



# The Telescope

News for the Greater Hartford PROBUS Club

February 2016

## President's Message

Dear Probus members,

Meetings, meetings, meetings. There is a group of Probus members who are meeting and meeting and meeting. They are the people who are working on the Special Needs Awards Project so that Probus will be able to move confidently ahead on that.

Come to the Wednesday February 17th meeting and hear all about it. This project continues to look like an exciting opportunity for Probus and the whole community.

Hope to see you there. Stay warm.

David Hoff

\*\*\*\*\*

### MINUTES – PROBUS MEETING 1/13/16

**Meeting called to order at 6:25 p.m.**

**President David Hoff** gave his welcoming remarks to the membership and Howard Raff and Warren Webber upon his return to our club.

Secretary Charlie Dobrow asked if there were any questions, comments or concerns pertaining to the latest published minutes found in the January Telescope. No discussion ensued and the minutes were passed in a vote by the membership.

**Meyer Frankel** gave his Treasurer's report. He brought to the attention of the membership that Webster Bank which holds our account is now charging a \$2.00 "paper fee" per month. Probus Greater Hartford chapter opened up our account with Webster back in 1989. We debated the merits of looking for a new bank to avoid getting nicked and dined to death. Some members suggested investigating banks such as Farmington Bank, Citizens, TD Bank, Santander, Simsbury Bank and Well Fargo. We also discussed whether our club President should be one of the signers for the account given the fact that our President changes every 2 years or so. Meyer will investigate other more user friendly bank options and report back to the membership in the near future.

**Under New Business, Michael Croll** announced who would be the special guest speaker for our Spring Installation Dinner. We are pleased to welcome the Curator of the New Britain Museum of American Art who also heads up their Education Department. This wonderful museum is a gem here in Connecticut and has a national reputation for excellence. Further details and a bio of our speaker will be forthcoming so stay tuned!

**Under Committee Reports, Bob Goldberg** reminded us that our Probus chapter will be hosting area group home residents at a University of Hartford Women's Basketball game on Thursday, January 21st at 6:00 p.m. Bob has already received word from 6 Probians who would like to volunteer as escorts and goodwill ambassadors at the game. Furthermore, Bob said that tonight (e.g. January 13th) as we gather for our monthly meeting, 29 American School for the Deaf students and caretakers are attending a U of H hoops game gratis courtesy of Probus. Finally, Bob said that our last speaker, Jeff Dooley, who is the on-air announcer for the RockCats/Yard Goats minor league baseball team, received a Connecticut Sportscaster of the Year Award recently so Bob sent Jeff a congratulatory note on behalf of Probus.

**Michael Croll** said he will have a list of prizes for our upcoming Raffle by next month's Probus meeting. Again, if you have any people whom you know from your work, home or social life who might be good candidates to donate a raffle prize, please let Michael know ASAP so an introductory contact can be made!

**Hal Levy** will have a report next month concerning the Crown Supermarket fundraiser.

The bulk of our meeting tonight was devoted to focusing everyone's attention on the progress of our Special Needs Education grant awarding project. **David Hoff** reiterated that a lot of hours of planning have gone into this great project and we are building momentum! So far we have 9 donors to this project who have pledged a total of \$3,700. We would like to have 100% membership participation, in terms of everyone donating something even if it is just \$10. This will allow us to approach large corporations in the area and report to them that every single Probus member has "bought into the project". This will be significant in the eyes of the corporations when they are deciding whether to open their purse strings. We want to approach the corporations with confidence and momentum so please consider making a donation to this project soon!

The above-mentioned \$3,700 pledged so far is ear-marked for legal fees, website outreach for this project and other start-up costs. In addition, our club will be giving \$10,000 to the project to go towards direct grant awards for the teachers.

