln members Bob and Jane Sibal, Bill and Cece Hunt, Ben and Marilyn Vrana, John and Nancy Comer, Marilyn Paolini, and Jane Kinsey, along with Exchange Director, Julie Albrecht, visited the Ukraine May 11-30. They met with public officials and leaders of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), some of whom had been hosted by Lincoln families in 2006 as part of the Open World Program of the U.S. Congress. Open World provides funding for young professionals from countries of the former Soviet Union to spend three weeks in the US, two in Washington, D.C. and eight nights home-

hosted in communities like Lincoln. The purpose of Open World is to expose leaders in the post-Soviet countries, like Ukraine, to American democracy and a free market economy.

While in Ukraine, the Friendship Force of Lincoln group also met with college students on various campuses and average working men and women.

We were home-hosted by members of The Friendship Force of Kiev for a week before traveling to Odessa, Dnipropetrovs'k, and Sumy. Kiev, the Ukraine capital of four million, is a modern city of tall granite structures, pastel colored cathedrals with golden

domes, burgeoning shopping malls, and highways jammed with cars. Except for the dozens of 15-story dull gray concrete apartment complexes surrounding the city and an occasional statue of Lenin, there is little on the surface to remind one in this cosmopolitan city of the years of Soviet control that stifled initiative and held the country back.

Among the highlights in Kiev was a trip to Freedom Square, site of the Orange Revolution in 2004, where a million or more Ukrainians marched in the streets, braving cold winter temperatures, in a peaceful protest of a corrupt national election. The country's Supreme Court ultimately set the election result aside. We visited the nation's Holocaust memorial to the 11 million who died of starvation in 1931 when Soviet Russia, under Stalin, confiscated the country's grain production and formed collective farms in Ukraine. Another stop was the Chernobyl museum documenting the tragedy in 1986 when a nuclear reactor 60 miles north of Kiev exploded contaminating the surrounding countryside. The museum offers a redemptive message of peace. The group also visited many schools, one in the

## Ukraine continued

center of Kiev, administered by an Open World alum who had been home-hosted in Atlanta. The school boasted state of the art programs in fine arts featuring many ideas the principal took from her Open World experience in the United States, including the presentation of student's work throughout the building. All schools support a strong English-language program and many Ukrainians are fluent in English.

Three days were spent in the port City of Odessa on the Black Sea where we were reunited with an Open World alum who was part of the group that had visited Lincoln in 2006. Employed in an NGO, he recalled Lincoln as a friendly and generous community, where he visited a number of private and public agencies and learned valuable lessons that he has put to work in this historic and culturally diverse city.

Dnipropetrovs'k, an industrial city in central Ukraine, was off-limits to foreign travelers during the Soviet period because it was a center of weapons production and space technology. It is home to one million Ukrainians including another Open World alum that had spent a week in Lincoln. The first stop in Dnipropetrovs'k was National University and a meeting with the social science faculty. The discussion was lively, address-

ing such issues as whether democracy in Ukraine is secure faculty are free to say and publish whatever they wish. Hiring and promotions in the University are based on merit, and women are treated equally with men. The answer to all of these questions suggests Ukraine is moving toward a more democratic society. Asked whether Ukraine should decrease its ties to Russia and seek a closer relationship with Western Europe, political science students lean toward the EU, but several suggested Ukraine should chart its own course, favoring neither Russia nor the EU. All the students could speak English.

A visit to a local grade school found a display featuring a map of Nebraska and pictures of the state capital,

the Omaha skyline, the sandhills and Chimney Rock. The school, as were all the schools and colleges visited, prepared and took the visit seriously. None of our group would have been surprised had the students broke out with "There is no place like Nebraska."

Even though he was on vacation, a district officer, similar to a city council member, spent an hour answering questions on such things as city services, communicating with local residents, and the salary of local officials. He identified his principal task as "serving the people," not unlike politicians everywhere. And an hour long meeting with an appellate court judge revealed strong support for the ideas of separation of powers and checks and balances, concepts firmly



## Ukraine continued

grounded in the American political tradition. The judge noted as well that the judiciary in Ukraine is the final arbiter of what the nation's Constitution means, also an American idea, and was emphatic in arguing corruption among judges was no more than one would find anywhere else, including the United States.

Sumy is a community the size of Lincoln on the eastern edge of Ukraine about 20 miles from the Russia/Ukraine border. It is also home to an Open World alum that had been hosted in Lincoln. It was here that the Lincoln group perhaps had its best look at Ukrainian democracy in action, albeit at the local level.

