

BLIND SA
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Blind SA empowers a blind lady
with sustainable employment

By Abraham Allies

We continuously strive to better the lives of the visually impaired all over the country by offering the services for independent living.

In November 2015 Blind SA was contacted by a potential donor who want to offer one of our members permanent employment. Because there is a long list of jobseekers maintained by the Employment Committee of Blind SA, it was difficult to choose the correct candidate.

I was then reminded of a lady who was working at one of the sheltered workshops in Johannesburg who really tried hard to find permanent employment. She is very enthusiastic and was searching around the factories in Johannesburg for employment, but in vain.

I have invited her to go with me to the company that wants to offer a blind person employment. She accepted the invitation and to my surprise, she successfully passed the interview and the practical test. The first that I have done was to convince the employer of the abilities of the candidate and Blind SA's continued support to both the employer and the employee.

Sarah was so happy of what Blind SA did for her with regards to the placement and the orientation and mobility (which is very essential after a placement) that she cannot stop thanking the organisation for helping her to a more sustainable living.

This is what she said: "You know Abraham, I don't know how to thank you and Blind SA for this opportunity. Now I need not to depend on my disability grant to look after my family. Thank you for an organisation that cares".

Sarah started at the company on 15 January 2016 and she is not only doing the assembling of small mining instruments but also helps with front line services when the need arises.

This is only one of Blind SA's many success stories as we strive to better the lives of visually impaired in South Africa.

BLIND SA ELECTION YEAR

This is again a year where the organisation will be having elections, both on a national and local level. During the next 2 months, Member Organisations will be having their AGMS to elect new committees for a term of 2 years. Elections will also be conducted for the Executive Committee and the Chairs and members for the 4 standing committees of Blind SA. The office bearers will serve for a term of 4 years and the Chairpersons and members of the standing committees for a term of 2 years. Member Organisations were given an opportunity to submit names of candidates for all national positions before the end of February this year and the elections will take place at the 70th AGM of Blind SA during September.

Here is the list of nominees for your information to help you decide on the future of your organisation:

1. PRESIDENT OF BLIND SA:

Ms Cathy Donaldson

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni

2. VICE PRESIDENT:

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni

3. TREASURER:

Mr Derick Greeff

4. LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE:

Chairperson:

Mr André Steyn

Members of Committee:

Mr Christo de Klerk;

Mr Dibatsela Maabane;

Mr Johan du Preez;

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni.

5. BRAILLE COMMITTEE:

Chairperson:

Mr Christo de Klerk.

Members:

Ms Antonnette Botha;

Mr Derick Greeff;

Mr Eric Gama;

Ms Heaven Botma.

6. ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE:

Chairperson:

Mr André Vosloo;

Mr Bongani Mthimunye;

Mr Eric Gama.

Members:

Mr André Vosloo;

Mr Christo de Klerk;

Mr Christo Vorster;

Mr Dibatsela Maabane;

Mr Doctor Nkosi;

Mr Hanif Kruger;

Mr Matthys Odendaal;

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni;

Ms Susan Webber.

7. EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

Chairperson:

Mrs Susan Bam

Members:

Mr Eric Gama;

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni;

Ms Sandra Dreyer;

Ms Tammy Watson;

Mr Thinus van Sittert;

Mr Tommie Lehmkuhl.

8. EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE:

Chairperson:

Mr Tommie Lehmkuhl;

Mr Solomon Nkosi.

Members:

Mr Abraham Allies;

Ms Martie de Klerk;

Mr Hanif Kruger;

Mr Tommie Lehmkuhl;

Mr Sello Mabusela;

Mr Ntshavheni Netshituni;

Mr Louis van der Sandt.

Blind capable of taking the lead

12 April 2016

Forrest Gump had it wrong. Life is not a box of chocolates, it's a kaleidoscope. With the flip of a wrist realities are shredded and the world takes on a totally new shape.

Fitting words to depict the experience of the blind; spoken by executive head Freddie Botha last Wednesday evening when the Institute of the Blind celebrated its 135-year history.

To mark the occasion the institute, for the first time ever, changed its name. It will now be known as Kaleidoscope, changing its focus to being a commercially viable entity, with a rousing pay-off line: "Let the blind lead". This, according to Hein Wagner, Kaleidoscope's brand ambassador, places the focus on visually impaired persons as complete citizens in the community capable of taking the lead in society.

