



## Observing World Autism Day



**THE World Autism Awareness Day** is observed around the globe on April 2 to raise awareness. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), autism is a complex nervous system disability which affects normal brain function. WHO said autism usually manifests during the first three years of a person's life. Autism is described as an impairment of the growth and development of the brain or central nervous system affecting communication, social interaction and behaviour. People with autism have difficulty with communication along with a wide range of social activities and interaction.

National education facilitator at Autism South Africa, Vicky Lamb, told the Gazette that autism is seen as a difference within society and not necessarily as a disorder. "This does not mean that people on the spectrum do not have a disability, they do, however, with support, understanding and acceptance we see autistic people reach their potential," Lamb said.

As many people around the world have been reported to have signs of autism disability, Autism South Africa said there isn't a confirmed cause of autism.

"We know that genetics play a role as well as environmental factors, and there is a lot of research in this area. All autistic people are different, and so their challenges will be different when interacting with other people. However, some of the more common ones are; not picking up on sarcasm, missing the figurative meaning in language, not giving eye contact. So it might

appear as though they are not paying attention. They often are paying attention even without giving eye contact."

Lamb said there were several early signs of autism. Parents are advised to contact the Autism South Africa should they notice one of the following signs:

- Self-injurious behaviour, e.g. head banging, scratching or biting.**
- Unusual habits such as rocking, hand flapping and spinning of objects.**
- The development of speech and language may be atypical, absent or delayed.**
- Indifference to, or dislike of being touched, held or cuddled.**
- Minimal reaction to verbal input and sometimes acts as though he/she is deaf.**
- Sense of touch, taste, sight, hearing and/or smell may be heightened or lowered.**
- Sudden laughing or crying for no apparent reason.**
- Inappropriate attachment to objects.**
- Abnormal sleeping patterns.**
- Displays extreme distress or tantrums for no apparent reason.**
- Prefers to play alone.**
- Difficulty in interacting with others and little or no eye contact.**

Source: Greytown Gazette

## SA Celebs go Deaf For A Day Will you try it too?

**In support of World Hearing Day on 3 March, three of South Africa's most-loved musicians challenged themselves to be 'Deaf for a Day' to remind their fellow South African's that communication is the way we connect with others and it's something that shouldn't be taken for granted.**

As musicians, Denholm Harding of Just Jinjer, Gad de Combes of Shortstraw and Cito of Wonderboom understand the risk of noise-induced hearing loss and together with eMoyo, a mobile medical technology company, set out to challenge other musicians to experience what it would feel like to be deaf for a day.

What became immediately apparent for each of them was how disconnected they felt. Feeling misunderstood and frustrated, the celebs were grateful for their ability to hear. "Anybody can experience hearing loss," says Cito of Wonderboom. "Look after your ears, they're the only ones you've got," he continued.

The theme for this year's World Hearing Day, a World Health Organisation initiative, was a call to action for people to check their hearing. "Getting your hearing tested by an audiologist is a critical first step in protecting your hearing," says Grant Slabbert, CMO at eMoyo.

World Hearing Day is an important milestone in audiology and has been instrumental in creating awareness for hearing loss. The campaign's intention is to

generate ongoing awareness by challenging everyone to experience hearing loss for themselves. The response on social media has been overwhelming.

"Our campaign was aligned to this call to action and we wanted to drive the message home that early detection is the key to preventing permanent hearing loss. Getting your ears tested is easy. It's just a matter of going to your local audiologist or phoning around to find an audiologist that uses KUDUwave™ so that they can come to you," concludes Slabbert.

**Watch the video here to see what the celebs had to say about the challenge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSfknKCw1XY&feature=youtu.be>**



# SA Schools participate in an empowering social cause

How recycling clothes helps SA children towards better education, while empowering people with disabilities and their families



The staff members with benefactors of the Clothes to Good small business project

According to the "Progress in International Reading Literacy Study" (PIRLS) report, 8 of 10 SA children cannot read: The report also found that 78% of South African Grade 4 learners are unable to read with meaning. This means that they could not reach the lowest international PIRLS benchmark.

This, and the sad statistic of a 55% drop-out rate before grade 12 – meaning that less than half the children starting grade 1 will actually complete their high school education, constitutes an education crisis in SA. While caregivers at low resourced Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres are passionate and dedicated to change these statistics, they lack knowledge and skills to provide quality stimulation to the children in their care and very rarely have access to ECD resources. Furthermore, many SA children go to school hungry and often times, the meal they receive at the ECD centre is usually their only meal for the day.



Kids with disabilities are the biggest beneficiaries from the Clothes to Good initiative

To give these children a better chance at educational success, Clothes to Good (C2G), in collaboration with Rise Against Hunger (RAH), have started the 'Clothes to Food' initiative.

By students recycling their clothes through C2G, funds will be raised to provide highly nutritious meals to children in low resourced ECD centres. The savings from these meals donated to the low resourced ECD centres will be used to upgrade the centre to improve their chances of securing a Department of Social Development grant. In addition to the meals, C2G will also be providing ECD toys made from recycled materials and training to caregivers to empower them to provide better education to the children in their care. These toys are mostly produced by people with disabilities working in the C2G ecosystem.

Last year St David's Marist Inanda, St Andrew's School for Girls and Saheti School packed just short of 20 000 meals and made over 1000 toys at their meal packing & toy making events to support the education of children at low resourced ECD centres.

"St David's Marist Inanda has had a long and successful relationship with Clothes to Good,

with an annual clothes collection drive having taken place annually over the past 7 years and, more recently, a toy making event with our Junior Primary boys and a Rise Against Hunger food packing event with some of our College boys. All of these events give our boys a very tangible experience of how their positive intentions, resources, time and energy can make a difference in the lives of the most marginalised in society. All of the events are aimed at maximising impact into communities within a highly organised and symbiotic ecosystem that



ECD Kit

C2G has developed over time. We have a strong values alignment with C2G, and also have a great working relationship with the team" school spokesperson, Lara Klement explained.

The advert on the facing page is our 2019 marketing campaign encouraging high resourced schools to support 'Clothes to Food' and help our children succeed.

The C2G programme is a student-led, 30 day programme, driven by the school leaders and supported by the C2G team. C2G provide the collection bags, a conveniently located cage for clothes collection and all the logistics at no cost to the school. The meal packing and toy making events occur at the school or at the RAH facility after completion of the project.

C2G is also changing the employment landscape for People with Disabilities and their families. With a 94 – 99% unemployment rate under people with disabilities and many mothers of children with disabilities trapped in poverty C2G empowers mothers of children with disabilities to start micro-businesses through recycled clothing, while providing training and employment opportunities to persons with disabilities in an inclusive, green ecosystem. Recycled clothes from school projects that cannot be used are upcycled into toys by persons with disabilities providing resources to low resourced ECD centres, making a difference to SA children.

For more information, please contact Mr Jesse Naidoo on 074 242 7414 or [jesse@c2cx.co.za](mailto:jesse@c2cx.co.za)



# CLOTHES to FOOD School Challenge



**Did you know?** An old skirt, blouse or t-shirt can go a long way. All it takes is a bag of used clothes to feed five children at a low resourced Early Childhood Development centre.

