



The Telescope

News for the Greater Hartford PROBUS Club

September 2016

Probus Meeting of May 17, 2016 MINUTES

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

President David Hoff gave his opening remarks which included a mention of 2 important upcoming Probus events: The annual Memorial Day Parade Balloon Sale fundraiser and our Installation Dinner in early June.

David also welcomed our guests who were joining us for the evening to check out what Probus is all about.

Member introductions took place for the benefit of our invited guests, and Dr. Alexandra Flowers provided a brief history of our charitable club.

Mark Goldberg introduced **Michael Propis** who is an advocate of the developmentally disabled community who was one of our guests this evening. Mark had approached Michael during the recent Special Needs project grant award ceremony at the Intensive Education Academy to ask Michael to consider joining Probus.

Also in attendance as Marks guests were: Gary Krol, Head of advisor support unit at Gateway Financial, Katherine Zucker, Head of advisor support unit at a different firm and Mark Hand, a registered Investment Advisor with Gateway Financial.

The Minutes from our last meeting were accepted by the membership and passed during the Secretary's Report.

No Treasurer's Report was given since Meyer Frankel was absent from the meeting.

Michael Croll gave a report on the status of our **Annual Raffle**. He thanked everyone who has already sold some or all of their allotted 20 tickets and turned in their money to him. The last of the money and ticket stubs need to be handed in to Michael at the beginning of the Installation Dinner on June 8th at 6:00 p.m. Michael must also receive all unsold tickets and hold onto them for 1 year in case we get audited. He also reminded us that even if you, or those you sold tickets to, don't win, we should all thank the merchants who provided prizes and patronize their establishments.

Bob Goldberg then spoke about our Installation Dinner scheduled for June 8 at 6:00 p.m. He said that it will be "one big gala event" and we need exact head counts of those attending. Cost for guests is \$27 per person. This year we have

invited guests who will be coming to join our installation dinner from the National Probus, so please make them feel welcome at our phenomenal gourmet dinner! **David Maslin** was not at our meeting tonight so Mark Goldberg gave a quick synopsis of the status of our **Special Needs Grant Program**. It was designed to create small \$500 grants for teachers of special education students for projects where they have to take money out of their own pockets. To date, 4 grants have been approved and 1 was sent back to get re-written and re-submitted. These grants are open to teachers in Hartford and the contiguous towns, and we have a 501c(3) set up. 2 weeks ago, we disbursed a \$500 grant to the Intensive Education Academy on North Main Street in West Hartford to Sister Helen Dowd. This grant is earmarked at paying for The Science Center to come to their school for all grade levels to provide “an in-school field trip”. Additionally, Mark had a long talk with the head of the academy to pitch Camp Horizon’s story. The academy has many children who would be good candidates for the camp’s Weekends in the Country program which runs throughout the year, and provides some respite to parents/caregivers. Also, Michael Croll said that it was worth the fight and the contentious meetings we had in laying the groundwork for our Special Needs Grant Program. He feels that “we did it right” and the grant program is now rolling ahead!

The Memorial Day Parade Annual Balloon Sale will occur in West Hartford Center on Monday, May 30th at 50 South Main Street, 3rd Floor, judge chambers. Plan to arrive at 7:00 a.m. sharp to begin the daunting task of blowing up 750 balloons! Mark Goldberg stopped into “All Gas” and secured one free tank of helium and one donated tank!

Marvin Jannow will bring a special balloon tying mechanism which will make our lives easier and save on the finger blisters! Please remember to wear your Probus Polo Shirts to this great event and bring your friends/neighbors to help us inflate and sell!

We were briefed on the **Annual Picnic plans by Bob Goldberg**. September 11 is the date and plan to show up by 9:30 a.m. please. Since we have done this event for about 8 years at Northwest Park in Windsor and we run an organized event and clean up well afterwards, the park administration this year has decided not to charge us for the use of their facility (barn pavilion). The deposit and fee have been waived, which is much appreciated! A private donor has offered to pay for all of the hamburgers. Also, University of Hartford mascot Howie the Hawk will be showing up, and possibly one of the Hartford Yardgoats baseball mascots as well. Pepperidge Farms will be donating all of the buns and Subway will be supporting our picnic as well. Bob’s contacts in the Athletic Department at U. of H. will be attending the picnic and bringing some free drinks for us. We were reminded that 2

years ago, **Steven Goode of the Hartford Courant interviewed Syd Elkin** as our spokesman at the picnic.

New Business:

Mark Goldberg shared a letter from his wife Ellie who works at the Paul Newman Foundation's Discovery Center and for the State of CT as a child advocate. She is an advocate for children getting a proper education if their parent is shot, etc. and is a surrogate parent. Mark read an open letter from Ellie seeking funding from Probus for a child who wishes to attend Camp Horizons for 2 weeks. What is being sought is \$1,388 which represents 1/2 of a 2 week campership. Dr. Alexandra Flowers offered to donate \$300 as did Steven Blotner. It was agreed that we should contact Meyer Frankel our Treasurer to see how many camperships are available in our budget.

