



Fixtures that adhere to the principles of universal design have come a long way from their institutional past. This Antique Copper grab bar, above left, is mounted horizontally both for style and safety, while this assortment of luxury grab bars, above center, shows a sampling of finishes and details now available.

A hand-held shower gives users more control. The one shown above is a Jaclo Nebulizing Mist hand shower with a luxury grab bar in oil rubbed bronze.

# Aging Gracefully

## Universal Design Adds Beautiful Functionality

By Victoria Ruotolo, The Majestic Bath • Photos courtesy of The Majestic Bath

Not so long ago, universal design was primarily thought of as a method of designing homes for residents with physical limitations. Today, it encompasses a home design philosophy that is user-friendly, regardless of a person's age or mobility. Really savvy homeowners are incorporating universal design principles as they remodel their homes, especially their bathrooms, with an eye to the future.

One reason is that many people in Charlotte are deciding that they intend to live in their current homes as they age. So when they tackle a home renovation, they are looking to improve the long-term accessibility, safety and comfort of their homes. They want a home that will support them as they age with features that will allow them to live at home longer, but they do not want their homes to look like an institution.

Fortunately, designers have transformed the functional but sterile features and fittings initially seen in institutions, and they're now incorporating these sleeker, more stylish versions into even high-end residential designs. As a result, universal design features now help meet homeowners' practical needs while also allowing them to enhance the appearance of redesigned bathrooms.

The Majestic Bath assists homeowners in achieving aesthetic, stylish universal designed bathrooms. Here are some tips from a recent bathroom renovation that may help to inspire your own design ideas:

**A large open space under the sink** eases access and promotes accessibility for a resident confined to a wheelchair by allowing the wheelchair to roll right up to the vanity.

**Elevate the toilet.** Most toilets are the standard 14" in height. Consider replacing the existing model with a Universal Design version that sits 17" off the floor. The few extra inches plus the addition of decorative grab bars makes it easier to get up and down and puts less strain on legs and joints. A Toto Washlet is a convenient option. With a push of a button, the seat delivers a warm water wash. This convenience feature is ideal for someone who has limited movement.

**Replace the showerhead with a hand-held model.** You'll gain much more control over the water stream to rinse your hair or your shower walls after you've taken a shower. We

will sometimes place a regular shower head on the other side of the shower, so homeowners have a choice of which to use.

**Zero threshold shower.** Simply eliminate the shower entry threshold to provide easy wheelchair access. Slope the floor slightly down into the shower to contain water, and replace the shower door with a shower curtain to further reduce obstacles.

**Recess the bathtub** underneath a granite top and then extend the granite to provide a sitting edge that can ease entry into the tub.

**Install grab bars at the toilet and in the shower.** These practical features do not have to look institutional. Grab bars are now available in finishes like antique copper and decorative polished brass with designer details that add an attractive touch to the room. ■

*If a Universal Design Bathroom appeals to you, call The Majestic Bath's showroom sales staff, who are also the store's owners, at (704) 366-9099, or stop in the showroom at 621 S. Sharon Amity Road to discuss your needs in person; no appointment necessary. Visit them online at [www.themajesticbath.com](http://www.themajesticbath.com).*



This Toto toilet incorporates a washlet, a convenience feature ideal for someone with limited mobility.