## WE INVITE YOU TO GET INVOLVED



➤ **YOUR school** gets involved with a fun and exciting old clothes collection drive with **Clothes to Good**



➤ **YOUR school** hosts an inspiring, feel good meal packing event with **Rise Against Hunger, Africa**



➤ **YOUR school** helps feed 100s of little tummies while supporting student led change through small and humble gestures of goodwill



To get involved, contact Nadine  
[nadines@rahafrica.org](mailto:nadines@rahafrica.org)  
+27(0)82 871 5346



[www.rahafrica.org](http://www.rahafrica.org)



CLOTHES TO GOOD



# SAB donates over R100 000 to wheelchair tennis

Monday, 25 February 2019, Johannesburg, South Africa. – South African Breweries (SAB) donated wheelchair tennis equipment worth R100 000.00 in the far North region to continue development of the sport.



SAB handed over a set of sports equipments at one of the Federation's development centres – Elandsdoorn, a town in Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province.

The handover, which included Wheelchair Spares (Tyres, Tubes), tennis balls, Grips and strings / restringing and tennis Racquets will richly benefit over eight development centres in the region including Elandsdoorn, Bakwethu, Egodeni and others.

The far north region has had a wheelchair tennis program since the inception of the sport in the country 13 years ago and has produced champions like Dennilton's Danny Mohlamonyane who represented SA at World Team Cups and has played at a higher level on the international circuit.

Besides Mohlamonyane, the region can boast Kgothatso Montjane who is currently ranked no 6 in the world in the women's division, and has represented SA in 3 Paralympic Games and reached the semi-final of Wimbledon. Other players include Evans Maripa, a former world number 11 men's player and ex-professional player Sydwell Mathonsi.

In handing over the equipment, which will continue to nurture the development of the sport, Josaya Moima, a coach at the centre expressed his commitment to grow the sport and how

the donation will assist, saying: "I love working with these athletes and I will keep at it until we have a top 10 world ranked player from one of these centres in Dennilton."

"Our dream is to create the ideal company in Africa, one which makes a real difference in society," commented Zanele Mphuthi, Stakeholder and Licensing Specialist.

According to Karen Losch, General Manager for Wheelchair Tennis South Africa (WTSA), donations play a huge role in providing the necessary support to effectively offer sustainable programmes in disadvantaged communities.

"Our goal has always been to reach out to people living with disabilities with the focus heavily biased toward previously disadvantaged areas. We provide equipment, empower coaches and pay tournament entry fees, but we simply do not have enough resources and equipment for each and every player. So, these donations play a huge part in enabling us to keep these programmes running successfully. We are very thankful for the support," says Losch.

PHOTOS BY John Tapuch

**THISABILITY**  
A DISABILITY AWARENESS NEWSPAPER

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## Department donates 58 wheelchairs to needy

29 March 2019 - Local residents with disabilities were given help when the deputy minister of justice and correctional services, Thabang Makwetla, handed over a donation of 58 wheelchairs.

MSOGWABA – Beneficiaries came from all the parts of the City of Mbombela Local Municipality and were identified by Mbombela Disability Forum (MDF).

Makwetla said although the department was not responsible for social development, as the government it should be responsive to the problems of poverty and general needs of society.

"Disability is one of the seven focus areas identified by the South African Human Rights Commission towards promoting, protecting, and monitoring the realisation of human rights in South Africa. People with disabilities constitute 5,1 per cent of the South African population aged five years and older," said Makwetla.

He encouraged the community to work closely with the department to solve the problems of crime. He said it is not succeeding with reintegration because of communities that reject offenders.

We release offenders with the belief that they have been transformed and rehabilitated. They come out equipped with skills to help them become constructive citizens and members of local communities," he said.

Timothy Khoza (91) is a local community member whose right lower leg was amputated because of high blood pressure complications.

He used crutches for seven years before his shoulders gave up on him because of his age. He got his old wheelchair at a local hospital five years ago, but was delighted to receive a new one that will guarantee his mobility for longer.

Delisile Vilakazi (26) said her wheelchair was worn out and she needed a new one. Vilakazi fell sick and could not walk any longer.

She said she was grateful to be alive and was looking forward to getting a job and working towards providing for her one-year old baby boy.

The chairman of the MDF, Moses Mlombo, thanked the department for its initiative and challenged it to do more by providing more employment opportunities for the disabled.

He said wheelchairs are not a luxury but a need, to make sure that disabled persons are able to move around.

Correctional services has established 30 community corrections service points in Mbombela and has 324 parolees and probationers involved in community work in the district. It has also facilitated restorative justice processes with 634 victims and 140 offenders in the local communities for the 2018/19 financial year.

The wheelchair project started in 2013.

About 2 000 wheelchairs have since been donated to the needy. The wheelchairs are donated by the Hillsong Church in Australia



# South Africans with intellectual disabilities can live happy and fulfilling lives – and we can help them do it

**PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF LIVING LIVES THAT ARE MEANINGFUL AND HAPPY BUT THIS ONLY TAKES PLACE THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION, EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM...**

**WRITES NICOLE BREEN**

**The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as “...a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community...”**

**This describes people who are happy and inspiring**

**We at the South African Federation for Mental Health (SAFMH) advocate for the idea that all people – regardless of any mental illness or disability they may have – deserve no less than the “state of well-being” contemplated by the WHO, and that anyone can attain this state with the proper interventions and support, and if they are treated with dignity and respect.**

On 20 February 2019, the staff of SAFMH visited the Hamlet Foundation (Place of Hope) to engage in an exercise with their beneficiaries, who are individuals with varying degrees of intellectual disability. The interaction was done in view of March 2019 being Intellectual Disability Awareness Month. The session we ran with the beneficiaries provided them with an opportunity to express what made them feel respected and for us to learn from them.

We were struck by the warm greetings we received and the infectious enthusiasm of the beneficiaries who happily shared their views and experiences. These, we instantly knew, were people who were in a good state of mental health – happy, content and passionate about their endeavours at Hamlet. While they acknowledged their disabilities, they were not in the least caught up by them and focused instead on what their talents, passions and ambitions were, clearly indicating what gave them a sense of dignity and pride.

Segri Subrumuny, Hamlet’s CEO, told us that the purpose of the organisation was to uplift and develop people with an intellectual disability as individuals, as people who “have the same needs as everyone else.”

“They want people to listen to them, to communicate with them with respect and refrain from teasing or making fun of them...as well as the opportunity to earn an income,” she said.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, people with intellectual disabilities “are not violent, mad, stupid, unfeeling or uncaring people,” illustrated Subrumuny.

This was borne out by our experience of the Hamlet residents’ genuine excitement to meet and interact with us, and with the vigour with which they took part in the activities we ran with them– this was inspiring even for those of us who had worked with such individuals in the past.

While the Hamlet beneficiaries have considerable amenities and opportunities available to them to learn, work and socialise, many people with intellectual disabilities are not as fortunate.

With a lack of prioritisation of mental health in general as well as poor service delivery, lack of support at community level, lack of opportunities for skills development, the stigma in society as well as service providers and the remnants of the medical model of disability which can lead to life-long institutionalisation, many people so situated are left to languish.

Many are doomed to fall into the poverty trap and to experience social exclusion, often with little to no chance of escape. While much has been done to ameliorate the plight of such individuals by the state and non-governmental organisations – including the promulgation of law and policy such as the Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Action Plan 2013-2020 and, for instance, the campaigns of SAFMH and other organisations – many people with intellectual disabilities remain underserved, caught in a seemingly endless labyrinth in which they face dead end after dead end.

## **Mental health considered a luxury**

So what can be done? The difficulty with this question is that the idea of good mental health is considered a luxury – particularly for the indigent or those who struggle to advocate for themselves, which is often the reality for people with intellectual disabilities.

