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Twin Cities Tall Club stands above the rest

BY STEVEN PEASE - SUN NEWSPAPERS

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Few clubs measure up to the Twin Cities Tall Club.

No joke.

The club, started locally over six decades ago, sports an enrollment of 55 members who gather the third Thursday of each month in and around Richfield for fun, food and a few cocktails.

With a combined height of around 465 feet, you would think that members of the TCTC would stand out among the rest when they go on their excursions around the metro area, but this is not necessarily the case.

"It's not such an odd thing to be tall anymore," said TCTC President Coral Rose of St. Paul. "I never thought I was tall at 5-10 until I worked with a bunch of short people. This is a good social group for [members] to be in and not stand out."

While that may be true in Minnesota, where a strong Scandinavian lineage helps group members blend in, elsewhere, such as the coasts, taller people have sometimes found solace in joining a group that won't look down on them.

TCTC is part of the larger Tall Clubs International, a multinational organization that oversees everything from fundraisers to scholarships. The nonprofit TCTC is no stranger to charitable donations.

Annually, the group awards \$1,500 in scholarships, naturally, to youths who meet the height requirement. TCTC also donates to National Marfan Foundation, an organization that helps to diagnose and combat Marfan Syndrome, a muscular and skeletal disorder that is said to have afflicted both Abraham Lincoln and punk rocker Joey Ramone. People with the syndrome tend to be tall and lanky.

Not anyone can be a member TCTC, however.

Candidates must be 21 or older, pay dues of \$30 a year and literally measure up: 5 feet 10 inches for women and 6 feet 2 inches for men.

Rose said that what separates the TCTC from other social groups is the sense of willingness to help one another in all aspects of their lives.

"These friends help with everything from car repairs to health care situations," she said.

Rose also mentioned that there is never a dull meeting because of the club's diverse members.

"It's not like how all accountants are friends with other accountants," Rose said with a laugh. "The thing I like about it is ... you have the height in common, but you also have so many different inclinations and careers and interests."

The group has not only provided a comfortable setting for the vertically exceptional, but has also proved to be a successful dating place.

Currently, there are at least five couples have met through the TCTC. Perhaps the most notable being that of the club's tallest active couple, 6-foot-8 John Bartow and his wife, Pat, who lists at 6 feet 2 inches.

While tall clubs are an international sensation, like many civic and social clubs across the United States, Rose said that the TCTC's numbers have "hit a plateau" because young people just don't seem to be as interested in clubs as they used to.

All TCTC members are more than 30 years old, but Rose said they are always on the lookout for younger members.

The tallest active female member is 6-foot 3-inch Jill, who has been involved with TCTC for 25 years. She said that what makes the group so extraordinary is the members' ability to feel ordinary.

"It's great just having friends that you're walking around with who aren't 10-inches shorter," said Jill who declined to give her last name. "Everyone's [roughly] the same height, and can relate to the same issues."

While meeting venues change from month to month, for more club information, e-mail president@TCTallClub.org or visit TCTallClub.org.

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