

Deb L's Story

What would it be like to leave all you knew behind and move to an entirely new community? Deb was going to find out. The single mom of two had recently become an empty-nester and at fifty-five was ready to write the next chapter in her story.

When Nat, her partner, asked her to move to the Upper Valley where he lived, she thought she was ready to go. She found a new job, and they bought a home together. What was not to like?

Deb had lived in Concord for two decades, and even though it was only one hour away, she had left a lot behind: her friends, her neighborhood, her community – and her library. Nat had his own friends, but they were not the same as hers. As Deb was coming to learn, “creating a whole new community at my age is hard.” Her new story was coming into focus more slowly than she had imagined.

Then Rosie, a family friend, asked Deb to join the "Reading Upwards" book group at the Howe Library. Deb loved books, and the theme – living, meaning, and belonging in perilous times – was relevant. Indeed, for Deb, the future had looked, if not perilous, at least cloudy.

After the first few once-a-month meetings, she began to feel as if she had found a community that she could claim as her own. Their discussions were insightful and inspiring. Among the regular attendees, Deb even began to feel warm intimacy as participants shared how that month's book affected themselves personally.

When the pandemic hit the Upper Valley, and life was turned upside-down, Deb discovered just how much the book group had come to mean to her. Human interaction had become restricted, and the Howe Library had to close its building, but the staff quickly adapted to the "new normal." Curb-side pick-up services were initiated, and the book group became virtual as “Zooming” enabled it to continue meeting monthly.

Thanks in part to her experience in "Reading Upwards" at the Howe Library, Deb considers herself increasingly at home with her new life in the Upper Valley. Instead of feeling alone and tentative about her decision to relocate, she feels connected to this community. She would even say she belongs.