## SENIO Restra!



The Hardines' home is located just north of Alexandria.



**By Annie Harman** aharman@echopress.com

ccording to a survey done by AARP in 2011, the number of homeowners who prefer to age in place is on an incline. This is specifically referring to the generation of baby boomers.

Essentially, aging in place means a person would pre-

fer to stay in their home as long as possible, as opposed to going into a nursing home in the future. The problem is that many

aren't properly designed and structured to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, physical limitations and It includes pathways that other factors that come with old age and disabili-

homes

dine's home, however, is quite the opposite.

The Hardines' 2.500square-foot home is located north of Alexandria. It is beautiful, comfortable, but most importantly, it is totally accessible.

Having his mobility affected by bulbar polio, Hardine's been living with progressive muscular weakness. This led Hardine and his

wife to relo-It's all about cate from assessing the their Lake Ida home 12 individual, the years ago to disability and the a more acprogressions of the cessible home, disability." which they built with a team from

**Richard Hardine** ACCESSIBLE HOME OWNER

> Architects. The Hardines now live in a universal totally accessible home, or UTAH. go around the house to every entrance, hardwood floors and wide spaces, making it easy for a in a home. For example, wheelchair to get around. Hardine used a device

Ringdahl

This was not the Hardines' and associate Paul Ringdahl's first UTAH house, though. About 20 years ago, the team built the first completely accessible home in Minnesota, near Voyager Elementary School in Alexandria.

"I'm in no way an expert," said Hardine. "I just have ideas, and it's easier to experiment on my own house.'

UTAH houses involve a lot of elements that Hardine would call common sense, including wider doors, no stairs, rocker switches, and having everything someone would need on the ground floor of their home, such as bathroom, master bedroom and kitchen. The key details, though, depend on each individual.

"Each disability is dif-ferent," said Hardine. "They can do and sense different things, and can't do and can't sense different things.'

This leads to different



Contributed photos Richard Hardine and his wife, Karen, have been living in their completely accessible home in Alexandria for the past 12 years.

that alerts the homeowner when the shower temperature is appropriate for someone who has multiple sclerosis (MS).

As the MS progresses, the individual has a difficult time identifying cold or hot water. Such a device would make a sound or produce a light when the temperature was warm enough not to make the individual sick, but not so hot whereas it would burn them.

"It's all about assessing the individual, the disability and the progressions of the disability," Hardine said.

When Hardine and Ringdahl started unsprocess in residential construction 20 years ago, Hardine said it may have

been a bit before their time.

"People just weren't getting it," Hardine said. "The older generation was unsure how to age in place." He believes that the baby boomer generation watched their parents struggle with getting around their inaccessible homes, leading them to want to make different choices.

"They don't want to just live in their homes until they can't get around and have to go to a nursing home," said Hardine. "They need to bite the bullet, swallow their pride and recognize that somesible to make or build a home that will be accessible regardless of future mobility and capability.

Hardine says that the most important part of a UTAH house is that it's made for people with handicaps, but it doesn't look it. This retains and improves both the value and equity of the home.

Hardine's business, Infinity Development, works with planning and construction of homes. He specializes in accessible, adaptable and universal design that can allow anyone to age in place, wherever that place may be.

ties That's most homes.

Richard and Karen Har-

elements being necessary

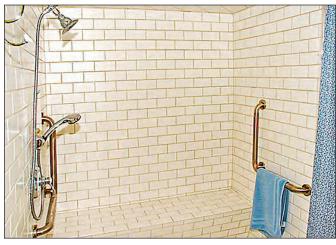
day they won't be able to do certain things."

While no one can avoid aging, it is completely pos-



A kitchen island was converted into a wheelchair accessible sink and The Hardines' living room allows for Richard to interact and be social counter, allowing Richard to continue to enjoy cooking and "supervis- with company, something Richard says is important to all people. ing" his wife.





This shower is proof that even a handicap shower can still be beautiful and add character and value to a home.