**David Maslin** who is spearheading this groundbreaking project said that many hours, and indeed months, have gone into planning this. He said that a "constructive debate" has helped to improve the nature of the project. He said that we are in full speed ahead mode now. A board of directors has been formed consisting of : **Dave Maslin, Mark Goldberg, Ed Peltier, Steve**

**Blotner and Dr. Robert Dobrow.** So David updated the membership on recent progress made and clarified our focus.

Ed, who is the Co-Chair of the Special Needs Project Committee along with David Maslin, presented bullet points on an easel flip chart. In tandem with this, David walked us through the Action Plan which included

Dates/Timelines, Actions as well as current Status. He went through both Phase One Pilot initiatives which will help prime the pump and begin to get the RFP (Request For Proposal) process moving ahead and some grants awarded and distributed this Spring and Summer and Phase Two which will ultimately allow us to approach corporations and foundations for larger and more substantial donations.

8 to 10 schools have been targeted/identified as suggested Phase One Pilot Schools: ASD in West Hartford, The Gengras Center in West Hartford, 1 or 2 elementary schools in the Hartford Public School system, Eagle House Education Program of Hartford, Intensive Education Center of West Hartford, The Grace Webb School of Hartford, CREC School of Windsor and 1 or 2 elementary schools in New Britain.

A few months ago in October, an agreement was made with a CPA/Audit firm to provide start-up pro bono counsel. **David Maslin** reminded us that he has worked with CCSU as a partner for this project. Again, David reiterated that Phase One encompasses the disbursement of Probus monies and Phase Two will involve our new 501-C3 disbursement once we have our ducks lined up. We will approach corporations and foundations for charitable giving. Ed asked that we all provide him with feedback because there will be bumps in the road and things we did not anticipate along the way which we will have to learn from and deal with as our project evolves.

Each of the Phase One Pilot Schools will be assigned 1 or preferably 2 Probus liaisons who will serve as a support person to interface with them and disburse the grant check. David Hoff said he likes the term “ambassador” vs. liaison for this role. Ed circulated a sign-up sheet for those interested in becoming a liaison.

Next we discussed the Public Relations and Community benefits which this project will yield. **Mark Goldberg** stressed that this project will grow the Probus Club both in size (number of new members) and stature. He said that this allows us to enter the big time! We will promote the project during Phase One via the local media, individual school’s websites or via a school district’s website. One thought was to have over-sized checks as props during the check presentation photo opts. Other publicity can be achieved during the Gala recognition event and through working in concert with business and industry corporate media efforts.

**President Hoff** said he read a moving book called “Relational Judaism” which caused him to think about how we relate with others we come in contact with and how we build trust and dialogue. His take away from this book is that we can all certainly approach the owner of the local gas station or hardware store that we have patronized for years and tap into our relationship with these proprietors and perhaps set up a convenient time for a brief coffee meeting to seek their participation in helping to underwrite a grant for our project. The 2 David’s concur that our Phase One disbursement of the \$10,000 to the schools will create a track record that is necessary and vital to our being able to turn our attention to the corporate world eventually.

**Steve Blotner** gave an update on the Website for our special project. He said that Mark Roffer who updated both our general website as well as the Bridgeport Club’s site, has agreed to reduce his normal fee down to \$500 plus a \$250 annual maintenance fee. The contract with Mark for this website project is pending and the next step is Beta Testing and hopefully deploying the website by the end of February.

**Dr. Robert Dobrow** shared his impressions of the project. He said that he is happy and honored to join the committee/board and although he does not have legal or corporate/business knowledge per se, he is very willing to roll up his sleeves and offer his perspective to this growing project. He said “If we can all contribute time and energy this project will succeed!” He also suggested that the ambassadors perhaps be charged with doing more than just handing out the checks in September and snapping a few publicity photos. He suggested that maybe the ambassadors could also make some RFP calls.

