**Have you “checked out” your library lately?**

Where can you go to get a cup of coffee, borrow a telescope, take a class, use a computer, have internet access, download free MP3s, borrow passes to a variety of museums or historical places, occasionally hear live music, join a knitting group, borrow DVDs, audio books, and, oh yes, real hold-in-your-hand-turn-the-page books?

If you are lucky enough to live in one New Hampshire town, you can do all this and more at the library. Other towns might have smaller budgets but they still offer many of these services. You can get reading recommendations, stay informed about community events, participate in discussions and book clubs, and meet interesting friendly people. The children’s area is cheerful, inspiring, colorfully presented and also staffed with knowledgeable folks to help with reading choices for young people. There are nooks with chairs to sit and look through books, play areas to stimulate creativity, and activities geared for different age groups.

Libraries are staying current with the digital age and offering the latest editions of newspapers on tablets as well as some actual paper versions. Computers are available for people who don’t have one at home and often library staff can those who want to learn how to use the computers. Some libraries offer conference/meeting rooms with streaming capabilities.

Libraries also provide something many of us don’t even realize we need. Libraries allow you to slow down and spend some time with yourself. Most libraries are not “Shhh...” libraries, meaning people can talk, but it is still a mostly quiet atmosphere where we get away from the constant bombardment of media noise and bad news and take a break from the unrelenting rapid pace of life today. Take a few minutes, check out your library, and hopefully you will find it to be a great resource and a place where you can get some soul-satisfying time to renew and re-connect with yourself.