



# The Telescope

News for the Greater Hartford PROBUS Club

February 2015

## President's Message

Dear Probus Friends:

Over the next few months I just want to ask each of you **to consider** if you can think of a friend or acquaintance, female or male who might like to come to the **Probus Meeting**. It could be somebody you usually don't talk too, but go out on a limb to invite them anyway. If so please **write their name down** so you don't forget them. The more we try the more we accomplish.

The next few months will have a lot to offer us in ways we can volunteer enriching Probus and ourselves. Please plan on attending our meetings and learn about exciting things for Probus.

Thanks so much,

*David Hoff, President*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **PROBUS MEETING: 1/21/15 MINUTES**

Submitted by Charlie Dobrow

**Meeting called to order at 6:48 p.m. by David Maslin** sitting in for President David Hoff who could not attend the meeting. **Introductions** were made of new Probus members Ellen Sanders Nirenstein and Ed Peltier. We also welcomed a guest tonight: Peter Barzack, Vice President of Operations at DataMail and Founder, along with his wife of Boundless Playgrounds which constructs handicapped accessible playgrounds for all children, such as Jonathan's Dream near the J.C.C. UConn Mens Basketball Coach Kevin Ollie and his wife recently donated \$50,000 to Jonathan's Dream

### **Treasurer's Report (Meyer Frankel):**

We now have 19 paid members in our Probus chapter.

Total of All Funds: Operating Fund = \$3,769.41

Fund Raising Fund = \$5,258.84

Endowment Fund = \$23,140.84

Total = \$32,169.09

### **Website Discussion:**

Syd Elkin informed the membership that President David Hoff met with a gentleman Mark and Mark has proposed that he can redesign our chapter's static and outdated website for \$500 which includes the redesign work and servicing of the site for 1 year. Moving forward, he will be able to service the website for \$250 per year. Discussion commenced and it was generally concluded that this is a very fair price given that companies often spend tens of thousands of dollars on website renovation. We also discussed the merits of linking our chapter's website with National's website for credibility and user-friendly purposes. Some members expressed a desire to have our new website mobile-enabled so it can be formatted for access via SmartPhones. Eventually we should have a presence on Facebook according to some members.

### **Crown Supermarket Fundraiser:**

Hal Levy reported that Sunday, March 29, 2015 (the Sunday before Passover) will be the date of our Crown Supermarket Fundraiser. A sign-up sheet was circulated and members signed up for shifts.

**Installation Dinner:**

We need a date solidified for the Installation Dinner so stay tuned!

**Annual Probus Picnic:**

Bob Goldberg stated that September 27<sup>th</sup> is our Annual Probus Picnic at Northwest Park . The New Britain (soon to be Hartford) RockCats will once again bring their community outreach team including Mascot Rocky to our Picnic!

**Probus Meetings Time Change:**

Bob Goldberg also mentioned that there will be a slight tweak to our monthly meetings at The American School For the Deaf. Since our meeting room has now been designated as a student dining room, we will need to have our dinner meetings moved from 6:15pm to **6:30pm**. Bob met with the Executive Director of ASD to learn this. **The ASD Executive Director will be our March meeting guest.**

**Social Night:**

No Report received on a proposed Social Night with Spouses.

**New Business:**

Mark Goldberg made a motion that \$500 from our Operating Fund be allocated to our website re-design project. Following some lively discussion, the motion was re-worded to say that We are authorizing President David Hoff to spend \$500 out of the Probus Operating Fund to re-design and enhance our website. This will now allow David to have the authority to enter into an agreement with the web designer to kick-off this much needed project.

**Goodwill:**

**Warren Webber** had heart surgery and is now recovering at West Hartford Health & Rehab at 130 Loomis Drive. Feel free to send him a get well card or stop by for a visit ! He is on a no sodium diet and doing well and he plans to be at an upcoming Probus meeting.

**Steve Blotner** just turned 70 years young! Congratulations!

**Special Needs Educator Project (SNEP):**

David Maslin gave a very thoughtful and organized Powerpoint presentation concerning the new SNEP (Special Needs Educator Project) which will be a huge and challenging undertaking for our chapter and will shine the light on some very deserving Special Educators in our region. David's presentation was very focused and granular and gave our membership an initial framework of how we will tackle this endeavor. He talked about the Need and said that Connecticut collectively spent \$1.8 Billion in 2014 to educate 70,785 children with learning disabilities. This represents 10% of the total school aged population (ages 3 to 21). 60% of that cost is borne by municipalities and many are stumbling under the burden. This is leading to funding shortfalls for many programs. He also talked about the volatility in terms of swings in enrollment surges.