Dinner to mimic blindness

The point was powerfully illustrated with a Dinner in the Dark event, unlike any this journalist has ever seen.

The windowless dining hall at Langverwacht Wine Estate in Kuils River was pitch black, entered into through a heavily draped black tunnel to eliminate every point of light and shade. This attempted to mimic complete blindness and organisers made very sure they missed nothing when cellphones, cameras and anything that could possibly provide light were confiscated at the door in a somewhat fascist manner.

Wagner, who has been blind since birth, explained total blindness as "not only the absence of light, but also a complete loss of depth perception, the ability to determine distances between objects and see the world in three dimensions, with no option of reprieve".

If this was not immediately understood by diners when they entered the hall, it soon became very clear. A menacing nothingness – pitch black, heavy and flat – wrapped up your entire consciousness to threaten your very existence.

For some, strangely this was a cue to give way to their inner boisterousness, whereas for most, I imagine, the darkness was oppressive.

I for one couldn't keep my eyelids open after only a few minutes and cowered down to protect myself from the overpowering darkness. It is hard to say exactly when one's other senses kick in, but mercifully they do, and when this happens you can somewhat relate to Wagner when he says "welcome to the magical world of the blind".

Wagner, despite his blindness, has many accomplishments to his name and lived by the motto that "Impossible is Nothing".

He ran the Antarctica, Two Oceans and New York marathons, completed several Cape Town Cycle Tours, tackled the white waters of the Zambezi River, not to mention climbing the ten highest mountains in the Western Cape. He was the perfect host in a most bizarre setting – sighted people having fun at being “blind”.

Diners enthusiastically piped out at how magnificent it was to actually smell the ingredients in the salads they were eating, as if feta cheese suddenly tasted better – sardonic, but true.

A crew of blind and partially blind waitrons was our only salvation and in the proverbial land of the blind, Erasmus' one-eyed man was truly king.

These waitrons expertly guided every lost soul to their exact seats at the tables, to the restrooms when needed, passed the wine, found the cutlery and served a plated three course meal. Astonishing.

“Blind people in the modern world are often unseen; invisible to a sighted society, and we want to change that because the blind have such unlimited potential and so much to offer to the world,” said Botha. “Human awareness can be likened to a kaleidoscope and we know that with a simple twist of perception so much can be revealed. This is what has led us to the new name for the refreshed, revived Institute for the Blind.”

The institute presently receives only 15% of government aid and is therefore solely responsible for the generation of 85% of the total operational expenses.

“It is therefore important that we should strive to become more self-sustainable to ensure a future for our persons who are visually impaired,” Wagner explains.

He says the institute is setting up sustainable partnerships with local and international business entities to strengthen the brand and grow its product offering. “By raising the bar in becoming a world leader in all things blind related, our aim is to inspire the blind and sighted alike to be successful – no matter the challenge.”

97% of visually impaired unemployed

Wagner says the name change reflects an international character and opens doors to new opportunities, projects and funding.

“A few of our goals include the development of a one-stop resource centre for blind and deaf-blind persons at our information centre, the establishment of a modern technology training centre at our adult career development department, the marketing of the institute as one of the best tourist attractions in South Africa, and to establish more viable partnerships with the corporate sector and businesses as well as to enhance existing partnerships.”

He says they are also in the process of transforming the production units to become more sustainable. Already innovative products have been launched including a new coffee brand, wine etiquettes, cane, weaving, wood, mattress, metal, arts, crafts production and sales. Employment

is one of the biggest challenges the blind face in South Africa – this is evident in light of the fact that 97% of the visually impaired are unemployed.

“It is also our goal to create more opportunities for job placement of visually impaired persons in the open labour market,” he adds.

Public ignorance and society's general lack of knowledge of the blind, expensive assistive devices and training, inaccessibility, school training and provision of braille text books are other major challenges the institution faces.

Peadar Hegarty, who works with the team as a strategic advisor, says that the new positioning will help Kaleidoscope change how the world sees the blind.

“Kaleidoscope projects inspiration, emanating from this wonderful community of blind and deaf-blind persons who, far from seeing themselves as disabled, actually live their lives as people of unimaginable ability.”

