

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 6, 2019  
Rockville Memorial Library  
6:30-8:00 pm  
Notes

**Present:** Debbie Brown, Cindy Buddington, Jane Carona, Steven Frank, Francie Gilman, Barbara King, Elizabeth Lang, Jill Lewis, Monica Martinez, Dennis Pillsbury

### **Organization Updates**

Jane Carona reported that her chapter of the American Council of the Blind will have a “gadget night” at their next meeting (March 21, 7:00 PM, at the Sheraton Hotel, 8777 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring) during which attendees will bring gadgets of interest to people who are blind or have low vision. Examples are ScriptTalk, the 6-dot labeler, and a talking thermometer.

Debbie Brown, representing the Sligo Creek Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, said that the National Federation of the Blind will be holding the summer Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) program for children in Glendale, MD. This program offers activities and mentoring geared to increasing students’ Braille literacy skills. Also, Debbie asked that if anyone knows of students who are blind who wish to apply for an NFB scholarship to please contact her. Debbie noted that the Sligo Creek Chapter hosted a successful Louis Braille birthday celebration on January 19 at the Davis Library.

Dennis Pillsbury, architect with Montgomery County’s Office of ADA Compliance, provided an update on branch upgrade projects. Long Branch Library is undergoing a building assessment since the branch requires more work than is possible in a refresh project; Marilyn Praisner Library has had exterior work done for ADA compliance and is the next branch to be refreshed; Poolesville Library is due to have new door operators installed; Chevy Chase Library has major renovation issues which have yet to be started. The Praisner Library refresh project will be followed by the Long Branch renovation after which the Germantown refresh project will commence. Steven Frank asked about the progress on the Wheaton Library. The Wheaton project is still under way with the exterior and much of the interior work completed. Elizabeth Lang believes that the work will be

completed in 2020 but the installation of the collection will take considerable time after the facility is built. Dennis will check on a completion date. Dennis also informed the Committee that the County is following a new process with library branch refreshes that will allow for better planning and budgeting: 1. Building Assessment; 2. Design; 3. Construction.

Monica Martinez reported that the Partnership for Extraordinary Minds will hold its annual forum on April 2. Held in conjunction with Montgomery County Public Schools, the forum's focus is programs and services available for parents and their children who are on the autism spectrum.

Cindy Buddington and Francie Gilman related that Independence Now is involved in fundraising.

## **Library Update**

Elizabeth described the sensory story time pilot project held at White Oak, Little Falls, and Quince Orchard Libraries. Geared to children on the autism spectrum, the staff members conducting the programs use a specially-designed kit, and the story times are listed on the main library calendar. Elizabeth met with the staff members involved in the pilot after they held the story times to evaluate the programs. The Little Falls and White Oak programs were well-attended and favorably received by attendees. Quince Orchard did not have good community participation and will not continue the programs at this time. Elizabeth requested that the participating staff members come up with five organizations or individuals to contact for sensory story time marketing purposes. Monica will continue to work with Elizabeth on marketing strategies. AAC members were enthusiastic about Elizabeth's announcement that she received word today that she had approval for all Children's staff at all branches to be trained in conducting sensory story times. She will begin to work with branch managers to determine the possibility of offering story times at more branches. Debbie discussed the importance of finding the best person to help advertise inclusive programs. Often this person is a parent who can spread the word to friends and organization members. Elizabeth will send a quote received from a delighted parent to Jill for distribution to the group.

The Books@Home pilot program has been very well received. Currently 55 customers are using the service, and all branches are involved in providing materials. Although there was an ad in *The Beacon*, word of mouth accounts for much of the success of the program as customers tell friends and family members how delighted they are with the service. The pilot began with 20 customers.

An MCPL book selector, Beth Chandler, discussed with Elizabeth the possibility of adding materials on disabilities to the collection. Beth is actively researching publishers providing books on or about disabilities as well as authors writing about disabilities. Elizabeth asked the AAC members for recommendations on disability-related materials for her to pass on to Beth. The recommendations can be fiction or nonfiction books, generic subjects, particular authors, documentaries, or movies. AAC members should send their recommendations to Jill who will compile a list for Elizabeth.

The staff training project is ongoing. Elizabeth received all the tip sheets compiled by AAC members and discussed them with Kate Tavakolian. The next step is for Elizabeth to edit the tip sheets into consistent formats and create one document for each tip sheet. The document would include the tip sheet, the training objectives, and the scenarios. In addition, Elizabeth is creating a “learning blue print” which would provide a detailed way of achieving the learning objectives. She would like to complete the documents within the next three months and will run the blueprint by the AAC members for feedback. Kate will decide on next steps for staff training, and she or Elizabeth will report on progress at the next AAC meeting. Elizabeth stressed that training staff is an ongoing, lengthy process, not a quick project. Elizabeth will begin with the autism tip sheet because there has been so much work done on it already — it will make for an easier launch.

At the moment library staff are training on service to homeless individuals and individuals with mental illness.

