

THE BOOK CLUB

At a recent conference on Shared Living there was a panel consisting of caregivers, agency staff and individuals being supported who shared their stories about how people came to live together and what life has been like for all involved. Much was shared about how the matching process worked and how transitions were done to help people settle in together. I asked a question about people getting to become more involved in the community through the connections of caregivers. A woman named Joan raised her hand and shared the following:

I am involved in a book club that meets regularly at the library. My daughter who also lives with me will stay home with Mary so I can attend. Mary is in her seventies and is deaf and blind. One day my daughter wasn't able to do that for me. I asked Mary (using hand signing) if she would like to go to book club with me. Mary quickly asked, "do they have anything to eat?" I said, "we always have cookies and coffee" to which she quickly replied, "I want to go." So off we went. Mary sat next to me and munched away but also occasionally signed with me to find out what people saying about the book.

When we got home my daughter was back and Mary could not wait to tell her about book club. She said (hand signed) there was a story about a woman who had left home at a young age and did not return until her father was dying. She went on to say it was just like her - - she left home and went to a school (Fernald) and did not see her father until he was almost dead.

Now Mary goes to book club with Joan all of the time. And the other people in the group are asking how hand signing works.....