A Question & Answer session ensued. Meyer asked a question about how the grant monies would be used. David Maslin and others who chimed in gave a short list of potential teacher needs such as: Money to go to paying for bus transportation to go to the grocery store to learn basic life skills, field trips, reading corners, computers, I-Pads, other technology purchases for the classroom, etc. Ed said that we are setting the Phase One grants at a range of between \$300 and \$500.

We then learned that the Bylaws for this special entity are in draft form awaiting finalization. The entity will eventually be run by the Probus Club Executive Committee and an accountant. David Maslin alerted us that the school where Bob Goldberg works, CREC in Windsor, was added to the Phase One School target list in appreciation for all of Bob’s hard work and dedication to our Probus chapter.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,  
**Charlie Dobrow**  
**Secretary**

---

## **Parents Fight for Disability Funding ((Hartford Courant)).**

HARTFORD — The signs of influence were there: About 30 legislators showed up at a rallying point Wednesday as dozens of parents of children with intellectual disabilities prepared to fan out through the Capitol complex and press lawmakers to resist \$47 million in proposed cuts to services.

The consensus in the crowded meeting room Wednesday was that parents, schooled by advocates to become their own champions, have in recent years fully conveyed what they see as an unjust system that favors expensive, outmoded state institutions serving a fraction of the population.

Now, having gained considerable influence at the Capitol, particularly with nearly 70 legislators on a disabilities caucus they helped to create, the challenge is to turn access into actions that take fundamental programs — job supports, day services, in-home help for families — off the budgetary chopping block.

Leslie Simoes, executive director of The Arc Connecticut, set a tone that was echoed by several legislators. She said families are grateful that Gov. [Dannel P. Malloy](#) identified a stalled line of more than 2,000 people waiting for services as a top priority, but that cuts to the Department of Developmental Services contained in Malloy's proposed budget "could be devastating."



**Three families. Three different paths. Same commitment.**

**Each is raising a son or daughter with a profound intellectual disability. There were times that were filled with joy for all of these parents. Relief washed over Dawn DeMatteo of East Haven when she found the right weekday activity program. (JOSH KOVNER)**

"Your voices are loud and clear," Rep. John Hampton, D-Simsbury, a co-chair of the legislative caucus on intellectual and developmental disabilities, told the audience of parents and clients.

"We have fallen asleep thinking of your faces and the faces of your children and the stories that we've heard from you," Hampton said, having listened to families in their living rooms and at Capitol public hearings.

He was asked later if he can support Malloy's proposed budget and at the same time temper the deep cuts to human services that it contains.

"I think we can, in a bipartisan manner, working with the governor, make cuts as necessary — such as state overtime and a cap on bonding — while protecting what is one of our core services," said Hampton.

He said the community of people with intellectual disabilities, and their parents and advocates, "have made such tremendous advances — to cut them off at the knees right now would be so devastating."

Sen. [Beth Bye](#), D-West Hartford, one of the legislature's most influential members, described for the audience what she sees as an undeniable political reality.

Referring to the current generation of young people with intellectual disabilities, Bye told the parents: "We are watching children who are growing up without options. We need to have everyone fully engaged in the community, yet there are grave concerns about this budget."

Bye is Senate chair of the appropriations committee, and a co-chair, with Hampton and Rep, Jay Case, R-Winsted, of the disabilities caucus.

"We've been fighting to hold the line [on funding to the Department of Developmental Services] but what is, is not enough — not when there are 2,000 families waiting for community services and housing."

**Reminder:**            **Next Probus Meeting (Speaker):**  
**Date:** Wednesday February 17, 2016  
**Time:** 6:00 PM  
**Location:**    **American School for the Deaf**  
                          **139 N Main St, West Hartford, CT 06107**  
                          **(860) 570-2300**

**Speakers:** Noreen Simmons and Beth Katten: Volunteers for “Autism Speaks”. This is a timely topic and will be extremely informative. This is the perfect opportunity to invite a potential member.

**Please remember** our meetings will always be in **Cogswell Hall** this year. This is the same building we have held our Installation Dinner.

