



The Telescope

News for the Greater Hartford PROBUS Club

March 2016

MINUTES – PROBUS Meeting 2/17/16

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Alexandra Flowers, our Historian, gave a brief history of our Probus chapter as well as told the assembled guests, guest speakers and members what our mission is. She also touched upon Probus' many special events, fundraisers and activities to benefit the developmentally disabled in Greater Hartford.

Two members introduced and welcomed guests that they had invited to our February meeting. **Dr. Robert Dobrow** invited his neighbor from Bloomfield, **Bob Barry**, who works at Cigna in their IT Department. He is a Lay Deacon at his church and along with his wife is raising their family at Gillette Ridge. **Mark Goldberg** spoke about his good friend **Russell Smith** and predicted if Russell were to join our ranks that he would probably get involved with our Memorial Day Parade balloon sale, the pumpkin carving event at one of the group homes and other special events.

Committee Reports:

Bob Goldberg updated us on recent and upcoming sporting event outings. It has been a busy last month according to Bob. On Jan. 21st 40 group home clients were invited to attend a University of Hartford Women's Hawks basketball game. Bob was happy to report that we (e.g. he) have (has) built a "perpetual relationship" with U. of H.'s athletic department and they are quite willing to help Probus help enhance the lives of the group home individuals! Clients were given a complimentary U. of H. Hawks Nation canvas bag, tee shirt, water bottle and towel after the game. A recent U. of H. Men's game also drew roughly 40 clients/caretakers and Probus greeters. The final women's game will be held on Feb. 24th and Bob hopes to secure a hot dog and Powerade for \$2.00 package for our group. Additionally, some Probians enjoyed a Wolfpack minor league hockey game vs. the Wilkes Barre Penguins at the XL Center on Feb. 12th. Bob proclaimed that "client interaction is invaluable!" "We received 5 thank you cards from the group homes and ASD students who attended the hockey game and Bob circulated them during tonight's meeting for the membership to read them. Finally, Bob reminded everyone to mark their calendars because our Annual Group Homes Picnic is slated for Sept. 11th.

Michael Croll spoke about the progress of our Annual Raffle. He cited the growth in the raffle over the past several years. We have gone from approximately \$1,500 to approximately \$3,300 in profits. Michael said that his goal is to have raffle tickets available by our March Meeting for distribution to the members, so they can begin selling them! He is currently working to get the raffle prizes lined up and secured. Also, he will be speaking

with the State of Connecticut to obtain our raffle license. Bottom line, his goal is to allow all of us to have 2 to 2 ½ months of selling time.

Hal Levy, who is overseeing our Crown Supermarket shoppers donation day, said it will occur on April 17th which is the Sunday before Passover. A volunteer sign-up sheet was circulated so members could sign up for a 2 hour shift to tell the Probus story to shoppers at this heavy traffic Jewish specialty food market and secure cash donations for Probus.

Michael Croll has a friend who is an artist who will redesign the donation box to look more appropriate and professional for this and other fundraising events we hold.

David Maslin updated us on the progress his Special Needs Grants Committee has made recently. It has been a fast-paced past few months with a number of meetings held and other tangible action items having occurred. The first wave of letters to potential grantees have gone out to 5 private schools! More letters will be going out to a few public schools very soon. A contract to develop a niche website for this Special Needs Grants Program was signed with Mark Roeffer. We already have a domain name for this website. We are about to file with the State of Connecticut for our 501c(3) status. David also said that a contact list is being developed so that we cover all of the bases.

David Hoff, our President, reflected that the Special Needs Grants Program has developed like an embryo. David Maslin hatched the idea a few years ago and it has evolved into what should prove to be a wonderful landmark program. David Hoff also put this whole program into perspective saying “We are a giver club” meaning Probus is not simply a club that other organizations turn to when they need a donation from us. We are proactive not reactive and that is a good thing.

Mark Goldberg spoke about our **Annual Memorial Day Parade Balloon Sale in West Hartford Center**. He enthusiastically proclaimed that “this is an event to be experienced! “He said it is a great way for all of us to interact with neighbors, family and friends and raise money for Probus’ mission.

Meyer Frankel introduced our 2 guest speakers for the evening. **Beth Katten** was a former neighbor of his. Also, Meyers daughter lives in Los Angeles and there is an L.A. chapter of **Autism Speaks** (which is the group Beth represents). Beth’s counterpart, **Noreen Simmons**, also dedicates a lot of time and energy with the Autism Speaks organization. Both women live in West Hartford and have sons who have been diagnosed with Autism.

