

# ROLLING INSPIRATION

ISSUE 6 2017 | R50.00

The thought leadership of people with mobility impairments

**SAB FOUNDATION DISABILITY  
EMPOWERMENT AWARDS**  
Small businesses benefit!

**BEATING DEPRESSION**  
You can manage it

**EXERCISE MATTERS**  
Here's how to stay active

**DONATED WHEELCHAIRS**  
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**MUD, SWEAT AND QUADS**  
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# ROLLING INSPIRATION

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# RUGBY

## — A GAME-CHANGER

**SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT HAVE LOST THE BID TO HOST THE 2023 RUGBY WORLD CUP, BUT NOT ALL IS LOST...**

*R*

ugby is a sport in which we, as a country, have achieved the highest accolades. We hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa a year after our first democratic elections and the hype of winning it was a huge unifier of the diverse racial groups of the new South Africa. It brought us all closer as a nation and is still a reminder of the possibilities that can be achieved by this sport.

Our former president Nelson Mandela, at the inaugural Laureus Sport Awards in Monaco in the year 2000, said, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair."

Very profound words spoken at the time but these five sentences now speak to the strategic direction and the vision of the South African Rugby Union (SARU), which is, "To be the leading Rugby Nation inspiring all South Africans". SARU has great plans to promote the sport of rugby and to include

everyone in the benefit of participating in the sport.

These plans include wheelchair rugby, as the South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is an associate member of SARU.

Recently, South Africa lost the bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023, when the International Rugby Board (IRB) awarded this privilege to France. The decision came as a blow to a large portion of the population. However, there are also many people who feel that it would have been inappropriate to host this event, as we have other more pressing and immediate issues to focus on.

Fair enough: we are all entitled to our opinions. There are pros and cons to the hosting of big sporting events such as the Olympics and Rugby or Soccer World Cups. (Some readers will recall that I wrote about some of the benefits when writing about the Commonwealth Games in Upfront in March-April 2015.)

There are lucrative benefits such as much-needed revenue, increased tourism numbers, improved infrastructure as well as sport-specific benefits, like the opportunity to host a concurrent International Wheelchair Rugby competition,



Springboks defeated the All Blacks 15-12 in the final, which is now remembered as one of the greatest moments in South Africa's sporting history, and a watershed moment in the post-apartheid nation-building process.

South Africa regained their title as champions 12 years later when they defeated England 15-6 in the 2007 final. As a result of the 2007 World Cup tournament the Springboks were promoted to first place in the IRB World Rankings, a position they held until July the following year when New Zealand regained the top spot. They were named 2008 World Team of the Year at the very same Laureus World Sports Awards where Madiba had made that speech, eight years prior.

But for the team to regain that form will take serious introspection, transformation and hard work to rebuild our team to the form it enjoyed 10 years ago – a big ask, but not impossible. At least we now have the opportunity to start the rebuilding process, with the collaboration between SARU and SAWCR enabling us to combine our efforts to achieve positive results.

By the time you read this, the first Wheelchair Rugby National Championship Tournament, now sanctioned by SARU and hosted by Western Province Rugby Union, should have taken place at the Belhar Indoor Sport Centre in Cape




which too was lost when we lost the bid.

This might seem insignificant in the light of the many serious challenges, such as unemployment, poverty and education, facing the country, but sport plays an important part in addressing all these matters.

But all is not lost. We might not be the host country for the 2023 Rugby World Cup but we can still prepare for and participate in it. We are a resilient nation; although the Springboks did not compete in the first two World Cups in 1987 and 1991 because of anti-apartheid sporting boycotts, we have competed in all the post-apartheid world cups.

The team made its World Cup debut in 1995, when the newly democratic South Africa hosted the tournament. The

Town (December 1 and 2). Teams from the Northwest Province, Gauteng and the Free State together with the host Western Province were due to participate. In a future issue, I shall report back on the event, which was a wonderful opportunity for all to show support to the athletes as proud South Africans enjoying one of the major sport codes of our country. Let us use rugby as a vehicle to take us forward as a nation. 



Raven Benny is the vice chairperson of QASA. He has been a C5, 6 and 7 quadriplegic since 2000. He is married with five children, is mad about wheelchair rugby and represented South Africa in 2003 and 2005. He also plays for Maties. email: rbenny@pgwc.gov.za



## DRIVING TO FREEDOM

Driving Ambitions, launched in February 2010, is one of QASA's flagship projects. Now, seven years later, it has built up an impressive momentum and has seen many successful candidates leaving with their driving licence in hand – their ticket to freedom and independence.

Alfred joined the Driving Ambitions programme mid-year with his mind set on obtaining his licence, which – with the help of driving instructor Des – he did. A thrilled Alfred says that it has given him the key to freedom, and he encourages all wheelchair users to

make use of this service offered by QASA. Wheelchair users not only gain motoring independence but benefit from the self-confidence boost that it brings.

Driving Ambitions offers the services of a driving instructor and an adapted/hand control vehicle for people with mobility impairments. Should you require more information about the Driving Ambitions programme please send QASA an email at [projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za](mailto:projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za), or visit the Driving Ambitions website at [www.drivingambitions.co.za](http://www.drivingambitions.co.za).