## **AAC Organization/New Members/Future Projects**

The committee members discussed the addition of new committee members to add organizational representation reflective of the County’s diverse disability community. Elizabeth recommended representation from the deaf or hard of hearing community to advise her and library staff on how to answer questions about services or collections. She also recommended that no new members be employed by Montgomery County Public Libraries. Steven asked if new members need to reside in Montgomery County. Yes, although experts or featured speakers from outside the County could be brought to meetings for informational purposes. Monica asked if she could bring a potential new member to a future meeting. The person she spoke of represents the adult autism spectrum community and will bring ideas on how to serve this demographic since Monica represents parents of children on the autism spectrum. Committee members were enthusiastic about

Monica or other committee members bringing potential members to future meetings. Cindy asked if it would be worthwhile inviting individuals who use wheelchairs or other mobility aides to attend branch library visits to advise on facility accessibility. Yes, this is an excellent idea. Cindy will look for individuals with mobility impairment to attend site visits or to join the committee. Dennis suggested contacting the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center to let them know we are looking for new members; Steven recommended the National Association of the Deaf which has an office on Georgia Avenue; Francie will contact Susan Cohen for suggestions on potential organizations/individuals from the deaf or hard of hearing community; Monica recommended an individual from the Down Syndrome community or a replacement for the member from the ARC. Elizabeth reminded the group that AAC information is included on the library website and will send the link to Jill to email to committee members. She also said that a new library director will be hired in the near future, and she does not know if this will have an effect on the AAC. Francie asked for a deadline for committee members to report on their search for new members. Members will report by the June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## Organization

Jill asked for assistance in leading committee meetings and serving as note taker. Ordinarily she, Betty, and Francie provide backup for each other for both functions. Unfortunately, all three have had recent family medical/health issues which made it difficult to fill in for each other. Some of these family issues are ongoing. Debbie offered to be note taker and will take notes at the next meeting. Jill will send Debbie a current list of members and their contact information. Jane, Cindy, and Francie offered to be coordinator backup, and Jill will send them the information they need to do so. Jill and Francie thanked the committee members for their assistance.

## New Programs

Discussion of future committee projects centered on the excellent program suggestions compiled at past meetings. AAC members will revisit their suggested programs and consult again with their organizations for additional suggestions. Programs will be an agenda item for the June meeting. Elizabeth supervises the outreach team and can have team members come to the AAC members' organizations to talk about suitable branches for specific programs.

Elizabeth advised that programming is done at the branch level, and the best way to determine if a branch is suitable for an organization's program is to contact the branch manager. Elizabeth will be glad to help find the best branch if AAC members would like help deciding where to hold a program. She is available to discuss the facility and the meeting room's accessibility. In answer to a question about accessibility of the MCPL website, Elizabeth said to let her know of any difficulties in using the site.

AAC members remain intrigued by the Human Library, and would like to continue to investigate some form of committee involvement with some form of the program.

### **Action Items:**

1. Dennis will email the latest information on the estimated opening date for the Wheaton Library.
2. Monica will continue to work with Elizabeth on sensory story time marketing strategies.
3. AAC members will recommend disability-related materials for Beth Chandler. The recommendations can be fiction or nonfiction books, generic subjects, particular authors, documentaries, or movies. AAC members will send their recommendations to Jill who will compile a list for Elizabeth.
4. Elizabeth will send the quote from a delighted parent of an autistic child to Jill for the group.
5. Elizabeth will edit the tip sheets into consistent formats and create one document for each tip sheet. The document would include the tip sheet, the training objectives, and the scenarios. Elizabeth is creating a "learning blue print" which would provide a detailed way of achieving the learning objectives. She will run the blueprint by the AAC and would like to complete the documents within the next three months. Kate will decide on how next to proceed with staff training, and she or Elizabeth will report on progress at the next AAC meeting.
6. Committee members will search for new committee members and report on their searches by the June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.
7. Monica probably will bring a potential new member to a future meeting. This person represents the adult autism spectrum community. Other committee members also might invite potential members to a future meeting.
8. Cindy will look for individuals with mobility impairment to attend site visits or to join the committee

9. Francie will contact Susan Cohen for suggestions on potential organizations/individuals from the deaf or hard of hearing community.
10. Elizabeth will send the link to the AAC information that is on the MCPL website
11. Debbie will take notes at the next meeting. Jill will send Debbie a current list of members and their contact information. Jane, Cindy, and Francie will be coordinator backup, and Jill will send them the information they need to do so.
12. AAC members will revisit their suggested programs and consult again with their organizations for additional suggestions.
13. Programs will be an agenda item for the June meeting.
14. When requested, Elizabeth will arrange for outreach team members to attend AAC members' organizations to discuss suitable branches for specific programs.
15. AAC members will contact branch managers and/or Elizabeth to determine the best branch library for a particular program.
16. AAC members remain intrigued by the Human Library, and would like to continue to investigate some form of committee involvement with some form of the program.
17. From the December meeting notes: the Human Library organization can possibly assist in designing an event. Francie, Jane Carona, and Debbie will have a conference call to discuss this. Monica is willing to participate if it happens.

Next meeting is Wednesday, June 5, 6:30-8:00 PM at the Rockville Library.