

Library and Town DEI Committee Seeks Volunteers to be “Human Books”

The Thomas Memorial Library and the Town’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee are partnering to offer a Human Library® event this fall, at which library visitors will have the opportunity to “read” a human “book.” The Human Library Organisation, a nonprofit founded in 2000 in Copenhagen, Denmark, provides a safe framework for personal conversations that can help to challenge prejudice, reduce discrimination, prevent conflicts and contribute to greater human cohesion across social, religious and ethnic divisions. The Human Library is based on the idea that we all carry prejudices and that we all judge. A Human Library event offers people the opportunity to have a conversation with someone who belongs to a group in society that has experienced stigma, stereotyping, or prejudices.

For the planned fall event, the Thomas Memorial Library will transform its Community Room for one day into a special dialogue room, where taboo topics can be discussed openly and without condemnation—a place where people who would otherwise never talk find room for conversation. Real people from Cape Elizabeth and beyond will be available to be “on loan” to readers as Human Books for a 30 minute one-on-one or small group conversation within the library.

If you feel you belong to a group in society that has experienced stigma, stereotyping, or prejudices, the library and DEI Committee invite you to learn more about the project and consider applying to become a Human Book. The topics relevant for publication include but are not limited to ethnicity, religious belief, gender, mental and physical health, lifestyle, disability, and traumatic experiences. The Human Library® also publish topics subject to heavy taboos, including victims of incest, sexual abuse, domestic violence, or grief-related topics. Human Books will undergo online training with the Human Library Organisation in Denmark and receive support from library staff and DEI Committee members before and during the event. If you think you might be interested in becoming a Human Book, please visit the library’s website to find out more information and fill out an online application.