## QUADS4QUADS RAISES R300 000 FOR QASA

About 250 road bikers braved the four-day journey from Ballito to Johannesburg in October to raise funds for QASA. On Sunday October 29, the adventure company handed QASA a cheque for R300 000, money raised through the annual event.



## QASA HAS A NEW WEBSITE

QASA relaunched its website with new features and links, making it much more user-friendly and informative – and it's configured for use on a smartphone. On the site you'll find the history of QASA, an overview of projects, application forms, the QASA Constitution and more. Please visit the website and give QASA feedback about what can be improved and what information you would like to see. Visit the site at [www.qasa.co.za](http://www.qasa.co.za). Send any comments, suggestions or queries to [projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za](mailto:projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za).



## YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE AT A FIRST IMPRESSION

As we welcome in the festive season and get ready for the New Year, most of us leave behind the old to embrace the new. QASA has the perfect plan for all your old work wear that you plan to throw away to make space for a new wardrobe.

The QASA Employment Project assists quadriplegics and paraplegics in finding employment. These members

will need new suits/blouses to look professional at their interview! Donate all your unwanted work clothing to QASA to be distributed among its members who will be attending interviews and kicking off their careers. For more information about this initiative contact us on 031 767 0584 or via email [projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za](mailto:projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za).



Ari Seirlis is the CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) and managing editor of Rolling Inspiration. email: [ceo@qasa.co.za](mailto:ceo@qasa.co.za)



## SHOULD WE MOVE ACCESSIBLE PARKING BAYS?

The abuse of accessible parking bays continues to be a hot topic - and some of our readers think that these bays should be moved away from the front of the stores or shopping centres. Here are two views:

"They should just move the parking further away from the doors and entrances. I am more than happy to wheel a block or two in a parking area to get a space to accommodate my chair instead of always having to fight for a spot. The exercise is good as well" – Johan de Waal

"The problem with parking that's further away is the risk of becoming roadkill: a wheelchair user is the same height as a child and therefore not visible!" – Alta Smit

What do you think? Let us know on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/RollingInspirationMag](http://www.facebook.com/RollingInspirationMag), on Twitter at @RollingMag or via email at [mariska@charmونت.co.za](mailto:mariska@charmونت.co.za).

## NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP

This message was shared on the ROLLING INSPIRATION website by Gene Hauptfleisch.

"Reading all the inspirational stories in this magazine has really played a key role in keeping me motivated and inspired after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at the age of 25. Struggling with this debilitating disease has often robbed me of the will to pursue my dreams, but reading stories of how others overcame adversity and hardship has really inspired me to keep going (be it with a walker or wheelchair) Thanks to the support of my friends and family, and inspiring tales, I was finally able to obtain my Bachelor's degree this year at the age of 30. I want to encourage everyone reading this to never, never give up. Thanks to all the people who have fought hard and paved the way to make life more accessible for people with disabilities."



**LEFT:** Congratulations to Quintin van Jaarsveld, sports editor and journalist at ehowitz, who was awarded KwaZulu-Natal Sports Journalist of the Year.

## "HOW COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY HELPED ME BEAT DEPRESSION"

My name is Tanya Gardy. I was born 45 years ago and have a physical disability that severely impairs my mobility. I have Cerebral Palsy Quadraplegia and use a motorised wheelchair to get around. I have depressive illness, since, contrary to common belief, depression is a physical illness often caused as a result of a chemical imbalance in the brain.

In December 2016, I decided to embark on an 84-day course of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). It is a school of psychotherapy particularly designed to assist the person undergoing the therapy to become his or her own therapist. Cognitive refers to thoughts and images (behaviour, in turn, refers to everything you do).

The basic premise of CBT is that you feel the way you think rather than think the way you feel. This allows you to feel better about yourself in situations that make you uneasy. CBT helps people change the way they think and act or behave. It is not a certain situation or problem that causes depressive feelings, but rather the meaning we attach to a particular situation. How we interpret and react upon our thoughts is what really matters.

Why did I consider CBT? I felt that I was in a psychological rut. I was seeing a therapist, but felt strongly that I was going around in circles and getting nowhere. Due to the nature of my cerebral palsy, I need to be almost totally reliant on caregivers for my physical needs. My relationship with people was tense. At times, I felt that people resented me simply because I needed so much assistance. I found life a bind and even contemplated suicide.

CBT gave me the freedom I was so sorely seeking as it empowered me to become a stronger, much more self-reliant woman. It has also made me far more confident and content. I now feel that I can wake up every morning fully able to face whatever situation may come my way. I'm so grateful for the person that I have become.

It is all thanks to the principles of CBT and my therapist, Evelyn Heunis, who was endlessly patient and tolerant, although she may have felt powerless to help me at times ... I am sure! The environment in which we live also plays a vital role in maintaining our physical and mental wellbeing, particularly if it is a caring, compassionate and nurturing one.

I am very proud to say that I love my life and am now fully equipped to manage any challenge that may arise. I just have to call on my CBT, which I have aptly called the "Mr Muscle" superhero inside me!