An hour-long session with the city major, himself an Open World alum who spent a week in Des Moines, revealed someone committed to democracy. He noted, "One lesson I learned from my Open World experience was the need to be transparent with the public's business." The lesson has apparently served him well. Winning office the first time with 26% percent of the vote in a multiple candidate race, he won a second term with 65%. He, too, saw the future of Ukraine as a member of the EU. A meeting with members of the local city council, unpaid by the way, confirmed high marks for the mayor. These same members, in addition to their regular

job, spend hours dealing with local issues and problems, just like council member in the U.S. The group finished in Sumy with leaders from several of the 35 NGOs active in the region. Those represented dealt with youth, families, patriotism, AIDS, journalism and women. All seek funding from wherever they can get it. All are committed to improving the quality of life in Ukraine, and doing so consistent with their newly acquired freedoms. The U.S. government is a source of funding for several, especially those tied directly to Ukrainian democracy such as the Sumy Press Club which sponsors press conferences, political debates and the Anti-Corruption Center.

While all is not perfect in Ukraine, there is still corruption in government especially at the national level and organized crime is a problem, the energy and enthusiasm of Ukrainians, particularly the young professionals and college students the FFL group met, suggest there is no going back to the limited freedoms and opportunities of the past.

## Incoming Exchange in October from Colorado and other states

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*by Barb Ridder*

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**P**lans are underway for hosting The Friendship Force of Northern Colorado October 10-16. The week's events will focus on the diversity of activities in our area. The committee is planning a wine and hors d' oeuvres welcome on October 11 and a farewell party at Misty's on October 15. We hope you will join us for these festivities along with some of the week's other events.

We will need hosts, day hosts, and small group dinner hosts. This is a nice way to be involved with our members and interact with new friends. If you can help, please call or e-mail Barb Ridder (402)435-0270 [bridder@neb.rr.com](mailto:bridder@neb.rr.com).

# Enrichment Voyage to Central America

by Becky Grutell



**O**n April 1, George Brown and 39 FFI members from five countries embarked on a great adventure. The first night was spent at the beautiful Hilton San Diego Bay Front Hotel getting acquainted. In the morning we were off to Ensenada, Mexico where we boarded the MV Explorer, our floating home away from home for the next 3 weeks. There are cruises, and then there are voyages. Ours was a voyage.

This was the start of an “Enrichment Voyage.” Any FFI member can join these voyages but be prepared for stops at unusual – off the beaten path -- ports of call, learning and studying while on board, and traveling in a small but comfortable craft.

Our travels took us to ten ports in 21 days, stopping at every country in the region except one. I and my fellow travelers were able to experience Central America in a way no one could have imagined.

Everyday was full of activities including Enrichment

seminars, language lessons, and briefings on the next port of call. I attended workshops on the birds of Central America, whales, earthquakes, astronomy, photography, sculpture and art. Instructors were top people in their fields. Having recently completed an FF exchange to Connecticut where I visited the home of Mark Twain, I found a seminar and dramatic presentation “Mark Twain Himself” put on by an FF passenger quite informative and entertaining.

A highlight of the trip was swimming with the dolphins, an unforgettable experience. These huge friendly creatures respond in human-like fashion to sound and touch. In Guatemala, the group spent two days touring Antigua and staying at the world famous Casa Santa Domingo Resort and Spa.

The group celebrated Cinco de Mayo in Punteranas, Costa Rica on the beach during the day and at a poolside party in the evening where there was a glorious Mexican buffet, live band, and breathtaking sunset.

After Costa Rica, it was Nicaragua and then Panama and transit through the Canal. As there was a general strike in Panama, traffic on the Canal was halted for a while but it was soon resolved. A few took dugout canoes up the Chagares River to an Embera Indian

Village. After a brief stay, the word went out that that the crocodile infested river was rising rapidly and everyone needed to leave NOW! The normally shallow river had become a raging torrent. Waves up to four feet high towered over the dugouts as the current carried us along. I suppose there was some danger but we were having too much fun to think about it. Covered with mud and water and thinking the worst had passed, I was struck in the face by a fish that suddenly jumped out of the river. Surprised, “You bet, but fortunately no harm.” Making our way back to the ship, we were the target of strange looks from the townspeople and our fellow FF travelers who chose to go to the museum that day. One asked “How much did you PAY for your trip? I thought for a moment, and spoke up, “It was priceless!”

