

## **MERIDEN LIBRARY ADA COMPLIANCE STUDY COMMITTEE**

### **January 24, 2013**

#### **Committee Members & Activities**

The goal of the Committee is to study the requirements for making the Meriden Library more accessible to people with disabilities, and develop a range of options with pros, cons, and costs of each. Work is to be completed by the end of 2013. Committee members are Brad Atwater, Judy Hallam, Bob Kline, Amy Lappin, Rod Wendt (Chair). In our 6 weeks of work, we have had 3 meetings. The most important was an extended meeting in both the Philip Read and Meriden Library facilities on December 10, 2012 with Jillian Shedd, Accessibility Specialist with the NH Governor's Commission on Disability. Ms. Shedd advised us on what the Americans with Disabilities Act requires and how our two libraries measure up.

#### **What the Law Requires**

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that all public services and programs be equally accessible by all people, regardless of their disability.

Library compliance can be achieved in two ways or a combination of them:

1. Facilities can be made physically accessible, providing access to all spaces in which programmatic functions (media collections, meeting spaces, etc.) are offered. This includes an ADA-accessible bathroom.
2. Programs can be offered in ways that reach beyond non-physically-accessible spaces via alternative delivery approaches or delivery in nearby accessible settings. Collections can be accessed online; media delivered to curbside or homes; programs offered off-site in accessible spaces, etc.

The Meriden Library does not meet the physical access standard today. Steep outside and inside steps deny physical access for all. The bathroom does not meet ADA standards. Valiant efforts have been made to offer access to books and other media in alternative ways (home delivery, curbside delivery) and to offer some programs in accessible locations, but not all programs are offered this way.

Philip Read Memorial Library is fully accessible. Its media collections, services and programs are available on an equal basis to all patrons, with or without disabilities. However, this does not help Meriden Library's accessibility problem unless the libraries have the same operating hours and all programs are offered in an accessible format somewhere in town.

Once we begin the process of providing physical accessibility, we are obligated to complete it in some reasonable timeframe (reasonable not defined). If we put up an access ramp, we are committing ourselves—eventually—to provide access to all function spaces and an ADA-accessible bathroom. An "ADA Transition Plan," while not required, is a useful tool to project our course and plot our progress.

#### **Next Steps**

Armed with an understanding of what the law requires, the Committee, in close consultation with the Library Trustees, will be exploring a variety of ways in which ADA compliance might be achieved in Meriden, and the pros, cons and costs of each. Rough costs will be developed with the help of local contractors. Our goal is to involve the people of Plainfield (Plainfield, Meriden and East Plainfield) as deeply in this process as we can. Community input meetings and a community-wide survey are likely during 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Rod Wendt, Chair



**Story telling on a summer evening at the Meriden Library  
Photo: Mary King**