**Mission Statement:**

To provide assistance to certified Special Needs Educators that augments and enhances classroom experience, learning programs and life skills training of students with special needs...and to recognize the dedication and professionalism of certified Special Needs Educators.

**Target Beneficiaries:**

Hartford Centric and Hartford Region.

**Special Needs Educator Project Grant:**

RFP (Request For Proposal) Solicitation: David spoke about an Advisory Board Screening and the dissemination to certified teaching staff. In other words, he said that there will be what he termed “a double screen”, first by professionals in the ranks, and then by us....Ultimately SNEP awards funds to selected proposals.

**Organization 501 (C)(3) Registration:**

\*standalone entity

\*expedited IRS Filing (Rapid Express Registration in 30-60 days)

\*advisory

Pre-filing consultation with L. Chatinover, ESQ. (Hartford Foundation For Public Giving). Also, CCSU/Major Gifts, guidance

**Executive Board:**

Comprised of 3-5 people or perhaps as many as 7.

Principal Director, Associate Director and Secretary are the key point people

Also an independent accountant is required, perhaps via pro bono.

**Advisory Board:**

With a total of 15 – 20 people on it

**Major Support:**

Probus Club / Lead Sponsor

Honorary Board – It was suggested that Ted Sergy who is retired as Commissioner of the Dept. of Education, and who is on the Board of Directors of The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving, would make a great Honorary Board member.

Corporate

Recogniton Gala (our capstone ceremony)

Fundraising Events

Designated Agency (e.g. United Way, Employee Giving, etc.)

Scholarship Commitment

**Proforma Budget**

25 individual grants would be made of between \$500 and \$1.200 each

**Communications:**

Contact list, website/Probus link, email/Newsletter, Facebook, etc., Media Relations, and related organizations like CPAC and CTFSN

It was suggested that at our next meeting in February, we **postpone the scheduled speaker** and instead zero in on this Special Needs Educator Project since it is so comprehensive. We would like to do further analysis and vetting. Those in attendance at tonight’s meeting conceptually agreed to this proposal to go ahead with the 501 (C0(3) application and to devote the entire February meeting to more lively and spirited discussion about SNEP.

David Maslin will have an implementation time line prepared for the Feb. meeting. David ended his presentation with some motivational Food-For-Thought: Alex’s Lemonade Stand charity was started by a 4 year old with cancer and is today carried on by the parents of this deceased child and is a \$100 Million charitable enterprise.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:48 p.m.**

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

**MINUTES: PROBUS MEETING – 11/19/14:**

Submitted by Charlie Dobrow

(Meeting called to order at 6:27 p.m. by President David Hoff).

1. Invited guests were acknowledged and welcomed to our Probus monthly meeting.

2. Sid Elkin introduced our special guest speaker for the evening, Joan Nicoli-Senft, PhD and Department Chair of Special Education at CCSU. David Maslin and Joan and others are working together to plan our Special Educator of the Year Award, recognition banquet and mini-grants program.

3. Joan stated that it is nice to be working with a group (Probus) which wants to honor Special Education teachers. She said that both nationally and here in CT there is a shortage of Special Ed teachers. Her department at CCSU works to equip students with skills for job readiness needed by teachers on day one to meet the needs of students across the spectrum from K through 12, actually through age 21. Joan also does advocacy work. She spoke on Central's Masters program, Post Bac program (in between undergrad and grad students status), accelerated learning and hybriding.

4. Other topics/aspects covered in Joan's talk to our membership were: the co-teach delivery model whereby Special Ed teachers work shoulder-to-shoulder with regular ed teachers. She mentioned the correlation between increased incidence of disabilities and socio-economic status. Also, we learned about the rise in Autism cases and society's increased awareness of it and ability to identify it. Joan touched upon the genetic link as well as the environmental link to Autism.

5. Finally, Joan discussed how her college program helps to train residence hall directors on their campus, who act as first responders, to deal with Autistic students appropriately and compassionately. Furthermore, she told our gathering how her department strives to facilitate improved skills for interventions. As a token of our appreciation, Joan was presented with a gift (a writing instrument) and an invitation to join our Probus chapter as a member.