The budgetary allocations for mental health in various governmental departments are in general miniscule and the state seems to operate on the basis of putting out fires and reacting in ways that, as in the Life Esidimeni tragedy, only exacerbate matters, instead of taking proactive steps to improve the mental health of the people of the country.

Mental health has long been referred to as the “Cinderella” of South Africa’s health crises – an issue that is neglected and largely ignored. But it’s not all doom and gloom. The fairy tale had a happy ending after all, and Cinderella was spared her fate of wanton neglect.

It is the hope of SAFMH that this will be the case for mental health in general. People, especially society’s most vulnerable – such as people with intellectual disabilities – deserve an opportunity to live to their fullest potential.

If we want to uplift people with intellectual disabilities we have to take a multi-pronged approach. SAFMH believes that there are certain salient factors that must be present in order to accomplish this feat. The primary duty-bearer in this scenario is the state. Government must create a climate conducive to the protection and empowerment of these individuals. This does not only denote the creation of structures such as a legal framework but requires concrete implementation of law and policy.

While the former is largely in place, the latter is pitifully lacking. Comprehensive documents such as Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education System (2001) often merely gather dust, rendering them moot and meaningless.

If we are to attain a true state of constitutional democracy, a paper exercise alone simply will not do. The prescripts of the Constitution, as well as enabling legislation, take cognisance of both the vulnerability of people such as those with intellectual disability as well as their need for autonomy – but neither of these goals will be met unless concrete steps are taken to translate such rights into reality.

Despite the obligation of the state to implement legal imperatives, there also exist moral imperatives for which society ought to take responsibility. This includes community-based organisations caring for people with intellectual disabilities to do the work they have undertaken and provide for and protect people.

It also includes family members and members of the community educating themselves about intellectual disability so that they can give their loved ones the best life possible. Education dispels stigma and in the absence of stigma people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to not only survive but thrive, leading to improved outcomes for these individuals.

Once empowered by knowledge, communities can go on to get involved in activities that include persons with intellectual disability who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and afforded as many opportunities as possible. Communities, even those with very little resources available to them can engage in activities like walks in aid of people with intellectual disability or by providing employment to such individuals.

Intellectual disability need not be a life sentence. People with intellectual disabilities are quite capable of living lives that are meaningful, happy and fulfilling but it is only through implementation, education and activism that this can take place. Let us work together to achieve these goals.

**Nicole Breen is project leader for information and awareness at the South African Federation for Mental Health**



## Call to enact the Copyright Bill and Ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty

The SAR2R Coalition and affiliated member organisations called upon the NCOP and the National Assembly to enact the Copyright Bill and ratify the Marrakesh Treaty that facilitates access to published works in an accessible format for the blind, visually impaired and print disable persons.

The current Copyright Act does not provide exceptions and limitations for published works to be made accessible in different formats such as braille or audio for blind etc. For the blind, visually impaired and print disable persons.

NGO’s affiliated to the SAR2R Coalition have over decades produced accessible formatted materials from charitable and development funds. The member organisations in conjunction with the (WBU) World Blind Union and (AFUB) African Union of the Blind successfully negotiated with State Parties at (WIPO) World Intellectual Property and Related Rights Organisation for an International Treaty and in June 2013, the Marrakesh Treaty was adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The Marrakesh Treaty is now in force with over 52 countries across the globe including 11 African countries that ratified the Treaty and 28 member countries from the European union (EU) to have automatic ratification. South Africa which led the disability rights movement internationally and the creation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) and the African Protocol on Disability quite unfortunately has not ratified the Marrakesh Treaty as yet.

“The Marrakesh Treaty promotes the production by rights-holders of published works in an accessible format at the, same day and at the same price. It also provides for cross-border

exchange and production for non-profit use by Authorised Entities, like NGO’s without copyright infringement should rights-holders not make available accessible formatted published works.

The provision of the Marrakesh Treaty is now incorporated in Section 19 D in the Copyright Bill, and is serving at the NCOP, and was approved by the National Assembly during November last year.

The enactment of the Copyright Bill and ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty will immediately provide over half a million accessible book titles to blind, visually impaired and print disable South Africans, thereby opening greater access to information and knowledge and has the potential to improve the economic, cultural and social well-being of this marginalised sector of our population whilst bringing the “book famine” to an end in our country.

**More information may be available from Mr Jace Nair at [ceo@blindsa.org.za](mailto:ceo@blindsa.org.za)**

### **SA Right to Read Coalition (Established: 2009)**

Member Organisations

- Blind SA
- Daisy SA
- SA Library for the Blind
- SA Braille Authority
- SA National Council for the Blind
- SA Disability Alliance
- Tape Aids for the Blind



# South Africa's first deaf student to graduate with a Bachelor of Laws degree at UCT



**Qobo Ningiza** will be South Africa's first deaf Bachelor of Laws degree graduate when he was capped at a University of Cape Town (UCT) graduation ceremony on Friday, 12 April 2019.

Born and raised in Ntseshe location, Ngqamakhwe District in the Eastern Cape, Ningiza is the fifth of six children. He describes his schooling experience as one of severe disadvantage since the limited resources at schools for the deaf meant that learners had to share textbooks and make do with poor infrastructure. A shortage of teachers meant they could also not choose their subjects but had to comply with a prescribed list.

Ningiza's schooling experience instilled in him a desire to seek equality and motivated him to pursue tertiary studies in law. He is currently pursuing his LLM (master's) and applying to law firms to serve his articles next year. But this is a challenge since firms have thus far been hesitant to accept him as they do not have facilities for deaf candidates. However, he remains hopeful that an opportunity will soon emerge and that he can begin his career.

"There is nothing I want more than to make a difference in other people's lives. I believe that we are a country with a lot of potential and that many of our problems would disappear if we focused our energy on assisting those in need," he shared about his aspiration to pursue a career in human rights law.

However, Ningiza is not new to challenges as he experienced the same obstacle when trying to gain entrance to a university that would accommodate a deaf law student. He recalled using public transport to travel the long distance to one such institution for registration where he befriended another aspiring student.

When they arrived, the offices had already closed, so they spent the night sleeping next to a lamp post in the parking lot. When Ningiza finally got an interview he was told, within the first five minutes, that the institution would not be able to provide sign language interpreters and he was denied access yet again.

At UCT, however, Ningiza's experience was quite different. The Disability Service, which receives much of its funding from donors, facilitated his registration for tuition and residence, helped him to access comprehensive bursaries to address his financial situation and assisted with sign language interpretation. His fellow students also assisted with taking notes in class as it was impossible to take notes himself while concentrating simultaneously on an interpreter.

The UCT graduation ceremonies took place from 10-18 April.

Story Submitted: UCT Communications and Marketing Department

# Finding confidence in deafness



**Deaf Confidence awarded R15 000 to the Mary Kihn School for the Deaf**

**Mary Kihn School for the Deaf** in Observatory could soon get more donations through more regular fund-raising events that will be held throughout the year.

This comes after the school partnered with national movement organisation Deaf Confidence to raise the 'much-needed' funds for the school.

Deaf Confidence is a movement that motivates and empowers deaf people to always find the ability in their disability and motivates people who can hear to be confident when communicating with deaf people.

The funds raised will help better equip children in the school and community.

All events will be held at the school.

Co-founder of the movement Tracy Duncan says serving schools is what they usually do.

