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PROBUS FACT SHEET

Retirement can come too early for many people who want and are able to remain active. Probus clubs are organizations for men and women who have retired from their profession or business and want to maintain a social network with others who have similar interests. Each Probus club is sponsored by a Rotary club and meets at least once a month for fellowship and to hear guest speakers. Today, there are over 300,000 members in approximately 4,000 Probus clubs worldwide.

The involvement of a Rotary sponsoring club with a Probus club varies. Rotary clubs typically approach retired or semi-retired candidates in their community and organize the formation of a club. Once established, the club becomes an autonomous organization and its members take over leadership. Potential Probus members are not required to be past members of Rotary. Fewer than 10% of Probus members are former Rotarians.

Since 1985, the Rotary International Board has encouraged Rotary clubs to initiate projects that address the needs of a growing senior (over age 60) population. At its March, 1994 meeting, the Board reaffirmed its commitment by urging Rotarians to organize and support Probus clubs as a commended community service activity.

HISTORY

Probus clubs were first formed, as an acronym for Pro(fessional) and Bus(iness), in the early 1920's in Saskatchewan, CANADA, and in New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A., the latter devoted to helping people with mental retardation, physical disabilities, and autism. Because they were not restricted to retired Professional and Business leaders, and had a different objective, they are (were) not associated with our present mainstream of Probus clubs worldwide.

The name was fused into a different type of club in England, and the first non-sectarian Probus club specifically for active retirees was formed in 1966 by the Rotary Club of Caterham, England to allow retired professionals to continue to meet together for fellowship. The previous year, the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City, England, formed the "Campus Club" that had the same purpose. The two soon merged and flourished under the sponsorship of the Rotary Club of Bromsgrove, Birmingham, England.

In 1974, Probus expanded into New Zealand and by 1976 the idea had spread to Australia. The first Probus club for seniors in North America was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Galt in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada in 1987. Although Probus membership has its greatest concentrations in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, clubs today exist in all parts of the world, including the U.S., Belgium, India, South Africa and several other countries in Africa and Asia.

PROBUS ACTIVITIES

Except for the Probus service clubs mainly in Connecticut, U.S.A., Probus Clubs worldwide are not service organizations and are non-sectarian and non-political, although members are largely active volunteers in many community organizations. Clubs are formed to provide social events and schedule speakers to keep members up to date with community issues and

happenings. Many members have formed smaller interest groups for hobbies such as sports, entertainment, bridge playing, fishing, travel, computers, etc.

While numerous individual members regularly offer assistance with area community service projects, (if one should check the individual service activities of members in any given club, the average member would probably carry out far more volunteer service than those in most service clubs),... Probus Clubs pride themselves on their independence and freedom from the responsibilities of a service club. The structure of the clubs is simple, and members are not required to attend a minimum number of meetings.

Probus clubs have no central governing body but Probus Centers have been established internationally by country to disseminate information and assist clubs. Offices are staffed largely by volunteers and operating costs are met by member contributions.

A worldwide web page (www.probus.org), containing essential information on Probus, includes worldwide chat groups, a new bed and breakfast program for travel, and information about forming a Probus Club.

ORIGINS

"PUT ME DOWN, FRED."

Following the Probus Clubs formed in the early 1920's in Canada (Melville, Saskatchewan see [old record](#)) and around Connecticut, USA..... about the latter part of 1965..... an active and notable Rotarian of Welwyn Garden City in ENGLAND assembled some retired Professional and Business men (some Rotarians and some not), to form a club. In a Probus newsletter, we find a report "A Simple Idea" by the Founder, *Fred Carnhill*

"I used to meet a few retired men for morning coffee - mostly ex-commuters (to London) with professional or business backgrounds and with a wealth of experience behind them. Conversation was always brisk and entertaining. One was an architect, responsible for many public buildings over the country, another an ex-borough treasurer, an ex-railway official, an headmaster, an ex-journalist, an ex-newspaper editor and an ex-secretary to a Prime Minister. This gave me an idea: really a very simple one..."I telephoned 33 friends that night and they said, "Put me down, Fred." Thus the Campus Club, (because it faced the centre of town, called The Campus), was formed."

"PROBITY" - UPRIGHTNESS, HONESTY.

Coincidentally at the same time, Rotarian *Harold Blanchard* of Caterham Rotary Club formed and sponsored the Caterham PROBUS club. In his writings of "The Birth of Probus" he states:

"..One of our more erudite members came up with the idea of PROBUS, - PROfessional and BUSiness, (probably from knowledge of a name used in Saskatchewan, Canada ([old record](#)) and in Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A., with similar attributes but not with the same purpose - editor). He assured us that *Probus* was a Latin word from which "probity" was derived, and the name was adopted with enthusiasm. Incidentally we found there was a village in Cornwall called Probus and also there was a Roman Emperor of the same name who in his day was famous for his cultivation of the vine."

Due to the success of these two clubs. Probus Clubs were promoted through Rotary in adjacent

towns. As a result Rotary International British Isles were informed and a promotional pamphlet was established urging other Rotary Clubs to form Probus. There are now approximately 1,700 clubs in Great Britain.

THE MUSHROOM

The first Probus Club in the South Pacific was originated by *Gordon Roatz* at Kapiti Coast,-Paraparaumu north of Wellington in New Zealand in November, 1974. In the mid 1970's Rotarian *Cliff Johnstone* from Australia discovered Probus on a visit and began Probus at Hunter's Hill in Australia. These origins were so successful there are now 1900 clubs in Australia and New Zealand under the umbrella of the Probus Centre - South Pacific.

Most other countries have followed the Australian example. The Netherlands has 300 clubs, Ireland 75, Belgium 60, South Africa 75 (including 7 Women's clubs). In India there are at least 20 clubs, in the U.S.A. there are approximately 12, Bermuda has 1, and others have started in Germany (1991, now 12 clubs), Chile, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain (1996), Trinidad, and Zimbabwe (3 clubs).

Growth in Canada (since 1987) under the leadership of *John Morris*, has successfully developed 170 clubs across Canada from Saint John's Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia, with a membership of over 22,000.