6. The Minutes from our last meeting in October were approved by the membership.

7. Meyer Frankel presented the Treasurer's Report detailing the status of our Operating Fund, Fundraising Fund and Endowment Fund. He provided a 3 page handout to all members for their review.

8. David Maslin updated us on his undertaking of our Special Needs Educator of the Year recognition project. Joan our guest speaker has agreed to serve on the Advisory Board for this project. David said he envisions that we will be awarding a series of "mini grants" of between \$500 and \$1,000 to teachers to enhance/ augment their classroom wish lists. These mini grants will serve to bridge the gap when schools are not able to fund certain items which could make a difference in the classroom. The end of the school year Probus award banquet comes at the end of the process to recognize what these teachers have actually done with their mini grants. David will provide us with a benchmark report at our January meeting. He will give us a Powerpoint presentation which will describe his planning group's goals, budgetary needs and deadlines and how the rest of the membership at large can assist him in any way to keep this great project focused and on schedule.

9. We were told that Camp Horizons in South Windham's new Commons Building

was recently paid off ! This state-of-the-art facility cost \$3 million and due to some very generous donations at the recent "Splash With Panache" gala event at Mystic Marinelife Aquarium the Commons Building is now paid for !

10. President David Hoff will shore up who will be our upcoming guest speakers in 2015 and will work with Meyer, Bob Goldberg and Mark Goldberg to coordinate this.

11. Also a letter was circulated pertaining to David's parents' George & Muriel Hoff Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Foundation of Greensboro, North Carolina. This letter dated June 17, 2014 stated that the Probus Club, Greater Hartford chapter has received a \$200 contribution to be used towards our club goals/mission statement.

12. Bob Goldberg announced that he is organizing a fun get together to thank the good folks at The American School For the Deaf. On Friday, December 12th Probus members and approximately 25 ASD students/staff will attend a minor league Wolfpack hockey game at the XL Center in Hartford at 7:00pm. Michael Croll will attend since he knows American Sign Language.

13. Michael also gave a summary of our Raffle which he is organizing for the springtime. He encouraged members who may have contacts/connections at local restaurants to let him know so that they can be approached and asked to donate \$25 gift cards to their establishments for our raffle.

14. A vote was taken authorizing a holiday tip (\$40) to the 2 gentlemen who work for the ASD food service (Sodexo) who continually prepare great buffet meals for our monthly Probus meetings. Thank you for the delicious food and the set up and break down of our conference room each month !

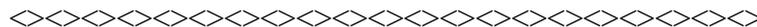
15. In December, there will be an Executive Committee meeting. Details forthcoming.

16. Under Good and Welfare, we heard more about Meyer's daughter new book "Dogs of War" and her recent book signing and her book being on the New York Times Bestseller List. !

17. Meeting Adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

.....  
**GREATER HARTFORD PROBUS BOARD 2014-2015**

<b>President:</b>	<b>David Hoff</b>
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> Vice-President:</b>	<b>David Maslan</b>
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> Vice-President:</b>	<b>Michael Croll</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Charles Dobrow</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Meyer Frankel</b>
<b>Probus National Rep:</b>	<b>Steve Blotner</b>
<b>Member at Large:</b>	<b>Bob Goldberg</b>



## Legislative Panel Seeks Better Ways To Fund Special Education



Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey, shown here at a 2013 press conference, said he would like to see an overhaul of the way special education is funded. (Rick Hartford/ Hartford Courant)

By **Daniela Altimari** *contact the reporter*

- Finance

legislative panel has been meeting for more than a year pondering better ways to pay for special education

HARTFORD — A legislative panel charged with promoting regionalism and efficiency in government is tackling one of the state's most vexing fiscal dilemmas: how to fund special education.

Connecticut collectively spent an estimated \$1.8 billion last year to educate 70,785 children ranging in age from 3 to 21. Those students have a wide variety of needs, from mild impairments that interfere with their ability to learn in the classroom to profound physical, educational or behavioral issues that require placement in a residential program.

Although the state and federal government help underwrite the costs of special education through educational cost-sharing grants and other funding streams, the bulk of that spending — more than 60 percent — is borne by local taxpayers.

The staggering cost and volatility of the special education budget has prompted municipal leaders to seek more help from the state. At a recent meeting of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns, Andrew Urban, the finance director in Westbrook, implored legislative leaders to "step up to your commitment."