"We host regular fund-raising events to assist schools to deal better with their challenges. We also spread awareness in the hearing community by giving motivational talks to them," Duncan says.

"Apart from that, the movement also educate and motivate the deaf to empower themselves and become more confident," she continued.

Reyhana Agherdien, another founder, said stigma around the deaf community is still a huge problem.

"The misconception that the deaf cannot do anything because they cannot hear is one of the challenges. Communication is another barrier because the hearing is not equipped on how to communicate with the deaf effectively," Agherdien says.

"That is why it is very challenging for the deaf to find employment or they feel isolated in social circles and everyday life. Deaf Confidence's aim is to educate, influence and empower the hearing to want to learn to communicate effectively with and assist the deaf."

The story of Deaf Confidence is that each deaf person will find their unique ability in their disability being part of the movement.

Deaf Confidence has already raised R20 000 for the Mary Kihn School for the Deaf and the next event will be held on Saturday 6 April at the school.

Story by Thabang Kuaho

People's Post

## A CALL TO ACTION FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SAHRC): Become a disability confident employer

As part of its mandate to promote, protect and monitor human rights in South Africa, the SAHRC today issued a call to action to employers – starting with JSE listed companies – to become "Disability Confident". Speaking at a Disability 360° Seminar and Knowledge Workshop hosted by Transformation Integrated Africa (TIA) and Cowan Harper Madikizela (CHM) Attorneys, Advocate Bokankatla Malatji, SAHRC's Commissioner in charge of disability, extended the challenge to companies to ensure that at least 1% of all new appointments made during 2019 is of persons with disabilities. He stressed, that in dealing with any change initiative, the task must be measurable. He added that "Rome was not built in a day", and that overnight change was not expected". He extended the challenge and urged ALL JSE listed companies to make a concerted effort to employ at least 1 new person (not 1%), 1 person with a disability before the end of July this year. "This will translate into 365 new jobs for persons with disabilities in the next four months", he said.

Explaining what it means to be a "disability confident employer", Trevonica Naidu, CEO of TIA and advisor to the SAHRC explained that "Disability Confident employers are those who are creating inclusive cultures for people with disabilities, are valuing and harnessing the potential of such employees, and believe in the skills of their employees. These employers are also actively working at removing the barriers to the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in their workplaces".

The Disability 360° Seminar also provided a platform for the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) to launch its newly developed Disability & Employment Professional Practice Standard – intended to assist employers to remove barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities. The seminar and knowledge workshop brought subject matter experts together with Disabled People's Organisations and employer representatives that were seeking to gain a better understanding of disability rights, responsibilities and requirements as it relates to the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa's workplaces. Topical on the agenda, was the update from the Department of Social Development's Mr Benny Palime, who shed light on the rationale and expectations behind the 7% disability target being communicated by his department.

Commissioner Malatji concluded by stating that at the end of July 2019, the SAHRC intends publishing a list of all those organisations who have risen to this call to action to become a disability confident employer. Kerry Gantley, partner at CHM reminded delegates of the significance of March 21 in South Africa's national calendar, serving as a reminder of the need to promote human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities to work. Ms Gantley also stressed the need for employers to examine the status quo and to explore how employment outcomes for people with disabilities can be changed for the better.





## New hope for spinal cord injury survivors after exciting breakthrough in spinal cord research



Left: Professor Gregoire Courtine Right: Gert-Jan Oskam

With support from the *Wings for Life* World Run participants, scientists have given three patients with incomplete spinal cord injuries a great gift: the ability to walk again

Spinal cord research scientists funded by the Wings for Life World Run have made a breakthrough in their treatment of spinal cord injury, restoring three study participants' ability to control their muscles after several years of paralysis –and giving hope to millions of people across the globe living with spinal cord injury.

Professors Grégoire Courtine and Jocelyne Bloch have been working on a clinical study called STIMO (Stimulation Movement Overground), which combines two treatments: precise electrical stimulation of the spinal cord and intensive robot-assisted movement training. It establishes a new therapeutic framework to improve recovery from spinal cord injury.

"We implant an array of electrodes over the spinal cord, which allows us to target individual muscle groups in the legs," explains neurosurgeon Jocelyne Bloch, who surgically placed the implants in the patients. "Selected configurations of electrodes activate specific regions of the spinal cord, mimicking the signals that the brain would deliver to produce walking."

The patients then have to learn how to coordinate their brains' intention to walk with the targeted electrical stimulation. "When all the patients could walk using body-weight support within one week," said Bloch, "I knew immediately that we were on the right path."

Thanks to the targeted neurotechnology, the three participants could actively train natural overground walking capabilities in the rehabilitation lab for long periods of time, rather than doing passive training, like exoskeleton-assisted stepping.

Just five months after having an electronic stimulator surgically implanted over the dura (the coating that protects the spinal cord), all three patients' ability to move and control their muscles had improved.

The patients can operate the stimulator with a personalized voice-controlled watch, switching the stimulation on and off to suit their needs - but what's truly exciting is that all three patients can move their paralyzed muscles even when the stimulator is turned off, too.

### What does this mean for people with spinal cord injury?

Study participant Gert-Jan Oskam was told after a traffic accident in 2011 he'd never be able to walk again. "But now I can walk short distances with the help of electrical stimulation and crutches," says Gert-Jan. "I should be able to have a BBQ standing on my own in the near future."

Sebastian Tobler had a spinal cord injury so severe that doctors had no walking-rehabilitation program to offer. "Now the electrical stimulation gives me the opportunity to train," says Sebastian. "It gets my blood flowing, and – more excitingly – gets me out in the forest. It's good for the mind. It's good for the body."

After seven years living with an incomplete spinal cord injury, David Mzee took his first shaky but voluntary steps: "It's an amazing feeling – let's see how far we can go with this technology."

### Thanks to Wings for Life World Run participants

The Wings for Life World Run has backed this incredible research team since the beginning, and continues to give hope to the millions of patients globally who live with spinal cord injury.

Sign up for the Wings for Life World Run now. Whether you do a solo App Run, join a local Organized App Run or stay ahead of a real Catcher Car in an Event Location on May 5, 2019, you'll keep this fantastic momentum going.

### About the Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation

Worldwide, millions of people are dependent on a wheelchair after having sustained a spinal cord injury, most often as the result of a traffic accident or a fall. Wings for Life is a not-for-profit spinal cord research foundation with the single mission to find a cure for spinal cord injury. Since 2004, Wings for Life has funded life-changing research projects and clinical trials around the globe. While a cure is still to be found, steady progress has been made. One hundred percent of the Wings for Life World Run entry fees and fundraising from this global running event will help work toward Wings for Life's ultimate goal. Every step taken at the Wings for Life World Run and with the Wings for Life World Run App is a step in the right direction – <http://www.wingsforlife.com>

### About the Wings for Life World Run

On one day each year the Wings for Life World Run is held simultaneously in numerous locations and via the App across the world, everyone starting at the same time, whether day or night, and all with the same goal – to raise money for the Wings for Life Foundation. Under its unique format, participants run as far as they can until they are passed by a moving finish line, the "Catcher Car," which chases runners along the course or virtual in the App, gradually getting faster until each participant has been caught. This moving finish line allows participants of any ability to complete the run – the slower ones are passed early while ultra-athletes go on for hours. 100% of entry fees and donations goes toward helping to find a cure for spinal cord injury; and in the fifth editions since it was launched in 2014, the World Run has attracted more than 500,000 people from 193 nationalities to participate in more than 66 countries across all seven continents.