Beth currently works part time as a Library Technician for the United States Courts Library in Hartford. Noreen is interested in community organizing regarding housing and employment for individuals having special needs.

Due to some technical difficulties the You Tube video which the 2 women were trying to show us entitled “What it’s like to have a brother with Autism” was not able to be viewed tonight so we were all encouraged to watch it on You Tube in our free time since it is eye opening for sure.

We were informed that there is a huge range of types of autism on the autism spectrum. 1 in 68 are diagnosed with autism. Perhaps this is due to better diagnosing methods/procedures and the availability of autism information on the Internet. Asperger's is a fairly new diagnosis according to Beth and Noreen. Some estimates exist showing that it could cost a family with an Autistic child \$50,000 per year to receive proper treatment and services. We also learned that some insurance covers autism and some does not depend upon the policy one has at their place of employment. The annual costs that autistic families are burdened with encompass services for aspects such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, social skills, etc. More children are diagnosed with autism than AIDS, Diabetes and Cancer combined. This is a staggering statistic.

We saw a Powerpoint slide entitled "Myths About Autism". We learned that not all people with autism are "Rain Man" like meaning displaying idiot savant skills. There is a myth that autistic folks are not affectionate (don't need love). This is not true. Another myth is that autistic kids are simply kids who need more discipline. Furthermore, Beth and Noreen tried to dispel the myth that autistic kids can't be taught. Not true.

There is no cure for Autism, rather it is a life long challenge. Both women echoed the sentiment that their goal for their kids is that they will someday find meaningful job and will find their way in society. Both acknowledged that they won't be around forever to care for their children. An IEP (Individualized Education Plan) can help chart a course and guide autistic children through their schooling. As we learned from one of these dedicated moms, it is possible to have your autistic child have his Bar Mitzvah at age 13. The only difference is that while most young Jewish boys typically experience 1 year of preparation and training for their Bar Mitzvah, an autistic child needed 5 years of Hebrew training and prep time.

Routine is important in the lives of many autistic children. So one of the moms takes her autistic child to the movies and they always get popcorn and do other routine/regimented things at the movie theater in order to settle in and watch the film. She encourages her son to deal with real life and being out in public despite his autism. We also learned that the Bushnell offered a Christmas production which was an "autism-friendly show" thanks to a special advisor/consultant who was brought in from New York. And did you know that Albert Einstein and Mark Twain were on the Autism Spectrum.?

Autism Speaks will hold its fundraising Walk-a-thon on June 5th at Rentschler Field in East Hartford. This national organization which is volunteer driven will also have a Resource Fair on site at the Walk-a-thon for local agencies and non-profits to hand out literature. It was hinted that perhaps this would be an appropriate venue for our Probus chapter to participate and spread the word to the general public about the Probus story!

The Minutes of our last Probus meeting were voted on and accepted.

Meyer gave his Treasurer's Report. The current Operating Fund total is: \$4,336.61.

Mark Goldberg reported on the Probus Candy Machines. It was learned that the machine installed at Sally & Bob's restaurant in West Hartford Center has broken, so Mark will either fix it or replace it with a new one.

The Camp Horizons Gala fundraising event is scheduled for April 30th at 6:00 p.m. Cost is \$175 per person for this unique fundraiser which includes great food, live entertainment / dancing to a live band. We would like to get a table of some Probus members to attend to show our presence and our support of the camp.

Meyer proposed that our Probus chapter give an annual donation (\$100) to some organizations like Autism Speaks, The American School for the Deaf and others. This will formally be proposed at our annual budget meeting in September 2016.

Under Good & Welfare, **Hal Levy** announced that he was having prostate cancer surgery tomorrow (e.g. February 18th). We all wish him a successful surgery and speedy recovery!

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Dobrow
Secretary

Probus Club's Newest Member:

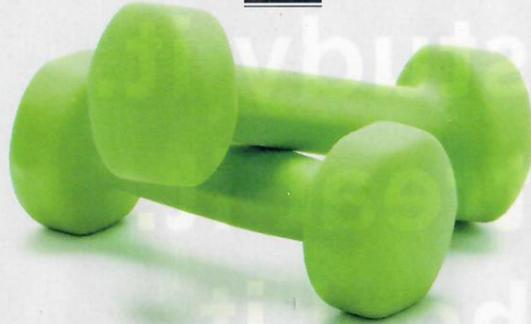
I would like to introduce you all to our newest member. His name is Russell Smith. He was at our last meeting and he instantly was impressed with the caliber of our membership and the projects we have planned as well as the ongoing activities. He wants to be a part of it.