*Article inspired by Evelyn Heunis.*





# SMALL BUSINESS GETS A BIG WIN THANKS TO THE SAB FOUNDATION

THE SAB FOUNDATION AWARDED OVER R9 MILLION TO 24 SMALL BUSINESSES FOR THEIR WORK IN SOCIAL INNOVATIONS OR EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. THESE WERE THE WINNERS

**T**he 24 winners of the SAB Foundation Social Innovation and Disability Empowerment Awards 2017 were announced in Johannesburg on Monday evening, October 23. The SAB Foundation awarded over R9 million to these incredible small businesses.

The category winners were divided into the Disability Empowerment Awards and the Social Innovation Awards. GreenAble and Brownies & Downies were announced as the joint first-place winners of the Disability Empowerment Awards and each received R1 million.

GreenAble is a non-profit company that strives to empower and develop people with disabilities, while benefitting the environment. The company trains people with disabilities to dismantle empty printer cartridges into their recyclable components for recycling. It currently employs 34 people.

Brownies & Downies is a coffee shop and lunchroom that serves as a training centre for people with intellectual impairments and employs 36 people. Brownies & Downies provides on-site, work-while-training opportunities consisting of hard-skills, soft-skills and social-skills training.

Second place was awarded to Rural Handbikes and Smergos, which were each awarded R400 000. Rural

Handbikes manufactures bikes for wheelchair users that are especially designed to be easily assembled and disassembled. Smergos creates a range of wheelchair bags and accessories that provide much-needed functionality through a choice of simple, personalised designs.

*“The submissions for this year’s awards have been remarkable. It is our hope that it will go on to provide sustainable and scalable solutions for South Africa and beyond.”*

Joint third place, with prize money of R150 000 each, are Finger Talk and Proxisee. Finger Talk is South Africa's first mobile app for learning South African Sign Language (SASL) and the app is aimed at South Africans with hearing impairments and their families and friends.

Proxisee is a mobile app that aims to bring a sense of sight and navigation to people who are blind or have a visually impairment by means of audible (sound) and



touch sensitive (vibrations) signals.

GrassBeef, by Livestock Wealth, won first prize for the Social Innovation Awards and was awarded R1,3 million. Developed by Ntuthuko Shezi, GrassBeef offers a healthy way of producing beef that involves the upliftment of rural communal cattle farmers. In second place with

Stoves, Vuleka, Smart Agri Solutions, Seebox, Excel@ Uni, Timu Trust and the Aqua Test Kit.

"The submissions for this year's awards have been remarkable. It is our hope that it will go on to provide sustainable and scalable solutions for South Africa and beyond. We are proud of the role SAB Foundation plays by assisting innovators, both financially as well as with technical and business support through our partnership with The Innovation Hub," says Bridgit Evans, SAB Foundation Director.



**LEFT:** (From the left) Wade Schultz, Wendy Vermeulen, Dr William Rowland, Ntando Nodada, Bevlan Sudhu, Sarah Ramkumar and Brendan Coopsamy.

**BELOW LEFT:** The team from Smergos proudly pose with their award.

**BELOW:** (From the left) Ntuthuko Shezi proudly raises his award, watched by Moss Ngoasheng and Ntandokazi Nodada.




R750 000 price money was RailPro, which aims to deliver a lifeline to rural people and businesses with its vehicle that can travel on rail and road.

RailPro also won the SABS Design Excellence award. Third place winners were ChemStart, a mini-science kit for high school learners that contains 52 experiments, and Ivili Loboya, which sources cashmere from local farmers with local manufacturing of textiles.

Development awards of between R300 000 and R400 000 were awarded to I-Drop Water, Abalobi, Commuscore and the Umgibe Growing System. The other participants received Seed Grants of R150 000. There were awarded to HearScope, Balambie, Auto Turtle, Iziko

She adds: "To date 114 entrepreneurs have benefitted from the awards, which has resulted in 167 percent increase in jobs and a 245 percent increase in turn-over. We see these awards as the first step in what will be a long and fruitful relationship with these innovators and entrepreneurs. The intention of the Foundation is to see these valuable businesses through to commercialisation to the benefit of all South Africans."

Do you have a small business that you think might qualify for the SAB Foundation Social Innovation and Disability Empowerment Awards? Visit the SAB Foundation website at [www.sabfoundation.co.za](http://www.sabfoundation.co.za) to learn more and submit your entry for 2018. 



# IMPERFECTLY PERFECT

## — A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO CARE

IN OUR QUEST FOR PERFECT SOLUTIONS, WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF PRAGMATISM – FINDING A WORKABLE SOLUTION IN AN LESS-THAN-IDEAL SITUATION

**E**arlier this year, at the QASA Annual General Meeting (AGM), one of the attendees showed me a photograph of a ramp that was built to the back door of a house. The ramp was obviously too steep to navigate alone. The photograph was part of the feedback on a rural outreach programme conducted by one of QASA's Regional Associations.

"How can they build something that is obviously inadequate and then have the nerve to brag about it!" exclaimed the attendee.