## OPINION: Making tourism in KZN universally accessible to everyone

**DURBAN** - Making tourism universally accessible to everyone-particularly those with disabilities - is more than just putting in a ramp at the entrance to a hotel, a B&B or an attraction.

Part of this is ensuring that venues have wider corridors to cater for wheelchairs, putting in toilet facilities for the disabled, having handrails in bathrooms, putting braille in lifts, installing visual flashing fire alarms for the deaf, providing hydraulic lifts in big tour buses, even lowering reception desks so that the receptionists are eye to eye with their disabled wheelchair-bound guests.

Airports, hotels, and other tourism facilities must cater to meet the needs of people living with disabilities.

Tourism service providers have long been urged to ensure that they remove all barriers-physical and non-physical-to make tourism accessible to all travellers.

The hospitality industry has agreed to position the country as a universally accessible tourism destination, implementing the best practices and systems, thus protecting an individual's rights to travel with dignity.

The Declaration on Universal Accessibility in Tourism was signed at the annual Tourism Indaba trade show in Durban back in 2012.

An action plan was launched at the same time, with the principle of universal accessibility being incorporated into all government tourism policies and programmes.

It was agreed that everyone needed equal access to attractions and facilities-and that it was the right thing to do. Universal accessibility would also enhance South Africa's global tourism competitiveness.

This will be a response to the Bill of Rights in the country's constitution-which says that no one should be unfairly discriminated against-as well as the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities and the UN World Tourism Organisation's global code of ethics for tourism

Statistics prove that apart from being a basic human right, universal accessibility can boost tourism numbers to a destination too.

With some 15% of people in the world living with disabilities and with an ageing population that needs wheelchairs and other assistance when travelling, the sector is worth billions of rand every year. More than one billion people globally are said to have some sort of disability, with more than 200-million of them experiencing severe difficulty in functioning.

The disabled and the ageing generally travel with family, friends or carers, so there is a multiplying ripple effect. It is a sector that cannot - and should not - be ignored.

The potential market for universal accessible tourism in South Africa is said to be about 30% of the population - and a portion of those have disposable income and can afford to travel -and that is a market that the industry should be tapping into.

Hospitality venues have gradually been implementing changes to cater for the disabled - and that includes people with hearing and sight issues as well as mobility challenges - and it is easier if the hotel owners build a new hotel.

The annual Lilizela Tourism Awards, recognizing service excellence in the tourism industry, also includes a category for hospitality businesses that cater for universal access.

Government's National Parks, for one, are making great strides in making parks more usable for tourists with special requirements. They have installed ramps, specially adapted ablutions and accessible facilities have been provided in hides, on boardwalks and nature trails, at picnic sites, interpretive centres, restaurants and campsites.

And for the visually impaired, there are tactile exhibits, audio descriptions, sound booths and listening locations.

The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa has created a universal accessibility grading scheme for the accommodation sector, rating facilities based on access, signage and ease of general tasks.

We as Tourism KZN look forward to working with an increasing number of universally accessible facilities to promote our exceptionally beautiful destination, and ensure it remains accessible to all.

**Phindile Makwakwa is the Acting Chief Executive Officer for Tourism KwaZulu-Natal.**



# Backabuddy - where cause meets crowd

Vusi Masinga and Sebenzisa Ndlazi, two wheelchair-bound volunteers, have embarked on an outreach programme for fellow wheelchair users who need to navigate treacherous terrain. The initiative is being headed up by physiotherapist, manager and clinical supervisor at Manguzi Hospital, Maryke Bezuidenhout, who aims to harness the experience and expertise of key community members living with spinal cord injuries.

## The initiative

Wheelchair users in the 8th most socio-economically deprived district in South Africa have to undergo tremendous difficulty travelling along roads covered in thick beach sand.

Maryke says, "Even with a rural active wheelchair, propelling through the thick sand for any distance is virtually impossible. Bush taxis only follow specific routes and often charge double for wheelchairs. This makes general day to day life, accessing health and welfare services, building a business, socialising and participating in community activities by wheelchair users a nightmare."

## The buddy programme

The buddy programme enables wheelchair users who are struggling to pair with role models who make regular visits to assist individuals coming to terms with their disability. These sessions include discussion around social stigma and avenues to help generate income.

"The programme plays a vital role in the community, especially for those who are unable to travel to get the support they need. Our volunteers also ensure individuals are linked to relevant medical care and social services, learn practical wheelchair skills, assist with repairs, give advice on goal setting and living a healthy active healthy lifestyle," says Maryke.

The personal approach is what Maryke believes is the key factor in the programme's success.

She says, "People with recent and old spinal cord injuries simply relate better and listen better to people who have been through the same thing. They connect, they ask more pertinent questions, they take the advice. Being privileged and not living with a disability, we remain very far removed from the daily challenges faced by people with disabilities in low socioeconomic communities no matter how hard we try to understand."

## The BackaBuddy campaign

Owing to a dwindling hospital fleet, the outreach programme has experienced a few obstacles in recent months, leaving role models to follow up telephonically or navigate the harsh terrain on their wheelchairs in order to fulfil their various duties.

One of the volunteers, Vusi, approached Maryke with the idea to set up a BackaBuddy



Volunteer, Vusi Masinga. Image supplied by BackaBuddy

fund to try and help raise money for quad bikes that will enable the volunteers to serve their community more effectively.

Having saved up R10 000 each, the equivalent of six months' welfare grant, Vusi and Sebenzisa have set up a campaign to crowdfund the remainder of the funds they need to "Mobilize Manguzi".

"In co-purchasing a quad bike, they will not only be able to improve their personal accessibility but will also be able to reach out further and to more people who need their support.

Quad bikes will revolutionize their mobility and independence, open up social and economic opportunities and enable them to provide psycho-social support services, build stronger networks and advocate more effectively for inclusion within their communities. I hope the public will continue supporting our outstanding volunteers through our BackaBuddy campaign."

## About BackaBuddy:

BackaBuddy is a proudly South African crowdfunding platform where individuals have the opportunity to raise funds for causes they feel passionate about.

BackaBuddy has raised over R97.9 million for various charities, individuals and causes across South Africa.

Website: <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BackabuddySA>

# These wheels are made for rolling! By Khumo Moyane



Keletso on the left, Nosi in the middle, Dudu on the right

**Ladies on Wheels** is a movement driven by three women whose lives are a demonstration of their mission statement: "Disability doesn't define us, it can only state what everyone knows, that disability has limitations but only to those who are limited by their own imagination."

Twenty-three-year-olds, Nosiphiwo Masikane and Keletso Morulane, and Dudu Mokgonyane, 24, were friends at school and were reunited on social media where the idea of Ladies on Wheels was born.

The movement, run from Morulane's and Mokgonyane's hometown, and now KwaZulu-Natal-born Masikane's adopted home, Pretoria, promotes self-acceptance as the key to conquer all, and that inner beauty exceeds any physical beauty. The women do this via social media and motivational talks.

Masikane, who has scoliosis, a medical condition that causes a sideways curvature of the spine, says they envisioned the movement being a trademark for all woman across the spectrum, especially woman with disabilities, to stimulate self-acceptance and self-growth, and to instill confidence in oneself no matter how one looks.

This spirit is also evident in Morulane who has muscular dystrophy which cause loss of muscle mass, and Mokgonyane who has paralysis in the spine.