The following are the Wednesday night's dinner meeting speaker's bios:

**Beth Katten** lives in West Hartford with her 2 sons, Gary and Sam and her husband, Stuart. Gary is 20 years old and Sam is 18 years old and is a Freshman at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst majoring in Animal Science. Beth and her husband Stuart grew up in West Hartford and both attended Hall High School. Beth graduated cum laude from Brandeis University in 1986. Her major was American Studies with a minor in Legal Studies. She was a paralegal for about 5 years, until the birth of her two sons. She has a Paralegal Certificate from Hartford College for Women. Beth currently works part time as a Library Technician for the United States Courts Library in Hartford. She has been in that position for 12 years. Beth is also the part time Librarian at the Emanuel Synagogue and she also taught first grade at the Emanuel Religious School for a couple of years. Beth is also very active in the autism community. Her oldest son Gary was diagnosed with autism at about the age of two and a half. Beth was the Region Coordinator for the Greater Hartford Region of the Autism Society of Connecticut for about 5 years and she has been the Resource Fair Coordinator for the Greater Hartford Walk Now for Autism for about 10 years, since that walk's inception. She also co-chaired with Noreen Simmons, Autism Speaks Connecticut's Family Services/Community Outreach Committee for a few years. Beth also was the Public Relations Volunteer for West Hartford Special Education PTO for a few years and is now the Public Relations Volunteer for Special Olympics West Hartford.

**Noreen Simmons** is a Massachusetts native who now lives in West Hartford with her husband and 2 sons, ages 14 and 11. Her 14 year old son, Weller, is on the Autism Spectrum and is a freshman at Hall High school. Weller was diagnosed at age 2 and a half. He participates in both mainstream and special ED classes.

Noreen has been active with the CT Autism Speaks Community for over 10 years, serving several years as a Co-Chair and Chair of the Greater Hartford Walk Now for Autism Speaks, and also as Community Outreach and Family Services Co- Chair and Chair, which she currently serves on. She helps organize information tables to promote autism awareness at Community events, and organizes events for families with children on the autism spectrum.

Noreen graduated from Lesley University in Cambridge MA, with a degree in Early Childhood Education, and currently is interested in community organizing, regarding housing and employment for individuals having special needs. For fun, she likes to travel, knit, search for and sell antiques, and enjoy the outdoors with her family.



**The following is a schedule of the Probus Club's 2015-2016 dinner meetings:**

**Note: All dinner meetings below are at the American School for the Deaf.**

**February 17, 2016                      Wednesday at 6:00 PM:   Speaker**  
**March 16, 2016                        Wednesday at 6:00 PM:   Speaker**  
**April 20, 2016                         Wednesday at 6:00 PM:   Speaker**  
**May 18, 2016                          Wednesday at 6:00 PM:   Speaker**  
**June 8, 2016 Installation Dinner Wednesday at 6:00 PM:   Speaker:**



**Probus Club's 2015-2016 officers:**

- President – David Hoff**
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – David Maslin**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Michael Croll**
- Secretary – Charles Dobrow**
- Treasurer – Meyer Frankel**
- Probus National Rep - Steve Blotner**

**Thank You Letters to the Probus Club:**

From: [Brian.C.Johnson@ct.gov](mailto:Brian.C.Johnson@ct.gov)  
To: [Debob50@aol.com](mailto:Debob50@aol.com)  
Sent: 2/1/2016 4:36:43 P.M. Eastern Standard Time  
Subj: Hartford Hawsk Game

Hello Bob Goldberg. Myself and the residents at Brown Street wanted to thank you for the kind donation to the Hartford Hawks game. Everyone had a great time, and is looking forward to attending future events. We appreciate everything you do for the individuals with developmental disabilities. Thank you again.

**Brian C. Johnson**

## **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.

Meyer Frankel, Editor

The "Telescope" is the monthly newsletter of the Probus Club of Greater Hartford.