"We don't know the whole story; perhaps it served the needs of the person, perhaps they had no other choice," I countered. But he was adamant: "If you want to help someone, you cannot be half-cocked about it, you must provide a proper solution."

It turned out that the photo only showed what was in the photo. What was not visible was that the ramp ended at the entrance to a backyard shack. And the ramp could not be built to run alongside the house, because another shack was in the way.

In addition, the child with a disability who lived in the house did not have the use of his arms, so his mother had to push him wherever he needed to go. The steep ramp replaced a 40-cm step. To the mother it was a huge improvement.

I recently read of a school in rural Kenya with a dormitory that houses 42 children with disabilities, but it has only one wheelchair. To get to school, those able to walk, walk. The smaller children are carried to and from school by older children. Some children have to be carted to and from school by wheelbarrow.

The headmaster said: "The sight of children with disabilities being carried in a wheelbarrow is not a pretty one, but what can the school community do when we don't have enough wheelchairs and need to use whatever we can to move the children around?"

A standard seven (grade nine) 16-year old boy noted: "I can't bear to see my friend struggling to get about on his own and that is why I don't mind using my strength to carry him from the classroom to the dormitory and wherever else he wants to be taken."



But then there is also the voice of his 15-year old friend, who pointed out: "I wish I had a wheelchair, because I cannot always depend on my friends to pick me up and give me a piggyback ride whenever I want to move around."

In a refugee camp in Syria, seven-year old Amar is pushed around in a wheelbarrow, because he has cerebral palsy and cannot walk.

On the other side of the scale there was also Chaeli Mycroft and her troop of "Chaeli Kili Climbers" who scaled Mount Kilimanjaro in 2015, with Chaeli in a custom-built, lightweight and ultra-maneuvrable wheelchair, being hauled up by her team.

Chaeli trained for months to become acclimatised to the lack of oxygen at high altitudes, but ultimately it was her team that got her to the top. A year later, Chaeli, who has cerebral palsy, and Anita Engelbrecht, who has spastic diplegia, participated in the 2016 Comrades Marathon.

They were pushed by their running partners, James Chevallier, Brett Glenn and Hilton Murray. They experienced the marathon, but the running was done by their partners.


The common factor between Amar, the Syrian boy, the wheelbarrow and piggyback rides at the Kenyan school and the wheelchair rides of Kilimanjaro and the Comrades, is that, in all cases, they could not go it alone. The people

with disabilities depended on the assistance and sacrifices of others who loved them and cared for them.

Returning home after the QASA AGM, I was on a flight with three persons with spinal cord injuries (SCI). An aeroplane is possibly one of the most inaccessible forms of travel for a person with SCI. However, to see the professional ease with which the Bidvest PAU staff, who were trained by QASA, transferred and secured their charges, was absolute perfection in an imperfect environment.

So, what is my point? Just this: our world is not perfect; we often find ourselves in situations that are beyond our ability to deal with. Of course, we must agitate and advocate for improvement, but we must be careful that in striving for perfection we do not discard less-than-perfect, workable solutions.

We must be open to the fact that when structures are not perfect, equipment is inadequate and terrain is challenging, there are always people who care. Don't be too proud to reach out.

To all of you who do care - our sincere thanks and appreciation. God bless you. You are special and you make us realise that life is worth living. And you awaken within us the urge to emulate you. To strive also to be persons of worth. 



Ida's Corner is a regular column by George Louw, who qualified as a medical doctor, but, due to a progressing spastic paralysis, chose a career in health administration. The column is named after Ida Hlongwa, who worked as caregiver for Ari Seirlis for 20 years. Her charm, smile, commitment, quality care and sacrifice set the bar incredibly high for the caregiving fraternity. email: [georgelou@medscheme.co.za](mailto:georgelou@medscheme.co.za)

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INTO  
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# OFF THE BEATEN PATH ... OUT-OF-THE- WAY PLACES

THESE ARE NOT YOUR USUAL HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS, BUT THEIR BEAUTY WILL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY



My travels for work have taken me to some really interesting places that I would like to share with you. Even if they are not the spots you might immediately think of for a holiday, especially for people with disabilities, let's take a look, as they offer such breathtaking beauty and are well

worth visiting.

The Cederberg wilderness area (covering about 71 000 hectares) is a three-hour drive from Cape Town on the Cape Namakwa Route. The Cederberg mountains make for a spectacular show, offering amazing rock formations including the Wolfberg Arch and Maltese Cross, and stretch from the Middleberg Pass in Citrusdal to the north of the Pakhuis Pass in Clanwilliam.

Although it is a mecca for rock climbing and mountain biking, there are many other exciting things to see and do, such as donkey cart adventures, hot and cold natural spring Victorian baths, and rock-art sites featuring remarkable

examples of San and Khoi art. It's also the heart of the rooibos tea industry.

Citrusdal has an organic market, museum and Astronomical Observatory, from which Halley's comet was observed in 1986. Clanwilliam boasts its famous dam, which usually offers lots of water activities, although right now the water levels are extremely low.