Ladies on Wheels manager and mentor, Phindile Vilakazi, says her vision is to ensure that the women become prominent in the motivational sphere.

Vilakazi describes herself as "affected by disability". She says she has endured her fair share of ridicule because of her body size, which is a form of disability.

Her relationship with the Ladies on Wheels was "an act of providence", Vilakazi says. "No matter if you are disabled or not, we can all play our part to ensure that we contribute as much as we can to improve our society."

## The President consults the Presidential Working Group on Disability to progress the rights of Persons with Disabilities in South Africa

26 February 2019 -The Disability sector is full of hope and expectation after its first meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa. The Presidential Working Group on Disability (PWGD) is constituted of 45 members from the disability sector – representing a diverse and all-inclusive voice. Prior to this event, it had only met once since its inception in 2016. The mandate of the PWGD is to advise the President and his ministry on strategic, focused programmes that enhance the development of persons with disability to ensure their equal citizenship. Its members had despaired that it was an ineffective, defunct agency that existed on paper only until the call by President Ramaphosa to meet. This, after a SONA in which persons with disability were not mentioned, and which resulted in a vociferous response from the disability sector. The PWGD members were pleased by the quick response by the President.

The PWGD caucused before the scheduled meeting and compiled five key issues for submission. There were:

The relocation of Persons with Disability from the Department of Social Development to the Office of the President. There was strong consensus by all Disability stakeholders that the sector should be afforded focused attention by all departments and levels of government in an integrated and coherent fashion. This repositioning would serve to advance the realization of the rights of persons with disability and replace the current dehumanising "welfare status" and the historical link to the medical model of disability through its current location in the Department of Social Development, with a human-rights based approach.

The adoption of South African Sign Language as the 12th official language of South Africa.

The fast-tracking of the domestication and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and all other regulations and policies relating to persons with disability. Whilst there was an acknowledgement that the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disability is a guiding document for the mainstreaming of disability, it has not been legislated and therefore there exists no enforceable legislation that specifically protects the rights (and dignity) of persons with disability in South Africa

The need for focused attention on the provision of quality education and economic empowerment. There was a call for the professional development of all educators around the issue of disability (in the context of diversity and inclusion), the development of an inclusive and accessible curriculum, and that persons with disability have full access to information and a means of communication, either through alternative formats or assistive technology e.g. braille, alternative augmented communication, captions/subtitles on tv channels, audio descriptions and alternative reading methods. The building of inclusive ECD Centres and the immediate prioritization of 'out-of-school learners' (often being children with high support needs and therefore victims of compounded marginalisation) was also highlighted as urgent issues to be addressed.

The final submission dealt with the alarmingly high incidence of violence, abuse and murder of persons with disability and their lack of access to justice. Some of the recommendations included ensuring that the justice system is made more accessible to persons with disability.

The response by the President and the Cabinet Ministers in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. He recognized the clear articulation and urgency of the needs expressed by the sector and emphasized its rallying slogan of "nothing about us, without us". The President also committed to considering all submissions made (verbal and written) and undertook to include and mainstream persons with disabilities within all levels of government, ensuring ongoing monitoring and evaluation, as well as accountability for non-compliance. The sector felt for the very first time that their concerns were heard, taken to heart and that their strategic input would be prioritized and actioned by government



# The 2019 Wings for Life World Run is calling on South Africans to be Wingmen and Wingwomen

JOIN THOUSANDS OF RUNNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE TO RUN FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T



World Run - images by Craig Kolesky

Get ready for the 2019 Wings for Life World Run – where every participant is a winner – set to take place on 5 May 2019, at Irene Agricultural Farm. The World Run is a global charity event, with 100% of all entry fees and donations raised going directly to the Wings for Life Foundation, which has funded close to 200 projects globally to date, all with one goal in mind – *finding a cure for spinal cord injury*.

The Wings for Life World Run first got the world running as one in 2014, and continues to bring people from all walks of life together in support of an incredibly worthy cause, encouraging people to run for those who can't. More than half a million participants have already run in the past five editions to help fund ground-breaking research into spinal cord injury.

“Research shows that there are around 250,000 new cases of traumatic spinal cord injury every year, leaving patients paralysed mostly from the waist down, and often from the neck down too,” says Paralympian, Laureus nominee and World Run Ambassador Pieter du Preez. “Every year the World Run helps us get a step closer to finding a cure for this traumatic injury, but we need the help of global citizens to take up the challenge and help us fund the research.”

The concept of the World Run is simple – on one day each year, the Wings for Life World Run takes place at event locations across the world. Every participant starts at exactly the same moment – 11am UTC (which is 13h00 South African time) – and, half an hour into the race, a ‘Catcher Car’ begins to chase participants along the course, gradually increasing in speed until the last runner is caught.

People of all ages, abilities and fitness levels are welcome to participate by walking, running or rolling a wheelchair. Whether it's day or night, bright sun or pouring rain at your location – you're running together with the world and sharing an amazing experience. Your name shows up on a Global Result List, too!

The Wings for Life World Run is inspirational and inclusive. Anyone – from beginners to international athletes – can sign up. “The Wings for Life World Run is a truly global event open to all ability of runners and wheelchair competitors all in the name of making a truly ground-breaking difference in spinal cord research,” says Colin Jackson, Event Sports Director and two-time athletics world champion.

Plus, by taking part you could find yourself rubbing shoulders with some of the world's biggest sporting stars and local celebrity ambassadors of the event.

So, sign up and take part in the global movement to find a cure for spinal cord injury. You can set your own goals, run anywhere on the planet and share the fun of a simultaneous worldwide event.

Spinal cord injury research projects and clinical trials are in progress, but they need your help to continue and find a cure. Sign up to participate, or donate now, at <https://www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com/za/en/pretoria/>

## Details for Wings for Life World Run 2019 South Africa:

- **When: Sunday, 5 May 2019**
- **Time: 13h00 local time**
- **Where: Irene Agricultural Farm**
- **Entry fee: ZAR175.00 per person**

### About the Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation

Worldwide, millions of people are dependent on a wheelchair after having sustained a spinal cord injury, most often as the result of a traffic accident or a fall. Wings for Life is a not-for-profit spinal cord research foundation with the single mission to find a cure for spinal cord injury. Since 2004, Wings for Life has funded life-changing research projects and clinical trials around the globe. While a cure is still to be found, steady progress has been made. One hundred percent of the Wings for Life World Run entry fees and fundraising from this global running event will help work toward Wings for Life's ultimate goal. Every step taken at the Wings for Life World Run and with the Wings for Life World Run App is a step in the right direction – <http://www.wingsforlife.com>

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On one day each year the Wings for Life World Run is held simultaneously in numerous locations and via the App across the world, everyone starting at the same time, whether day or night, and all with the same goal – to raise money for the Wings for Life Foundation. Under its unique format, participants run as far as they can until they are passed by a moving finish line, the “Catcher Car,” which chases runners along the course or virtual in the App, gradually getting faster until each participant has been caught. This moving finish line allows participants of any ability to complete the run – the slower ones are passed early while ultra athletes go on for hours. 100% of entry fees and donations goes toward helping to find a cure for spinal cord injury; and in the five editions since it was launched in 2014, the World Run has attracted more than 500,000 people from 193 nationalities to participate in more than 66 countries across all seven continents.



## Disabled athlete, coach takes school sports to new heights

A talented athlete with willpower like no other continues to reach new heights and break more records than ever before, despite having one leg 4cm shorter than the other.