Michael Croll posed the idea of having Probus offer 1 male American School For the Deaf graduating senior and 1 female graduating senior with a small grant to be used for college books, etc. This idea will be brought up to the Finance Committee and published in our Telescope newsletter for consideration/comments. Michael feels that these grants would be an appropriate gesture to our friends at ASD who have been very good to Probus in many regards.

Old Business:

The recent **Camp Horizons Gala** was a first class function! Attendees were escorted into the camp's parking lot and to their assigned tables. Everyone agreed that the new 10,000 square foot, \$3 million building was gorgeous! This was a great upscale fundraising event. Their professional photographer took your photo and Shakela Holly mentioned that everyone received a care bag as they were leaving that night.

Bob Goldberg reminded us all about our dinner reservations at our monthly meetings. He needs to call in the right head count of attendees so that there is enough food and no waste, so please respond to his emails in a timely manner with your R.S.V.P.

Good & Welfare: Steve Blotner offered his wish for continued health improvement for our member Moe Kotick.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Probus Clint Picnic Sunday 09-11-2016.

About 175 clients attended. The clients and caregivers came from D.D.S., ASD, HARC, MARCH, and RIVER STREET GROUP HOMES.

Bob,

You have made the picnic a joy not only for the clients and staff that come and enjoy every minute but for every Probus member too.

Through your many months of planning, emailing, coordinating, and thoughtfulness you make our job more or less effortless. We show up and gain so much by serving food to the clients and their staff.

We really cannot ever thank you enough for all the hard work you have put into making the picnic effortless for everyone else. David Hoff, President ydstu1

**Supporting Special Needs Education
A Project of Probus Club of Greater Hartford**

The Probus Club project, Supporting Special Needs Education, was initiated in the spring of 2016. We requested grant proposals from 9 schools in the area, both public and private; five schools submitted applications, four of which were approved. The approved grants included: American School for the Deaf for \$500, ASD Paces for \$500, Intensive Education Academy for \$500, and CREC River Street School for \$425. Each proposal was reviewed by committee members David Maslin, Mark Goldberg, Dr. Robert Dobrow and Edward Peltier. Probus Club members presented the checks and joined in celebrating the successful grant awards. We are asking each of the grant recipients from last year to provide us with a report on their program’s status.

To begin the 2016-17 school year, we recently approved a high quality grant application from Norfeldt School in West Hartford, and presented that award at a Faculty & Staff function on September 13. This grant, for which we have committed three sequential \$500 awards in conjunction with a \$500 contribution by the West Hartford Special Education Parent-Teacher Organization, will fund a music therapy program for special needs students for a full academic year. (Please see the accompanying article describing this exciting grant award).

We are currently inviting area private schools serving special needs children and area public schools (Hartford, West Hartford and Bloomfield) to apply for grants that support special needs education programs that have school administrators’ approval. Grant applications are also being reissued to the 9 area programs previously solicited.

We continue to expand our search for teachers and programs supporting the education of special needs children that could benefit from an SSNE grant. Any Probus members, who may have contacts or insights into potential grant making opportunities, are asked to bring it to the attention of the committee members. We are also seeking Probus members interested in serving as liaisons with recipient schools.

The SSNE committee is also focusing on several important project development issues. These include: establishing a productive relationship with special needs education programs in the Hartford public school system; creation of a web-site platform to promote and receive grant applications; and continuing research and development of the project's accounting and tax-exempt framework. The committee members will soon present an updated SSNE project task list and agenda for the coming year to the general Probus membership.

Norfeldt School Initiates Special Needs Music Program with Generous Grant from the Probus Club

Teachers at the Norfeldt Elementary School in West Hartford were seeking to introduce a music therapy and enrichment program for special needs students. The program will utilize the skills of a certified music therapist to enhance language development, peer interaction and group participation within the school and classroom. The music therapist will use a developmental approach to music education: students will learn through music, which facilitates development across all curricular areas, including language, cognitive, emotional, social and physical development.

The Probus Club grant, offered by its Supporting Special Needs Education project, comprises three sequential \$500 grants over the coming academic year. Combined with a \$500 contribution by the West Hartford Special Education Parent-Teacher Organization, the funds will provide thirty sessions of group music therapy during the 2016-17 school year.

Probus members Michael Croll, Dr. Robert Dobrow, Edward Peltier and David Maslin were pleased to present the grant award to the school at a faculty and staff assembly on September 13. Jen Derick, Norfeldt's Principal, Ellen Phillips-Wilcuts, representative from SEPTO, and Paul Vicinus, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment were also in attendance. Michelle Lacroix, Special Education Teacher at Norfeldt & Whiting Lane Schools, who spearheaded the grant request, accepted the award on behalf of the school.

Michelle indicated "I am thankful to my colleagues for their expertise, collaboration and genuine passion around teaching and learning with our students. I am grateful to PROBUS for this grant and for all that they do for children, adults and families of the multiply disabled."