Sport news

The 2016 Nedbank national championships took place in Bloemfontein from the 18th-24th March. On the menu there was athletics, boccia, football (7 aside), goalball, para cycling and swimming.

Athletics: A number of records in field and track items had been set up. This includes South African records, Africa records and two world records.

Lizaan Coetzee from Free State set up the world record for the 5000 meters in the B1 class for senior females. Her time was under 20 minutes. We see also a 100 meter race in the B1 category for senior males with a winning time of 11.40 seconds. The qualified time for Rio 2016 is 11.70.

Goalball: On the goalball court the competition, as normal, was very strong, especially in the senior male division. For two years in a row, Boland and Gauteng met in the final. Early in the first half, Gauteng took control of the game and never gave Boland a chance for a comeback. The final score, Gauteng 12 Boland 5.

MEDAL WINNERS FOR THE 3 DIVISIONS

Junior male:

Silver: Limpopo

Gold: North West

Senior female:

Bronze: Gauteng

Silver: Free State

Gold: North West

Senior male:

Bronze: Eastern Cape

Silver: Boland

Gold: Gauteng

Cricket: During the weekend of 1-3 April, the Boland Blind Cricket team visited Pretoria for a triangular cricket series (pro 20), between Boland, Gauteng North and Gauteng Central. Game one started one hour late and therefore there were only 12 overs aside in that match. Boland batted first and hit 143 for the loss of 2. After 12 overs Gauteng North (Northerns), had 115 for 8. After Friday lunch, Central got 128 for the loss of 7. Boland answered with 129 without the lost in the 15th over.

On Saturday morning Central batted first and hit 197 in 20 overs. Northerns answered with 139. The game after lunch between Boland and Northerns was the most exciting game of the tournament. Boland batted first and challenged Northerns to get 185 to win. After 15 overs, Northerns needed 56 of 30 balls. After the 17th over, they needed 34 of 18 balls. After 19 overs, Northerns looking for 20 runs and 6 balls left and a B1 must bowl. The 20th over started with a wide. At the end Boland won the game with 11 runs. Gauteng North hit 173 for the loss of 8.

Sunday morning Boland and Central played again. This time Central got 124 for 5. In the 19th over, Jerome Syster hit the winning runs for Boland.

Sunday afternoon, Northerns batted first and hit 111 all out. Gauteng Central hit the winning runs in the 13th over.

During this tournament Boland won four out of four games, Central two out of four and Northerns lost all their games. Boland received the cup and gold medals, with Central silver and Northerns bronze.

Article sent in by Marius Coetzee.

Kursus in joernalistiek
vir siggestremdes

16 April 2016

Siggestremdes kan danksy 'n nuwe projek makliker die wêreld van joernalistiek betree met 'n kursus wat hulle die nodige vaardighede sal aanleer.

Die Kaapstadse Vereniging vir Blindes (CTSB) gaan dié kursus in samewerking met WeCan24, Media24 se opleidingsprogram, aanbied.

Siggestremdes sal hiermee opgelei word om onder meer onderhoude te voer, berigte te skryf, bladuitleg te doen en subredakteurs te wees.

“Dis 'n nuutjie vir die maatskappy en ons is trots daarop om op hierdie wyse betrokke te wees by hulpverlening aan die visueel-gestremde gemeenskap,” het Adrie Jurgensen, groepsbestuurder van Media24 se gemeenskapsdienste en projekbestuurder van WeCan24, in 'n verklaring gesê.

Luidens die verklaring, wat Dinsdag uitgereik is, sal 'n groep van 14 studente van die CTSB aan die kursus deelneem en 'n diploma in gemeenskapsjoernalistiek verwerf.

Bonita Blankenberg, 'n kommunikasiespesialis en blinde navigator wat aan motorwedrenne deelneem, en Benedict Leteane, provinsiale voorsitter van die SA organisasie vir blinde jeug, gaan die projekbestuurders wees.

Oor die volgende drie maande gaan hulle werk om die opleidingsprogram so inklusief moontlik te maak, waarna dit in volle gang sal wees, luidens die verklaring.

Siggestremde studente sal drie keer per maand bymekaarkom vir die joernalistiekkursus van ses maande.

Elkeen ontvang R2 500 per maand en sal ná die aflê van 'n eksamen 'n nasionale diploma in joernalistiek ontvang.