Shane Smit (27) is not only dedicated and hardworking, but he strives to coach others and has them achieve the best they can.

After realising that he could not compete to his full potential when running against able-bodied athletes, Smit underwent extensive physical testing and learned that his left leg measured at 73cm, while his right leg was at 77cm.

“The tests included a balance test, the strength of my bones and legs and that is when we realised that I have a disability. This happened in 2011,” Smit explained.

Smit coaches athletics at the Pretoria High School for Girls in Pretoria and boasts an impressive 31 medals won at the interschool tournament this year.

“Altogether, the girls from ages u/14 to u/19 won 62 medals, I feel extremely proud to say that 31 of those medals were earned by learners I coach,” says Smit.

From 15 to 22 March this year, Smit took part in the South Africa Sport Association for the Physically Disabled national championships (SASPD) in Stellenbosch. He walked away with a gold medal for achieving first prize in the 5 000m category with a time of 22:22.

Smit dreams of attending the World Para Athletics Championships in Dubai in November where he is set to break more records.



# No limits, just life!

By Nonhlanhla AdoWord Bakasa



Photo by Liza Lombard

**No limits, just life!** That was the theme of the day as Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF) hosted the first adaptive kayak and scuba diving demo day on March 9.

Excitement filled the atmosphere as 23 kayak and scuba diving participants arrived at The Blyde Crystal Lagoon in Riverwalk Estate, Pretoria. The 250-metre long lagoon is recognised as a water lover's paradise. "I was scared and nervous because I can't swim. But once I got here, and seeing the beauty of the place, my anxiety was overpowered by excitement. Now I just can't wait to get into the water," said Refiloe Nchachi who has been a paraplegic for 11 years.

Also waiting in line to hit the water, was Chanel Jonker, a 23-year-old wheelchair user, who said, "I'm excited, I thought it was going to be hard, but now that I'm watching the first group go, it doesn't look hard, it looks ok, and no-one has fallen into the water."

Jeffrey Yates, the founder of ASF, was injured in a car accident at the age of 19 in 1999. He says, "I started the foundation because I wanted to let other people who have impairments like me experience what I have been fortunate enough to experience."

Since its inception in 2015, ASF has brought many adaptive sports to the community of persons with disabilities such as adaptive skiing, wakeboarding, golf, go-karting and hand cycling.

"It's great to get outside and meet new people, because you don't get to meet a lot of people in wheelchairs at shopping centres and the like," said Gerrie Grundlingh, a T11 to T12 paraplegic at the demo day. "But it's good to see that there are so many people as you tend to think you are alone, but then I now realise that that's not the case."

Also having a good time were Chavani Mhinga and Samantha Sekwane. "I was worried about my spasms and wondering if my legs would cooperate in the water, but instead my body was very relaxed. I thought I was going to chicken out the moment they put me in the water, but the instructors were pretty amazing and very patient. I'm very proud that I spent that 10 minutes or so under water, it was an amazing experience," said Sekwane, who became a paraplegic through a car accident in 1998.

"It was exhilarating! You feel free as you are gliding on the water. Now I'm looking forward to doing the skydiving and skiing," said Mhinga, a quadriplegic who was worried about his lack of balance before getting into the water.

The participants' sheer determination and triumphs were an inspiration to Thomas Jansen van Rensburg, who with his wife, Marlène, is involved in planning and organizing ASF events. "I receive more from the members than what I give," Thomas said.

*The ASF team said that event's success was all thanks to the many sponsors and volunteers that offered their services, products, and time to the day.*

# Amputee golf legend signs up for 2019 Canon South Africa Disabled Golf Open

One of the world's most talented and respected disabled golfers, Geoff Nicholas from Australia, has signed up for the 2019 Canon South Africa Disabled Golf Open taking place from 13 to 16 May 2019 at the Magalies Park Golf Club. Organised annually by the South African Disabled Golf Association (SADGA), this international amateur event incorporates some of the world's best golfers with varying disabilities.

"We are honoured to have a golfer of this calibre participating in the 2019 Canon South Africa Disabled Golf Open. One of the world's legends of amputee golf, he brings a wealth of experience and will add excitement, and not to mention stiff competition, to the event," says Dana Eitzen, Corporate and Marketing Communications Executive from Canon SA.

As a result of a congenital disability, Geoff's right leg was amputated below the knee at the age of 11. He played his first game of golf the following year and his amateur career began in 1981 when he joined The Lakes Club in Sydney. His elite career took off in 1990 when he won the inaugural British Open Amputee Championship in Wales by an astonishing 13 shots. Later that year, he won the US Amputee Open in North Carolina by eight shots. He went on to win both of these championships until 2002.

Other triumphs include winning five Canadian Open Championships between 1995 and 2003; the World Series of Amputee Golf in 1996; the Japanese Open Disabled Golf Championship four times between 2000 and 2006; the Korean Open Amputee Championships in 2007 and the New Zealand Open Amputee Championships in 2009. He has won the Australian Amputee Championship three times and also captained an Australian team to victory in the World Cup of Disabled Golf in South Africa in 2014.

Geoff completed the Australasian PGA Tour, playing through Asia and Australia. He broke the course record at the 1994 Singapore Open and in 1996, he finished highly placed in both the Australian and New Zealand Opens, becoming the first amputee golfer to do so. Generous and passionate about his sport, Geoff coaches a team of intellectually disabled golfers to complete in the Special Olympics and has also taught in golf clinics for amputee Vietnam veterans in the United States.

Canon SA has a proud legacy of support for South African sport. The company is a primary sponsor of SADGA's First Swing programme which encourages young children with disabilities to live beyond their physical limitations and play golf. Canon is also associated with the Sunshine Ladies Tour as a sponsor of the season opening event for the past two years. This year, Canon SA is sponsoring The Player's Fund Project Hero, through which the stories of four fallen rugby heroes are being told to offer hope to former rugby players whose lives have been forever changed by serious injuries on the field.



Geoff Nicholas

**SOCIAL MEDIA: #CanonSAOpen**  
**Twitter: @CanonRSA / @sadga101**  
**Facebook: Sadga / South African Disabled Golf Association / CanonSouthAfrica**  
**Instagram: canonrsa**



## GolfRSA to become a member of EDGA

The South African Disabled Golf Association is pleased to announce that their National Federation umbrella body, GolfRSA has been made a member of the EDGA (formally the European Disabled Golf Association).

The announcement comes on the back of a unanimous endorsement from all the EDGA member nations. SADGA Operations manager Lily Reich remarked that the Association's affiliation is a tremendous privilege.

"We couldn't be more excited about our affiliation with the European Disabled Golf Association. The impact that the EDGA has had on the growth of disabled golf has been remarkable to watch over the years and we are looking forward to being associated with one of the true pioneers of disabled golf," says Reich. "This truly is a watershed moment for South African disabled golf and comes a short while after the announcement of the world disabled golf rankings system which is testament to the great place that disabled golf is in at present."

GolfRSA CEO Grant Hepburn echoed Reich's sentiments and spoke of the increased exposure that South African disabled golfers will receive as a result. "The South African Disabled Golf Association has risen in stature over the last few years

and it is fantastic to see that the great work of the Association has been duly recognised," commented Hepburn.

"Furthermore, SADGA's EDGA affiliation will afford our top golfers the opportunity to showcase their talent more frequently on the international stage." Tony Bennett, President of EDGA described the membership of GolfRSA as being "a huge step for golfers with disability on the continent."

