

## **PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS AT THE JUNE 9<sup>th</sup> PROBUS GALA:**

**Welcome everyone! I am Charlie Dobrow, President of Probus Greater Hartford, and I am thrilled that all of you could join us tonight!**

**I come from a sales and marketing background. It's been ingrained in me since DAY 1 to always pitch the decisionmaker, the chief influencer, the person at a business or organization who is receptive and is motivated to embrace whatever product, service, or idea you are promoting. Well tonight, at Probus' inaugural recognition gala, I am surrounded by all of you...key decisionmakers at businesses, both non-profit and for profit, state agencies, volunteer-based and grassroots organizations. What a wonderful opportunity to articulate my message to you decision makers who positively impact the lives of intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals in Connecticut !**

**Some of you are full time employees, some are members of all volunteer organizations. Some of you are politicians, some are heads of state agencies. And some of you have family members who live in group homes in Central Connecticut. The common ingredient is that all of you are compassionate and dedicated people who view what you do as a labor of love, not just a job.**

**Tonight is not about all of us basking in self congratulatory praise. Sure, we pause to take stock of our collective efforts**

**to assist the IDD community, and this is important to do. But tonight is really all about inspiring others in our spheres of influence to become involved, to volunteer their time and energy and resources to make the lives of intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals a little brighter !**

**Tonight is about always remembering to prioritize seeking new and creative ways to recruit volunteers, employees and board members. And we all need to grow our boards so that they are diverse and inclusive and reflect a commitment to social justice issues.**

**Tonight is an opportunity to commit to further partnerships and collaborations with other non-profits. One of the fundamental keys to success, which Probus was made well aware of in our recent 2-year engagement in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's "Building on Success" program for area non-profits, is that we are stronger when we link up with other non-profits, community-based grassroots organizations, agencies and corporations. This allows us to share ideas, best practices, and resources needed for projects, events, fundraisers, and the like.**

**Speaking of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Roosevelt Smith, who was our Hartford Foundation assigned non-profit consultant for these 2 years, was scheduled to attend our gala tonight to say a few words about our experience working together. Unfortunately, Roosevelt cannot be with us tonight due to a loss in his family. We will**

**keep his family in our thoughts and prayers, as we reflect upon the thoughtful guidance he has given us. He has been a great sounding board for Probus and we celebrate his friendship!**

**So why do we collaborate? Quite simply to learn from each other's experiences...the good and the bad, what went well and what mistakes need to be adjusted. We come together in the spirit of discovering how to plan fundraising events, recruitment of volunteers, outreach, media relations, how to motivate donors to make contributions of time, money and in-kind services.**

**We strive to be creative and think outside of the box and yet not waste valuable time reinventing the wheel. As community-based organizations we tend to be lean and mean as they say. Many of us wear a lot of hats and don't have the bandwidth to pursue every initiative that we would like to. That is why it is critically important that we join forces, share our knowledge and offer up our tangible skillsets to each other. Our crystal clear and common goal is to make each day shine for the IDD population and their families that we serve.**

**Probus Greater Hartford has been in existence since 1955 and we have partnered with each and every organization represented here tonight. Later in this evening's program we will take some time to recognize and honor all of you and Probus' relationships that have been established with your organizations. In some instances, we've built long standing**

**relationships over many years, while in others we've just begun to scratch the surface.**

**We certainly do not live in silos. We are part of a larger community. So how do we prepare for the post-pandemic challenges that our respective organizations will be facing? We plan, we brainstorm, we make checklists, and we have dress rehearsals for the events and activities we are planning.**

**In my own family, I am acutely aware of the following: a musician who rehearses diligently and a ballerina who works tirelessly to project strength, grace and perfection. We too, as non-profits, must continually plan and prepare, with our missions always at the forefront, if we too want to be impactful. In my extended family, I also see a number of dedicated teachers and professors who do detailed lesson planning and research for hours, behind the scenes, so as to get the most out of their students. We as non-profits, must also work behind the scenes. When we hold our committee meetings, that is where the real work gets done. That is where we weigh our options, vet our ideas and try to chart our course for what the best direction for our organizations should look like.**