The Cederberg forms part of the Cape Floral Region – a world heritage site – which includes fynbos, laurel-leaf protea, the red disa and rare snow protea. And don't forget the Clanwilliam cedars that give it its name and are found on the upper mountain slopes (home to the elusive leopard).

Other wildlife includes porcupines, honey badger, Cape clawless otter and armadillo. The more common predators include the African wild cat, lynx, bat-eared fox, aardwolf and Cape fox. There are also the usual baboons, dassies, grey rhebok, klipspringers, duiker and grysbok. The birdlife varies from the Cape eagle-owl to the Cape canary.

My work is to train the staff of the national nature



*“The rugged spectacular colours and views of the mountains and fynbos as well as the absolute peace are completely soul-restoring.”*



**ABOVE:** The Cederberg Algeria Cottage is reasonably accessible. Seven new units are being built that will be universally accessible. **RIGHT:** The Clanwilliam Hotel is part of the Country Hotels group with a large, accessible room on the ground floor.



reserves in universal access as well as customer service excellence with a focus on people with disabilities. So, I was able to visit the main accommodation site of the Cederberg Algeria Wilderness Area. The staff here at Cape Nature are all very eager to ensure that the facilities are accessible, but access ramps, accessible routes and ablution facilities are just not completely there yet.

They are about to start building seven new units that will be completely universally accessible, so watch this space. If you are travelling with family or a caregiver, your stay

would most probably be reasonably accessible; though help would be needed for the ramp gradients and kerbs. If you can use a bath and standard toilet without grab rails, you will manage with the current facilities.

The facilities are self-catering – so you need to bring everything with you. The accommodation in the two towns, Citrusdal and Clanwilliam, have various “wheelchair friendly” venues, with the best being the Clanwilliam Hotel, a charming, recently renovated establishment on the main road of the town, part of the Country Hotels group.

There is a large accessible room on the ground floor with a step-free shower, but no grab rails or shower seat. The basin is positioned on top of a cupboard, which hampers access. The parking area and pool at the rear of the property are accessed via two very steep ramps, for which you’ll require assistance.

Just outside Clanwilliam (22 km) is the Elandsberg Eco-Tourism reserve, which offers two accessible self-catering units with adapted

accessible wet rooms, and wheelchair access to the wild garden. There are a number of other “wheelchair friendly” establishments in both Clanwilliam and Citrusdal, but I was not able to visit these due to time constraints.

This area is worth visiting even if you don’t do any activities, as the rugged spectacular colours and views of the mountains and fynbos as well as the absolute peace are completely soul-restoring. I can’t wait for my next trip up to the Springbok area in the Northern Cape!

Happy travels. [R](#)



Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access. email: [mandy@noveltravel.co.za](mailto:mandy@noveltravel.co.za)

# TACKLING TABLE MOUNTAIN ON TYRES

**MOUNTAINS ARE OFTEN INACCESSIBLE FOR PERSONS WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS BUT THAT'S NOT THE CASE WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN WONDER OF NATURE**

**I**n 2007 a global initiative to identify seven new wonders of nature chosen by a global poll was conceptualised. By the time voting was completed in 2011, 100 million votes had been submitted from around the world. Table Mountain was one of the selected destinations. It forms the northern-most part and nominative icon for Table Mountain National Park (TMNP), extending down the Cape Peninsula to Cape Point.

But how accessible is the mountain, also a World Heritage Site, to persons with physical disabilities? While pedestrian routes are limiting because of steep gradients and rough terrain, for those using the cableway the answer is "Very"...

## ACCESS ADAPTATIONS

There is accessible parking at the entrance to the lower cable station, but

Accessible toilets are located at both the lower and upper cable stations. On the mountaintop there is an extensive network of pathways, boardwalks and viewpoints, and while sections are inaccessible, there is a range with ramps and suitable surfaces. The retail and catering facilities are also designed to be accessible. The cableway does not operate when conditions are too windy and wet.

The cableway periodically arranges specials for local



individuals who need to use this parking will need to disclose their situation to security. There are several public transfer options. Lifts from the parking level take people with mobility impairments to the cable-car entrance, where control gates, doorways and threshold into the cable car have all been designed to accommodate wheelchairs.

visitors to enjoy the mountain at reduced rates. There are more plant species in TMNP than in the whole of the United Kingdom. More information (including rates) about Table Mountain, the rest of TMNP, or the other 18 national parks can be found on the SANParks website at [www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org).

Designated UA accommodation units are kept on reserve for those who need them and can only be booked directly with SANParks on special request. Unlike other units, they cannot be booked in advance online until the reserve period has expired. Visitors pay a daily conservation fee to make use of park facilities and enjoy the natural heritage. However, if you buy a Wild Card, that fee is waived. <sup>[1]</sup>



[www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org)  
[reservations@sanparks.org](mailto:reservations@sanparks.org)  
 +27 (0)12 428 9111



[www.wildcard.co.za](http://www.wildcard.co.za)  
[wildcard@sanparks.org](mailto:wildcard@sanparks.org)  
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## RMA- leading the way in occupational injuries and diseases through our family-centric approach.

