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Crafting a Wheel-chair Friendly Master Bath

Accessibility designer inspired by personal experiences.

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By John Byrd Wednesday, June 12, 2013

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Lorton — “We are seeing more seniors choosing to stay in their homes than ever before,” says aging-in-place specialist Russ Glickman.

“This is partly a function of the fact aging-in-place solutions are improving, but we’re also learning — as a society — that good universal design well-integrated into the home can work for the entire family.”

Glickman points to ramps and walkways perfectly integrated into porches and veranda; wheelchair friendly dining counters that double as serving stations and clean-up stations when needed; wider doorways and grab bars that prove convenient for everyone.

Of course, there can also be challenging technical considerations. In an assignment completed just last month, the remodeler collaborated with an occupational therapist in designing a master bathroom for a Lorton-based senior who had recently transitioned to a wheelchair.

“Here we have an individual who has lived in the same house for 25 years,” Glickman said. “His son occupies the same residence, so there was really no thought of moving into a nursing facility. My goal was to execute a plan that enables a capable mature male — who happens to be in a wheelchair — to live a fully independent life in his own home.”

Glickman, who has operated Glickman Design/Build for 30 years, understands such household challenges first-hand. When his son, Michael, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy almost two decades ago, Glickman set about acquiring several certifications in universal design specialties; after 15 years of enabling seniors and people with disabilities, his projects are frequent award-winners in an increasingly high-profile accessible living category.



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A critical component to the just-completed Lorton assignment was designing a wheel-chair friendly master bath that allows the homeowner to perform all his bathing and toiletry routines without assistance.

The result is what is known in the industry as a “wet room”—a completely waterproofed space that includes a curbless level-access shower, conveniently located grab-bars, and counter space designed for easy wheel chair maneuverability.

The key to a curbless shower design is floor grading and tile layout, Glickman says. The floor is framed to support a very gentle slope that keeps water flowing towards the drain.

A weight-tested, pull-down metal arm assists the owner in moving back and forth between the wheelchair and the toilet.

The wet-room’s finishwork features skid-proof ceramic tile, an ADA-compliant doorway, a sink with a wheelchair friendly L-shaped counter surface and plenty of barrier-free room to move about.

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