**So consider collaborations and partnerships as being just as necessary as the air we breathe. Consider implementing an internship or mentoring program where you work. Consider making a conscious effort to post on your website news articles and feature articles written about other IDD**

**organizations. Consider sharing or loaning a board member to another organization on a per project basis or as a consultant or advisor.**

**It's abundantly clear to me that there is a wealth of experience in this room. People who have dedicated their careers, their free time and their holistic approach to getting things done, in pursuit of serving the IDD community.**

**When I think of collaborations and partnerships I think of Reeses Peanut Butter Cups. Peanut Butter.....great ! Chocolate....love it ! Allow the 2 to partner....Magical !**

**Probus thanks you for allowing us to harness your talents and goodwill and letting us feed off of your energy.**

**A final thought: Probus, as many of you may know, has had a very long-standing and robust relationship with Horizons, Inc. (formerly Camp Horizons) in South Windham, CT. We are proud to have been one of the earliest supporters of Horizons, Inc. and we have maintained our commitment to this world-class organization for decades. With our Kotick/Kulick Fund and our Probus board member Mark Goldberg having also served on Horizons' board for many years, we are deeply entrenched in the ongoing success of Horizons. We have worked closely with CEO Chris McNaboe for many years to help sustain Horizons for the future. Probus has also expanded our portfolio and has branched out over the years**

**into enhancing the lives of people who live in group homes or in independent living arrangements. We've also awarded grants to help underwrite a myriad of programs for special needs students in the area. At this time I would like to turn the microphone over to Margo Melly, who is a receptionist at Horizons, Inc. and a successful beneficiary of Horizons vocational programming, to share a few thoughts with us!**

**(Margo speaks)**

**Thank you Margo! And just a reminder to everyone, it is not too late to purchase your raffle tickets and bid on the silent auction items! We've put together some very nice gift items so I encourage you to participate!**

**And now it gives me great pleasure to announce that our buffet line is open for business, so enjoy the delicious food and we will be back with more of our program and our keynote speech a little later !**

## **CHARLIE'S CLOSING REMARKS**

**(HONOR ROLL OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN ATTENDANCE AT GALA):**

**It's important that we acknowledge other organizations represented here tonight which Probus Greater Hartford has engaged with in meaningful ways. We've supported them financially, we've attended their special events and fundraisers, we've attended their annual meetings and panel discussions. We've sent volunteers to assist with their Special Olympics athletic contests, we've moderated their community conversations on topics devoted to identifying discrimination faced by the IDD community. With their generosity, we've also hosted group home residents and their caregivers at minor league baseball games and college basketball games. Others that we give a shout out to have been guest speakers at Probus' chapter and board meetings, educating us on various IDD related topics and trends. And still other organizations have helped facilitate getting the word out about our Annual Probus Picnic so that group homes and folks in independent living situations were able to participate in this fun outing. We also recognize some retail stores which train and employ IDD individuals. Finally, there are a few like-minded non-profits whom we just recently have crossed paths with and we hope to develop a relationship with over time.**

**So, I give a sincere thank you to the following organizations for all that they do to make a difference in the quality of life for intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals:**

**New Horizons Village in Unionville  
Horizons, Inc.**

**State Representative John Hampton and the IDD Caucus**

**The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative**

**The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and  
Opportunities**

**Hartford Yard Goats Minor League Baseball**

**Special Olympics Connecticut**

**HARC**

**SockStarz (SockStarz is part of the HARC organization)**

**The Next Chapter (work in conjunction with West Hartford  
Public Schools)**

**Best Buddies**

**Connecticut State Senator Derek Slap**

**& Connecticut State Representative Tammy Exum**

**Thank you all for coming out tonight to our Probus Greater  
Hartford inaugural recognition gala! If you are interested in  
learning more about Probus' activities, events and fundraisers**

**and how you can get involved with us, I highly recommend that you visit our website: [hartfordprobus.org](http://hartfordprobus.org)!**

**I now turn things over to Adrienne Maslin, our Gala Chair, for the Raffle & Auction!**