For over 120 years we have made sure that workers who get injured while at work in the mining industry receive benefits including medical costs, disabilities, family allowances and child extension pensions in the case of death. We have since March 2015 been allocated the iron, steel, metal and related industries to administer by the Minister of Labour.

Our claims are processed speedily and efficiently per our tagline of “Caring, Compassionate, Compensation” as well as our belief that behind each claim is a family waiting for relief. This has made us the leading administrator in the business. We administer in accordance with the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) 130 of 1993.

### CONTINUOUS CARE

Our service to those injured extend beyond the payment to where we allocate case managers in line with our Pensioner Medical Plan. The case managers visit those severely affected to check on the standard of care and other needs. We have also developed innovative interventions such as a mobile clinic to help us reach rural areas across the country and outside to provide the required level of care to those who cannot access it, in the process also changing prosthetics and treatment where needed. Our Care Facility offers long term treatment to our seriously injured pensioners to ensure they receive the best care possible. We also provide continuous education to our pensioners who are on preventative health conditions to help reduce the

pensioners to ensure they receive the best care possible. We also provide continuous education to our pensioners who are on preventative health conditions to help reduce the occurrence of secondary complications. These innovations further underline our passion for caring for the lives of our claimants and their families.

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Our passion gives us insight into further needs that our clients, the employers, may have. By working with them, we now can offer a range of value-added solutions uniquely tailored and suitable for their needs. These include Augmentation Policy (top up cover of the COID policy), Group Personal Accident Cover with a difference, Commuting Journeys Policy, Funeral Policy etc. For a quote suitable to your needs visit our website at [www.randmutual.co.za](http://www.randmutual.co.za) or email [sales@randmutual.co.za](mailto:sales@randmutual.co.za)



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# ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL...

**MANY WHEELCHAIR USERS EITHER CAN'T AFFORD QUALITY WHEELCHAIRS OR FACE LONG WAITING LISTS. DONATED WHEELCHAIRS SEEM LIKE THE SOLUTION, BUT THERE'S A CATCH**

**A**ccording to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than a billion people need assistive technologies such as wheelchairs. However, only one in every 10 of those has access to them. Thanks to donations, many governments are able to provide assistance to people with disabilities.

For example, the majority of wheelchairs in Zimbabwe are donated. However, there are no regulations in place regarding their quality, and they often take the form of a makeshift chair with a plastic garden stool as a seat, or they're ill-fitting with little or no back support, or they are repaired with duck-tape or old rags. While these wheelchairs enable users to do basic things – like get out of bed and move around with the help of friends and family – they offer very limited mobility.

Zimbabwe is not alone. There are also no regulations regarding donated wheelchairs in South Africa.

## WHY REGULATE?

"Because there is no control over the quality of wheelchairs

being imported into South Africa, cheap chairs that do not meet any local or international durability standards are brought in and sold. They often break down very quickly and have to be replaced," says Elsje Scheffler, physiotherapist and researcher at the Centre of Rehabilitation Studies at the University of Stellenbosch.

The majority of South Africans, about 80 percent, receive their wheelchair through the public healthcare service and programmes. South Africa signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which obliges the state to promote, defend and reinforce the right of people with disabilities.

It requires the government to develop appropriate services and equipment as well as supply access to affordable information and trained staff.

"In line with the UNCRPD, there is a wide range of products available to meet individual needs. All products adhere to minimum durability standards," Scheffler explains.

While the public-health facilities have to conform to the UNCRPD requirement, private healthcare services do not.

"Wheelchair users in private healthcare services depend





on the benefits of the medical aids and private funds. Often funds are limited and users are supplied with the cheapest wheelchairs, which often do not meet minimum durability standards," Scheffler says.

Wheelchair users who rely on government might be confident in the standard and durability of the wheelchair, but they might have to wait as long as two years to get one. The government often provides additional funding to reduce the waiting list, but that is not enough.

"The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or disabled people organisations (DPOs) and other donor organisations assist in addressing the shortfall," Scheffler notes.

"Breakages may occur and can also cause injury. Donations often consist of only one type of wheelchair with 'standard' features throughout, except for the size, and they are therefore not appropriate for all users."

Regulations could also address the maintenance needed to ensure that the wheelchairs are in the best possible condition.

Scheffler points out: "Spares on imported products are often not compatible with local products, or, if correct spares are available, they can be expensive. In addition, donated products are also often second-hand or end-


of-the-line products, further compromising the ability to maintain them in good working order.

"Users who receive donated wheelchairs are responsible for their maintenance. If the wheelchair is provided through the state, however, the state is responsible for maintenance and replacement of the wheelchair. Once a user has received a donated wheelchair, their name is removed from the waiting list. If the wheelchair was not appropriate, they go back to the bottom of that list."

#### HOW CAN ONE HELP?

Scheffler suggests that the appropriate wheelchair should be fitted by a trained service provider.

"The wheelchair should adhere to local and international durability standards and be compatible with local spares. Where possible, donations should be made through local services to ensure ongoing monitoring and repairs. Many wheelchair donations have successfully been done this way," she says.

If you are planning on donating a wheelchair, be sure that the wheelchair is fitted to the user's needs by a trained professional, and that there is maintenance available to the wheelchair user if needed. 

