

## Assistive Devices – Nov. 2007

Assistive devices or handicap devices, we all use them, sometimes without knowing it. Curb cuts, single handle faucets, large handle faucets, lever type door handles, high toilets, ramps and grab bars are just a few. Sometimes we don't want to use or install these items because we do not want to feel old but once you



do you wonder how you did without them. Grab bars are available in different sizes and finishes at Lowes, Home Depot or online. Test out the area where you want to install it by sitting or standing there and simulating how you would grab it. These bars can be installed horizontally, vertically or at an angle. In all cases I recommend they be screwed into a stud or studs and not attached with wall anchors or molly

screws. Remember, you will be putting your full weight on them! You may want them near the toilet, in the shower, at the garage and front entrance doors or near your favorite place to sit. High or handicap toilets are also available in the above stores and cost about \$180.00. They will fit on the same floor fitting without any modification. The 2" or so change in height can make a big difference. There are also add on seats that increase the height, some with soft seats,



some with arm rests and some that go between your existing bowl and toilet seat. These are available online or at a place like R&S on Rte 70 and Community or Rand's Surgical Supply in Toms River. These stores have all kinds of thing to make life a little easier for us. They have small (and large) ramps to allow a wheel chair to safely transverse a step or steps. My wife Gail loves the Pikstick I bought her. It allows her to grab things high and low from her motorized wheelchair and can be locked when squeezed. They come in different lengths, I got her the small one so she attach it to her chair. We are lucky that the doorways in

the Fairways homes are wide enough for most wheelchairs. If you need a little more room at the bathroom doors there are special wrap around hinges that place the door clear of the frame when opened. The Zoeller Company makes a toilet with a macerator and pump that can be installed anywhere in the home with breaking the concrete flooring.

If you find it hard getting in and out of bed (I mean your body) you can have your frame lowered, purchase a new lower frame or buy a thinner box spring. Using a step or footstool to get into bed is not so bad but getting out in



the dark at night could be dangerous. Night lights in the bedroom and hallways are a must. There are also sidebars or handrails to help you hold on to something as you get out of bed. They are designed to slip between your mattress and box spring and give you the extra support you may need.

In the shower besides grab bars, a shower seat and hand held showerhead is very convenient. Instead of turning in the shower and taking a chance of slipping, sit in the seat and use the handheld showerhead to wash and rinse and set it to massage for awhile to relax you. Not too long though, we don't want to line the pockets of American Water anymore than we have to.

If you have trouble bending or reaching, get someone to help you rearrange your cabinets so the most used items are where you can get at them without too much trouble. If you use a stepstool make sure it is a sturdy one and hold onto something as you climb.

This and previous Around the House articles can be retrieved on the web at [http://www.unc-1.com/fairways\\_legend\\_maintenance\\_arti.htm](http://www.unc-1.com/fairways_legend_maintenance_arti.htm) or go to [www.unc-1.com/bobsplace.htm](http://www.unc-1.com/bobsplace.htm).

Bob Mattsson