David Maslin, speaking for Probus, commented "We greatly appreciate this opportunity to further our project's mission with this extremely well-researched and deserving grant request."



Agency Serving Developmentally Disabled Lays Off Another 416, Will Privatize Group Homes (Hartford Courant August 16, 2016)

HARTFORD — The state agency serving 16,000 people with developmental disabilities will lay off more than 400 additional workers and shift dozens of state-run group homes, day programs and in-home services to the private sector in order to meet a "savings target" of nearly \$70 million, state officials said Tuesday.

The newly announced layoffs of 416 employees of the Department of Developmental Services come on top of 189 layoffs that have already been carried out. DDS, with a budget of about \$1 billion, has been cut deeply over the last several years, state budget officials acknowledged.

The layoffs now total 605. The majority will occur after Jan. 1. On Tuesday, DDS had 2,352 full-time workers, and a part-time staff of 855, including some seasonal employees.

Thirty state-run group homes would be converted to private operation by Jan. 1, dislodging 373 of the DDS workers.

Two state-run regional institutions in Meriden and Stratford will close by October. Also, a string of day programs across the state will be turned over to the private sector by September, resulting in the layoffs of 68 workers.



Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Connecticut, said breakdowns in injury reporting are placing group-home residents in jeopardy.

Another 110 workers will be laid off as a result of reductions in some clinical services, maintenance and privatizing in-home services.

Advocates have decried the cuts at DDS for several years. More than 2,100 people are on a waiting list for residential placements, and funding has been delayed for several hundred 21-year-olds who have aged out of the school system and need day programming. Meanwhile, outmoded state institutions continue to drain a disproportionate amount of the budget.

The shift to the private sector is a way to free up public funds, but advocates don't believe the state will use the money where it's needed the most — to provide relief to those waiting years for services, and to bolster the salaries of underpaid private workers in group homes and day programs.



Leslie Simoes, executive director of the Arc Connecticut, said DDS has not used savings from previous privatization efforts or from reductions in overtime expenses to expand services. Instead, savings have been returned to the general fund, or have been eaten up by the operation of the remaining four institutions in the state.

"Today's announcement of devastating cuts will do nothing to shape the future for those stuck on waiting lists," Simoes said.

Union officials have objected to the closing of the Meriden and Stratford facilities and the conversion of the 30 group homes to private operation.

"The governor's proposal would decimate our state's ability to provide services for the disabled," said Jennifer Schneider, spokeswoman for the State Employees International Union, Local 1199, which represents several thousand state and private direct-care workers. "Services for the intellectually and developmentally disabled should be a core function of our state.

"If the state can find \$22 million to give to the world's largest hedge fund then surely they can find the money to keep the disabled in the only home many of them have ever known," Schneider said, referring to approval in May by the State Bond Commission of \$22 million in grants and loans to Bridgewater Associates, operated by [Ray Dalio](#), one of the nation's wealthiest people. Officials in the Malloy administration said state government has to get smaller.

"We are in a new economic reality and we must continue to adapt," said Ben Barnes, secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, and Malloy's top budget official.

"As we work to transform state government, these transitions will undoubtedly be difficult for the families and the employees, but they are nevertheless necessary to move government into the future," Barnes said.

DDS Commissioner Morna Murray said the leaner state workforce and the private conversions follow a national trend of "reducing publicly run residential facilities" and "providing cost-effective, community-based options for individuals supported by DDS."

Murray said the savings will allow DDS to expand services "to thousands of families." She said privately run group homes are "highly qualified," and can provide for people with complex medical and behavioral needs. She said that in most cases, the clients will remain in the same homes as the conversion from state to private operation occurs.

Murray urged the private group homes to consider hiring the former state workers.

But many families of sons and daughters in state-run facilities have vehemently opposed transfers to private care, saying these disruptions place unnecessary hardships on their loved ones and could jeopardize their health.

Murray said DDS is working closely with families during the transition.

Overall, the public's trust in the system of care for the developmentally disabled is wavering. A recent federal audit contained sharp criticism of DDS' ability to accurately track serious injuries to clients in group homes and other facilities.

Advocates have said that the department needs to improve its oversight of the treatment of people under its care. One way to do that is to get out of the business of delivering services, advocates have long said.

But advocates such as Simoes say the state has systematically "starved" the private sector over the years by paying low rates to contractors. While many of the groups homes have staffs that are highly capable, the companies are constantly struggling to retain their best workers, Simoes has said. The private workforce has not had a raise in more than seven years.

DDS has also been criticized by some lawmakers and parents for paying tens of millions of dollars in overtime annually at the remaining state institutions. The Southbury Training School for example, has maintained its own fire department and a large group of food-service workers even as the number of residents has decreased substantially. Twenty-four food service workers are included in the new round of layoffs.

Reminder: **Next Probus Meeting:**
Date: Wednesday September 21, 2016
Time: 6:30 PM
Location: American School for the Deaf
139 N Main St, West Hartford, CT 06107
(860) 570-2300

Note: Our monthly meetings have been moved to the "Vocational Building" on ASD campus.

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.