



Aging Happens: Check out Ashland Library Outreach Services

By Ellen Waldman

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I have been a big fan and supporter of the Ashland library from the day I moved here 25 years ago. They offer so many great services to our community. People who become homebound might find themselves yearning for a visit to their library. If someone can't navigate to get there, the library will come to you. This is called the Ashland Library Outreach Services and, in fact, they will deliver the items you wish, free of charge for Jackson County residents. Is this great or what?

Here's their motto: From our place ... to yours, and they mean it, by making this an actual door-to-door service. If you're homebound due to age, illness or disability, you can get in touch with them, and library materials are on the way. This applies not just to those living in their own homes, but also those in assisted living facilities, retirement centers and adult foster care homes.

Ashland Outreach Librarian Amy Greenwold organizes this service for Ashland homebound patrons. There is also an outreach coordinator, Nancy Peterson, for Medford and surrounding libraries in Jackson County. Amy delivers to the assisted living and other centers, and library volunteers provide services to those in private homes. They can also work with those who are homebound and have caregivers or family members who are willing to come to the library to pick up materials. Upon request, a note can be added to a patron's record indicating they give permission for another individual (family member, friend, or caregiver) to pick up their requested materials.

The range of materials they will deliver includes large and regular print books, audiobooks, music CDs, magazines, and films on DVD. They'll also provide answers to your questions about other requests. Most Outreach patrons do not go online, although a few are tech savvy and make requests themselves. For the majority, Outreach volunteers will select appropriate materials. At the initial sign-up, Outreach patrons complete a detailed intake form with their reading interests and favorite authors. The library works with this information, hand-picking books to suit reading tastes.

Typical Outreach checkout period is six weeks and is exempt from fines. The homebound elderly can stay on the program indefinitely, until they lose interest in reading. Assisted living facilities receive monthly drop-off bags full of books specifically selected for the individuals. For those living on their own, they can call when they are ready for more materials, which a volunteer will deliver and pick up. If requested, they can return with another bag of books.

You might imagine that there are many people who would like to utilize this service and you're right. If you call right now, there is no waiting list for those requesting these Outreach Services. The number of people they can take on at one time is limited by their volunteer pool. They are always open to training new volunteers to fill the demand, so you might consider signing up.

For those who benefit from this program and others, donations are always welcome. A donor can specify their funds are to be used to support Outreach Services. For more information about any of these services, please contact Amy Greenwold, reference librarian at the Ashland branch, directly at

541-774-6986. By the way, donations of large print books are always welcomed and Amy can help with that as well.

No one truly expects to be unable to do the usual tasks of daily life. Personally, I would seriously miss getting new books and films on my own. But knowing that the Ashland library can step in and keep me happily reading is a real bonus. When my daughter was a young girl, if I showed a special fondness for one thing or another, she would say, "Why don't you just marry it?" Well, if I were a building, I'd marry the Ashland library, for sure. Instead, I'll pass this information along to you so we can all benefit from their kind services.