"I haven't [heard] anybody talk about what the state would like to do, what you would like to do, about taking on the special needs education costs, completely, 100 percent, because we can't," Urban said.

The variability of special education costs because of changing enrollments as well as the changing needs of students, adds another budgetary complication for local officials struggling to get a handle on costs.

"One year we have 10 [special education students], another year we have two," Urban said. "We can't budget for this."

House Speaker Brendan Sharkey, who has long championed regional cooperation as a way to streamline government, save money and improve services, said he would like to see an overhaul of the way special education is funded.

"I've said publicly many times: It is my hope and expectation that the state should ultimately take over the cost of special ed entirely," Sharkey said. "Not only is it more fair for this to be handled at the state level because of the vagaries of the year-to-year budget that you cannot control, but also because there are tremendous efficiencies to be gained by doing things on a regional and/or state level."

Themis Klarides, the Republican leader in the House, called those goals "laudable."

"There are certainly efficiencies we can make as a state," Klarides said. "I don't know if taking over the entire program is the answer, but I think doing something where you have control of your costs is what we need to look at."

Sharkey conceded that a complete takeover by the state is unlikely to happen soon.

"The problem is we currently spend about \$1.8 billion a year collectively on special education," he said. "The state budget right now is about \$20 billion, so unless we're talking about a 20 percent increase in state taxes .... I'm not sure the public is ready to do that."

Still, the Democrat from Hamden expressed hope that incremental steps could offer some relief to municipalities while improving services for special education students. Incentives for school districts to regionalize special education services are among the proposals that could be on the legislative agenda in coming months.

A group of legislators, working as a subcommittee of the Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies Commission, has been meeting for nearly a year to formulate a plan.

Rep. Brian Becker, D-West Hartford and co-chairman of the commission's working group on special education, said he expects the panel to come up with recommendations to present to lawmakers this year.

"But as we said at the beginning of our work, I view this as a multiyear project," Becker said. "There are going to be some initial recommendations, but by no means do we believe it to be the end of our work."

Co-Chairwoman Michelle Cook, D-Torrington, sought to reassure parents and other advocates that the group's goal is not to reduce or eliminate programs.

"We are not about cutting services," she said. "This is really about how we can do it better, and if better means more efficient, if better means regionalizing, if better means keeping it the way it is, that's our charge."

Copyright © 2015, Hartford Courant

\*\*\*\*\*

**Reminder:      Next Probus Meeting (Speaker):**

*(Please note the new time)*

**Date: Wednesday February 18, 2015**

**Time: 6:30 PM**

**Location: American School for the Deaf  
139 N Main St, West Hartford, CT 06107  
(860) 570-2300**

**Speaker: David Maslan**

**Subject: Special Educator Awards Fundraiser.** This presentation will have a detailed "Project Plan" for the Special Educator Program.

\*\*\*\*\*

## An Easy Fund Raiser

### Occasion Cards

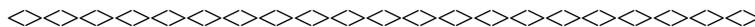
As you know, the Probus Club is 100% committed to helping those that, for no fault of their own, cannot help themselves. One of our fund raising events that we sponsor is the ability for us to be able to accept contributions to honor, praise, memorialize or make a special acknowledgement to someone who is either in our presence or in our memory.

By you making a contribution to the Probus Club, our very own Bruce Stanger will process your contribution; inform the donee that a contribution was made to Probus to recognize him or her and for the event that is being recognized. Also, an acknowledgement will be sent to you, the donor, to thank you for your charitable contribution to the Probus Club. As always, 100% of donations to the Probus Club are used exclusively for charitable purposes.

Consider the Probus Club when honoring or remembering someone special.

Bruce Stanger can be reached at:  
Attorney Bruce Stanger  
433 South Main Street  
Suite 112  
West Hartford, CT 06110

The check should be made payable to The Probus Club and forwarded to Bruce along with the information necessary for a proper acknowledgement. Thank you for supporting The Probus Club.



## 2015 COMING EVENTS FOR GREATER HARTFORD PROBUS CLUB

Schedule of Dinner Meetings at the American School for the Deaf:

February 18-- **Speaker: David Maslan**

**Subject: Special Educator Awards Fundraiser.**

March 18--speaker

April 15--Business

Installation Dinner ---May 20; May 27; or June 3 --- to be announced

Meyer Frankel, Editor

The Telescope is the newsletter of the Greater Hartford PROBUS Club