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**Chester County Library RECEIVES NATIONAL GRANT FOR SMALL AND RURAL LIBRARIES
\$10,000 Grant Will Help the Library Work with Residents with Disabilities to Enter the Library Easier**

HENDERSON, TN — The Chester County Library has been selected as one of 240 libraries to participate in Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, an American Library Association (ALA) initiative that provides community engagement and accessibility resources to small and rural libraries to help them better serve people with disabilities.

The competitive award comes with a \$10,000 grant that will help the library to install automatic door openers on both library entry doors. The library has experienced many comments from patrons and witnessed the difficulty patrons can have getting into the library if they are disabled in any way but especially if they require the use of a wheelchair, cane, or even families with multiple small children.

“We are so proud to be chosen for this amazing opportunity,” said Library Director Savannah Gilbert. “This grant will allow our library to get to know our residents with disabilities better. It will help us improve our services to ensure this population feels welcome and comfortable in our space.”

As part of the grant, Chester County Library staff will take an online course in how to lead conversations, a skill vital to library work today. Staff will then host a conversation with residents about accessibility to the library and use of the grant funds to install automatic door openers.

This project was decided on due to the need that library staff was visually seeing when witnessing patrons visit the library. The families with young children were identified as a target audience due to the number of programs we offer that bring in these families. In 2022, the Chester County Library offered 123 with 2,186 in attendance. Many of these attendees also use the library on a weekly basis. Our elderly and disabled population were also identified as a target audience for this project. For these individuals, we have a few goals. We want to create a library that is more accessibility friendly as well as safer for those with declining health that are still able to get out and visit the library. We want to make coming to the library an easier experience for our elderly and disabled patrons to encourage as well as lengthen the period of time they are able to utilize our services.

If you are interested in getting involved or taking part in the conversation, please contact Savannah Gilbert at library@chestercountylibrary.net or visit www.chestercountylibrary.net for more information.

Since 2014, ALA’s Libraries Transforming Communities initiative has re-imagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types have utilized free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a space



for residents to come together and discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff.

“Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL).”

The Chester County Public Library is a public institution providing services and resource information to meet the community residents’ personal, educational, and professional needs. Special emphasis is placed on providing popular reading, listening, and viewing materials, and stimulating young children’s interest and appreciation for reading and learning.