After nearly two weeks on board ship, half way back in Costa Rica to begin home stays in San Jose. In route a landslide blocked the major road forcing a detour and turning a two hour trip into a 10 hour trip. Taking advantage of the detour, we stopped at the Earth University for lunch and toured a banana plantation.

During the stay in Costa Rica, the group visited the Doka Coffee Plantation, butterfly gardens and Inbio Park,

## Voyage continued

which is a national institute dedicated to studying and conserving biodiversity in Costa Rica. There were visits to the National Cloud Forest and Poas Volcano, purported to be the widest in the world. Several hiked a half-mile to the crater's edge for a close-up view..

There was a celebration for the group in Friendship Park in Alajuela where a plaque was unveiled commemorating our visit. With our names on the plaque, part of us will be there forever. Festivities included traditional music and dancing and, of course, lots of food. Costa Rica is a very special place with warm and friendly people. I was fortunate to have two host families during my stay. You know I could have stayed forever. My new FF friend Alejandro offered to get me a job at McDonalds. But, alas, on my last day there was a 6.0 earthquake in the city and so I decided it best to come on home where the only danger is a tornado . . . or maybe dying of boredom.

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**Fabulous Friendship Force Gifts: Aprons, pins, pens, etc. On sale at the Annual Meeting, Friday August 19. Questions, Mary Lou Reeves, 402-464-1803**

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## Discover Costa Rica & Its People, January 2012

**O**penings remain for The Friendship Force of Lincoln to join a January 2012 cultural exchange with The Friendship Force of Turrialba in Costa Rica.

Why not swap a week of Nebraska's January cold for the warmth of this Latin American paradise. Make new friends in a country that offers a diversity of people and inspiring landscapes. Visit volcanoes, hot springs, roaring rivers and waterfalls, and marvel at the exotic jungle sounds filling the evening air. You will have to look close to spot the green, leatherneck turtles and multicolored butterflies as you hike the rain forest and march through sugarcane and coffee fields.

Turrialba can host 20 ambassadors and has selected activities manageable for people with minor mobility limitations. Applicants should, however, be able to handle their own luggage. The exchange is one week with possibly an additional day or two touring in the capitol of San Jose. See <http://www.10best.com/destinations/costa-rica/san-jose/about> for San Jose points of interest.

Cost is estimated to be \$1300, including airfare. Application Forms are available at [www.friendshipforcelincn.org](http://www.friendshipforcelincn.org). Send your completed application to Al Surkan, 1940 Devonshire Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506. More information will be available next month. Questions before July 27th, contact Al at [ajsneb@yahoo.com](mailto:ajsneb@yahoo.com)

# Action Alert! Exchange Directors Needed

*by Nancy Comer, Vice President*

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**F**riendship Force Lincoln has two upcoming opportunities for Exchange Directors. The first is an outbound domestic exchange to Northern Colorado in July, 2012. The second is an inbound exchange from Niagara, Canada in late fall 2012. If you have not been an exchange director, and think you might be interested, there is an excellent DVD you can view, or you can download and read the 2011 Exchange Director manual directly from the FFI website. FFL members are available to assist you in planning and carrying out this leadership role.

You can complete the application found at [www.friendship-forcelincoln.org](http://www.friendship-forcelincoln.org). If you have questions, you may contact Nancy Comer at 402-488-9209 or [ncomer@neb.rr.com](mailto:ncomer@neb.rr.com)

If you are interested, please fill out the application below and mail to: Nancy Comer 7730 Myrtle St. Lincoln, NE 68506. Questions call 402-488-9209. You can also download an application from the FFL website. Get involved, have some fun, consider leading one of the 2012 exchanges.

## Exchange Director's Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Club Member since \_\_\_\_\_

Exchange(s) In Which You Are Interested (You may designate more than one)

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To assist the Board of Directors in assessing your commitment to Friendship Force, please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Indicate in a paragraph or two why you think you would make a successful exchange director.
2. How would you recruit club members and members of the community to participate in the exchange?
3. What ideas do you have regarding leading workshops prior to the exchange to instruct Hosts/Ambassadors on how to make the exchange a success?



The Friendship Force of Lincoln  
PO Box 30334  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68503

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Mail to: Friendship Force, PO Box 30334, Lincoln, NE 68503. Make check payable to: "The Friendship Force of Lincoln."

Date \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Name Badge \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Name Badge Name(s) *Please Print* \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY:  Individual-\$30  Family-\$40  Patron-\$50  Benefactor-\$75  Sponsor-\$100  
 Replacement Name Badge @\$9.00

**Total Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: New members each receive a complimentary name badge; replacement name badges cost \$9.00 each.