# FIVE YEARS WITH PANTHERA

IS IT RISKY TO USE AN ULTRA-LIGHT WHEELCHAIR? PERSONAL ACCOUNTS  
FROM CHAIRMAN INDUSTRIES'S TWO LONGEST-TERM USERS OF PANTHERA  
DISPEL THE MYTHS AND STIGMAS



**I**t has now been more than five years since the arrival of Panthera wheelchairs in South Africa. There have been many positives and some negatives said about them, so Chairman Industries decided to consult two of its longest-term users of Panthera, Mathys Roets and Kerry Fraser (Roodt), to give their opinions and to let us know if the chairs have lived up to their expectations.

## MATHYS ROETS

Mathys (51) was injured in 2009 following a motorcycle accident on his way to Oudtshoorn. He is a singer/

songwriter by profession and an adventure/thrill seeker by heart. He will soon be heading to Switzerland on a skiing trip. Mathys received his Panthera X in March 2012.

## What was your motivation for buying a Panthera wheelchair?

I think the carbon fibre aspect and obviously the weight of the wheelchair motivated me. Since I bought it, I can honestly say that nothing can beat the advantage of the weight. Moving around, you don't feel the weight of the chair – or any weight at all really. It's agile and it "sits smaller" too. The way you sit doesn't make you feel like



it's imposing. When people see you sitting in it, they kind of admire the chair and its good looks.

#### **How does a Panthera compare to other chairs?**

Again, the light weight is a benefit. I like the way I sit in it and moving around, especially on flat surfaces. It just seems to glide and go forever when you give it a little push. The disadvantage, in comparison to my stainless-steel chair, is that I can't be as aggressive on rougher terrain, be it sand, stone, snow, etc. I feel more comfortable really giving my stainless-steel chair a beating. I bought the new U3 Light, which will enable me to be more aggressive, while still retaining a degree of lightness.

#### **Would you recommend a Panthera to another wheelchair user?**

I'd recommend it to someone who is active and is relatively skilled in the use of an active chair with such a fine balance point, but once you've become accustomed to that, the use of the chair is just so effortless. You don't need to worry about pivoting; you just lean back and it goes up. Even travelling downhill at speed I just lean back and it lifts – that's what I like about it. Being so finely tuned, it makes moving around very much easier.

#### **There's a belief that they are too light to be safe for an everyday user. What are your thoughts?**

If it's too light or too tippy, you simply can't handle the chair. The entire idea of the chair and being an active wheelchair user is being able to control your balance point as easily as possible. When you get to the point where you've learned to

the back during a house robbery. In her free time, she loves everything from sky-diving to swimming with dolphins. She was also nominated for Bride of the Year in 2016. Kerry received her Panthera U2 Light in July 2012.

#### **What motivated you to buy a Panthera wheelchair?**

The main thing was its weight. It was so light, small and compact to sit in.

#### **How does your Panthera differ from other wheelchairs you've used?**

My previous chair was a proper hospital chair and was big, bulky and heavy. It had armrests and wasn't very easy to be mobile in. With the Panthera, I can easily get in and out of my car. When I drive, I just put it next to me. At 4 kg, it really is very light and easy to use.



**ABOVE:** Kerry Fraser sits comfortably in her Panthera U2 Light wheelchair on her wedding day.

**LEFT:** Mathys Roets performs on stage with this Panthera X, which is light and easy to manoeuvre.




#### **Why would you recommend a Panthera to other wheelchairs users?**

It truly makes you so independent. When I drive myself, I take it apart so easily and load it. It really makes you as independent as you possibly could be.

#### **There are rumours of the chair being dangerously tippy, do you agree?**

No, you've really just got to learn how to use it. There's a bit of a learning curve at first, but it's so worthwhile when you get the hang of it.

In a further conversation Kerry stated that she was originally scared of the weight due to the massive comparison with respect to her previous hospital chair and was even in tears at the initial consultation, but now explains how using it has truly changed her life for the better. She is completely independent and is now back at gym and at work, and is completely mobile both in the chair and while driving herself. She says she could not have made a better choice.

For more information about the Panthera range of wheelchairs, contact Chairman Industries at [chairman@chairmanind.co.za](mailto:chairman@chairmanind.co.za) or 011 624 1222. 

control your balance point, it just entirely changes the way you sit in a wheelchair.

I can't stand it when my front castors feel too heavy and pushing becomes a chore, so I spend most of my time on rougher ground up on my back wheels. In such a case, you'd obviously want the chair to be light and tippy to give you that ease of movement. With the X not having the options of anti-tips you'd have to be a skilled user to use it.

I've only ever had one accidental fall, while closing a door behind my back, because I hadn't yet got used to the fact that it was so light, but I now wouldn't want it to be anything different.

