**Get to Know Our New President:**

**Gretchen Worth**

*By Kathleen Jamison*

Gretchen Worth’s first official meeting as the new Friendship Force Florida Suncoast president is just coming up, but she has already been busy for months. Summer is usually a quiet time for the club, but a lot has been happening. The first order of business has been revising the bylaws, including changing the club’s calendar year to match FFI’s, to present to the membership for approval. There has also been a flurry of activity preparing for 12 Canadian Ambassadors in October. Plus time putting serious thought into what she would like to accomplish for the club during her tenure. Luckily, she has plenty of leadership experience, so things are looking exciting as we rev up post-Covid.

One goal is finding ways to let more people know about Friendship Force. “Especially those in the just-retired or getting ready to retire age group who are looking forward to traveling and making new friends,” she says. “Friendship Force has so much to offer.” She also hopes to get as many members as possible involved in club activities.

Since joining FFFS four or five years ago, Gretchen and Art, her husband of 61 years, have home hosted and given dinners several times. “I really enjoy that kind of hospitality. I like to cook, and I have my grandmother’s dining table that can seat 16." They have hosted club members from Milwaukee, Raleigh, Long Island and Australia. "One of the best things about Friendship Force is getting to meet lots of interesting people. Art and I made a real friendship on our first trip. The couple who hosted us in Milwaukee stayed with us on their Florida journey and bought a home in Naples which we have visited. Our trip to Australia and New Zealand with Globus was right after 9/11, which was an interesting time."

Gretchen is from a small town outside of Pittsburgh, moved with Art and their three children many times, and landed in Florida in 1972.They now live in Palm Harbor. She has had an interesting career, but her favorite job, she says, was seven years as a travel agent. The Arctic, Antarctica and Hawaii are still dream trips. Holland for the tulips is on the calendar for next April. In the meantime, Gretchen is gardening and sewing clothes for the homeless. And getting ready to steer FFFS for the next couple of years.