Bennett himself a former Sunshine Tour member said, "For decades South Africa has produced some of the leading players on the professional tours around the world, and the passion that the population of South Africa has for sport is clear to see in the many sports in which it excels. I personally have been aware of SADGA for ten years and to see the work they have done, and to feel the passion they have for helping people with disability to get involved in golf can only be admired. We see all our members as being partners, and as such we look forward to working with GolfRSA and SADGA to ensure that more and more people can start, stay, succeed and enjoy golf".

GolfRSA's membership of the EDGA is made even more significant in light of the announcement of the Disabled Golf World Rankings system. South Africa's premier disabled golf event, the Canon SA Disabled Golf Open will now award World Ranking points to its participants. This is sure to raise the profile of the event on the international stage and with marquee players such as defending champion Mike Browne and Australia's Geoff Nicholas among the early commitments, all signs point to 2019 being one of the strongest fields in tournament history.



# Toyota sponsors biggest para sporting event for South Africa

**In March, athletes with disabilities gathered in Stellenbosch for the South Africa Sport Association for People with Disabilities (SASAPD) National Championships, sponsored by Toyota.**



Para-cycling

SASAPD teamed up with Toyota South Africa Motors to host its National Championships for athletes with disabilities. The event ran from Sunday, March 17, to Thursday, March 21, with eight of the Paralympic sports on offer, including boccia, para powerlifting, judo for the blind, cerebral palsy football, para swimming, goalball, para athletics and para cycling.

SASAPD is a federation that promotes sport for athletes with disabilities and visual impairments from grass-roots to Paralympic level. It currently caters for 12 regions throughout the country and for five disability groups, including spinal cord injuries, amputees, cerebral palsy, visually impaired and blind, and les autres (a category for Paralympic competitors whose disability does not fit into the other five categories).

This epic five-day event is arguably one of the most important sporting events for athletes with disabilities in South Africa as it offers them the opportunity to showcase their talent at an internationally recognised event.

"The National Championships are probably the most important for any athlete with a disability who participates in the eight sporting codes we offer. It is the last opportunity for these athletes to showcase their athletic ability. It offers them the opportunity to break South African or international records, which are then recognised," Moekie Grobbelaar, SASAPD president, says.

All the sporting events at the Toyota SASAPD National Championships are in line with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) regulations, so that new records are recognised by the IPC. With support from Toyota South Africa Motors, Grobbelaar noted, it is a lot easier to host the event.

"People always ask me what the SASAPD reinvests into the athlete. Unfortunately we don't have the opportunity to send every athlete overseas, but we can offer them the opportunity to participate at the National Championships, showcase their talents and be recognised. They don't have the same platform on club or provincial level, as the club sports aren't standardised," she says.

"If the event is not sanctioned by the International Paralympic committee (IPC), the athlete can't be ranked internationally. Today, sport is all about international ranking. It is how you are measured. This year's National Championships are particularly important and so is the backing from Toyota South Africa Motors, as we need to select the team for the 2019 World Para Athletics Championships."

SASAPD advises the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) on the team that should be at the World Championship and Paralympic Games. However, SASCOC makes the final decision. The Toyota SASAPD National Championships offer athletes the opportunity to qualify for the World Para Athletics Championships, which will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from November 7 to 15 later this year.

As adaptive sports become more competitive, it is more difficult for athletes with disabilities to be selected to represent their country at these events. Grobbelaar explained that if a country can get 30 athletes to the World Championships, it would be fortunate to receive 12 slots for the Paralympic Games.

"We need to send as many athletes as we can so that we can get more slots at the Paralympic Games. Toyota's sponsorship of the National Championship is key in achieving this goal," she adds.

While Grobbelaar is excited and grateful to have high-performance athletes like Ntando Mahlangu, who won silver at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, at the National Championships, she is equally excited about the upcoming athletes.

"The core function for the SASAPD is to develop the sport codes and build athletes from grass roots. That is why we have schools and clubs. I'm interested in the newcomers or wild-card athletes, as it shows me whether there is development in the sport," she explains.

People with disabilities are monitored by SASCOC as soon as they become high-performance athletes. SASAPD thus takes more interest in the talent that still needs to be developed.

SASAPD's work in developing sport has already reaped results, with junior athletes making up the majority of the 795 athletes at the Championships. With Toyota's support, the number of participating athletes will surely only grow.

While there are high stakes for the Paralympians competing at the Nationals, for many



Long jump



Louzanne Coetzee

other athletes it provides an opportunity to measure their performance against the best in South Africa or their personal best. Jonathan Swanepoel is one of those athletes – soft-spoken and a little shy, he has a smile that lights up the Coetzenburg athletics track.

A T54 wheelchair competitor representing Western Province, Swanepoel completed the 100 m in a respectable time, powering to the line one second behind the leading pair (just over 18 seconds). It was satisfying progress for Swanepoel, 21, who has been racing competitively for the past three years and is determined to improve every year.

To make this progress happen, he trains up to five days a week – on the track in summer and in the gym in winter. At the end of 2018 he graduated from the Cape University of Technology with a qualification in office administration and is currently working as an intern while looking for full-time employment. Will there always be time for sport in his life? You bet.

For others, it was their first time competing at the National Championships. This was the case for 14-year-old Mpumi Ngozo, who was delighted to have completed the T36 100-m girls' race. One of her teachers, spotting the youngster's sporting potential, encouraged her to take up running a couple of years ago – which she's done with enthusiasm and dedication. "Third place this year," Ngozo says with a smile, "but next year, it'll be first!"

The 2019 National Championships, lauded the best ever at Coetzenburg stadium, were organised by the Local Organising Committee, which consist of only six members! An astonishing amount of work is done before, during and after the four-day event by chairperson Mark Beack and his team.

Praise was received from the various provinces and the SASAPD team. "This year's event was really incredible," Johan Grobbelaar from the SASAPD noted. "All the sporting events were only a few minutes away from each other and located on the same campus, which makes it so much better."

His sentiments are echoed by Jan Wahl, chairperson of the Free State Sports Association for the Physically Disabled (FSSAPD). "The event was very well organised and offers a great platform for some incredible athletes," he said. "Stellenbosch is also a very central place to host the event and it is wonderful to have the athletes go see the other sports on offer."

Toyota has entered into a three-year partnership with the SASAPD to promote the sporting codes offered at Paralympic level for athletes with disabilities.

"At Toyota, we believe that movement and mobility in all its definitions is all around us. Sport has the power to connect people. This where we learn the true power of sport – it can challenge us, inspire us and, most importantly, unify us," says Glenn Crompton, Vice President: Marketing at Toyota South Africa Motors.

"As the Worldwide Official Mobility Partner of the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee, Toyota shares the vision to inspire people to push onward – past their finish line, past their impossible. We have seen so many examples of people achieving the impossible at the SASAPD National Championships.

"Toyota believes that you can achieve great things when you move. This is why we are a proud partner of the SASAPD National Championships. We are wholeheartedly committed to unleashing human potential through the power of movement," he explains.

**Good luck to the athletes who have qualified for the World Para Athletics Championships! For the rest of us, we can look forward to the 2020 Toyota SASAPD National Championships, which will surely be even more spectacular.**

**Karen Key** on Radio

The **DISABILITY** REPORT

...tune in every first Tuesday of the month @ 21h.05







# SAB FOUNDATION SOCIAL INNOVATION & DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AWARDS 2019



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