Russell grew up in Hartford's North End. He had a rough time in his early years and grew up street wise. As he matured he became a landlord, a person who puts together entertainment shows as well as fuel oil delivery. I have been driven around on his three wheeled motor cycle. It is a blast!

He has a son who hopefully will be able to take advantage of the Memorial Day Balloon sale activity as well as some of the U of Hartford Basketball games and some of the other events of our club. Please present yourself and welcome Russell to our club.

Mark Goldberg

GYM NEWS



WORKING IT

Not Everyone Enjoys Pulsating Music With Their Workout

By JACK KRAMER

Tucked off the Boston Post Road in Orange sits a 5,000-square-foot fitness facility that is the only one of its kind in Connecticut.

The ASD Fitness Center, a specialized gym for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), was the inspiration of co-founders Adam and Dedra Leapley. They wanted to create a gym based on their own experience raising a child with ASD.

Their son, now 20, works — and works out — at the gym. Adam Leapley isn't comfortable discussing details about his son's ASD. "We try and respect his privacy," said Adam Leapley, which is why the Leapleys prefer not having him named in this story. "But let's just say we've seen a big transformation in him since he began working out at the gym."

That transformation, Adam Leapley said, "has led to improvements in my son's level of fitness and social/emotional well-being."

Adam Leapley, who is an investment manager when he isn't at the gym, said the ASD Fitness Center now has 82 family memberships. "We would max out, space-wise, at about 110 to 120 families. I believe we will

soon be there."

ASD Fitness has a different feel than other gyms because it doesn't have pulsating music and lights, brightly colored walls and blaring TVs. Those kind of gyms, Leapley said, "would be too much sensory overload" for someone with ASD. Instead, there is softer, non-fluorescent lighting, beige and white walls, no loud music, special floor matting.

"It is much more subdued — better suited for someone with autism," Leapley said.

ASD gym users range in age from 5 to adults and their family members also can join the gym and work out in a separate area.

The gym's mission statement is straightforward: "Provide a safe, comfortable and structured environment for empowering individuals with ASD to improve their level of physical fitness."

How does the gym find new members? "To be honest," Leapley said, "we don't have to work too hard at it. Word of mouth has served us pretty well."

Leapley said the staff, which consists of an executive and program directors and class instructors with special education training certificates, teach classes including adap-

tive karate, Zumba and yoga. There are workout stations, equipped with visual cues and timers. There are also tailored "fun" stations, following each workout station.

Leapley said one of the things he is proud of is that the gym members "have become a family. Often on weekends," he said, "we will work on community projects together, Easter egg hunts, pumpkin painting, participate in fairs. Two of our gym members recently ran their first 5K race."

Chapel Haven, a New Haven school for adults on the autism spectrum and with other needs, "became an immediate supporter of the ASD Fitness gym because its specialized equipment and facilities fit well with our focus on wellness and healthy living," said Catherine Sullivan-DeCarlo, vice president of admissions and marketing for Chapel Haven. The school brings students to the gym twice a week.

From the recessed lighting to trainers knowledgeable about autism, "our clients love being there," said Michael Storz, Chapel Haven's president. "They get a very fun workout with great trainers and all the sensory interruptions that can make it hard to work out in a typical gym have been removed."

www.asdfitnesscenter.com

Reminder: **Next Probus Meeting (Speaker):**
Date: Wednesday March 16, 2016
Time: 6:00 PM
Location: American School for the Deaf
139 N Main St, West Hartford, CT 06107
(860) 570-2300



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.

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**
- 1st Vice President – David Maslin**
- 2nd Vice President – Michael Croll**
- Secretary – Charles Dobrow**
- Treasurer – Meyer Frankel**

Probus National Rep - Steve Blotner

Probus Club's Annual Balloon Sale:
At West Hartford's Memorial Day Parade.
Monday, May 30, 2016.
More details forthcoming.



Probus Occasion Cards:

Donations for Hal Levy – Best Wishes for a healthy recovery:

- Michael and Shelley Barker.**
- Steven and Linda Blotner.**
- Meyer and Sheila Frankel.**
- Mark and Ellie Goldberg.**
- Bruce and Linda Stanger.**

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.