#### **KERRY FRASER**

Kerry (28) was injured in September 2009. She was shot in



# WHY EXERCISE MATTERS

**WHEELCHAIR USERS ARE MORE PRONE TO WEIGHT GAIN, HEART DISEASE AND CANCER. MARISKA MORRIS EXPLORES SOME EXERCISES TO HELP STAY FIT**

**E**xercise reduces your chances of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer. It boosts self-esteem, improves sleep quality and lowers depression by 30 percent, according to health professionals. Leandré van Tonder and Linda van der Westhuizen, physiotherapists at Summit Rehab, add that exercise also prevents secondary complications such as urinary tract infection (UTI) and pressure sores, and reduces constipation.

"Exercising for wheelchair users is even more important. For them it has more to do with maintaining cardiovascular output, body weight and flexibility," says Natassia Eunson, physiotherapist at Netcare Rehab, Auckland Park. She notes that improved cardiovascular output also reduces the chance that blood clots will develop.

The United States' national health protection agency Centers of Disease Control and Prevention state that people with a disability are three times more likely to contract heart disease, diabetes or cancer. Nearly half of all people living with a disability don't participate in physical activity. Wheelchair users are also more susceptible to weight gain.

"Remember," says Eunson, "as a wheelchair user the more weight you gain, the more difficult it becomes to do daily activities such as transfers and moving around."

It is important to focus on the upper body, which is usually key when manoeuvring a wheelchair. "Arms, especially shoulders, are important to maintain stability, flexibility and muscle to prevent injury. The shoulders take a lot of strain, because pressure gets placed on them for transfers and for propelling the wheelchair," Eunson says.

There are three main exercise groups to focus on. Cardiovascular exercises, such as walking or swimming, raise the heart rate. Strength training builds muscles and increases bone mass. Flexibility increases range of motion, prevents injury and reduces stiffness.

It is important to include all three in an exercise programme. "Consult with your doctor or therapist first," says Eunson. "They will know what your limitations are and prescribe an appropriate routine."

Joining a gym is a good way to stay fit. "We are very proud to say that the majority of Virgin Active clubs in South Africa are wheelchair-friendly," says Les Aupiais, head of strategic communications at Virgin Active. The gyms





have designated parking, ramps, mechanised pool hoists and accessible toilet and shower facilities.

"Many of the clubs also have lifts designed to accommodate wheelchairs. There is a variety of equipment suitable for cardio workouts and upper-body strengthening, with fitness staff more than willing to assist members," she says. Although there is no equipment specifically designed for wheelchair users yet, many machines are accessible.

"Some clubs – because of their design – cannot be enlarged or reconfigured, or cannot retrofit lifts," Aupiais observes. If wheelchair users find a club that is not accessible, they can contact the club general manager who will find them an alternative club in the vicinity and match the membership fees.

*“Try and do as many of your daily activities independently to build muscle.”*

wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball or tennis," Van Tonder suggests. If you enjoy swimming, there are accessible public swimming pools in Coronationville, Auckland Park and Soweto.

These are heated, indoor pools with accessible toilets. Coronationville also offers a ramp and lifeguard, while Soweto Pimville Pool has accessible showers.

For the more adventurous, there's a scuba-diving club, Dive Chest, in Rosburgh, Durban.

From the Ferndale Dance Academy in Randburg and Protea Sports Club in Cape Town to Disability Bowls South Africa in Krugersdorp, South African Disabled Golfers Association and the Chilanga Riding School for the Disabled in Somerset West, there really is something for everyone.

Lawn bowler Chris Patton, a wheelchair user and president of Bowls SA Disability Bowls, keeps active with road work or trails. "Distances of up to 10 km (or more) are not a problem," he says.

He also makes use of a standing wheelchair. "It is important for bone strength and other internal systems, as well as the good feeling that goes with standing erect," he comments. He regularly does passive movements on his feet to prevent toes, ankles, calves and tendons from contracting.

Van Tonder also suggests that wheelchair users try and do as many of their everyday activities independently to build muscle. For strength training, for example, you can




**ABOVE:** Use the wheelchair-friendly treadmill, Invictus Active trainer, or battle ropes for cardio training.

Van Tonder and Van der Westhuizen suggest that wheelchair users "accompany their family on regular walks around the block to increase their endurance and fitness". There are also hiking trails in some areas: Albertville Gardens in the northwest of Johannesburg offers wide pathways, ramps and guide rails, and Melville Koppies has a 300 m mini-trail for wheelchair users.

Sport not only keeps you fit, but keeps you sociable. "People could also join a sports team, for example,

push your wheelchair forwards and backwards up a ramp. Arm raises with weights will also build strength.

"Do regular exercises. Do your stretches daily to maintain flexibility. Participate in sports if you wish to and eat healthily," Eunson says. "Drink plenty of water and listen to your body as to how it responds to things you do."

"Your mind is the only limiting factor for what you will be able to achieve. You can prove to yourself and anyone who's doubtful that anything is possible," she concludes. 



# MAKE GYM LESS DAUNTING

PERSONAL TRAINER SUNE VAN NIEUWENHUYZEN SHARES HER EXERCISE ROUTINE FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS

**I**

put this programme together so that wheelchair users can exercise without getting out of their wheelchair. The programme is designed for the Human Sport Equipment and Kinesis machine, which allows wheelchair users (who are not strong enough to transfer themselves)

full access to the machine with minimal adjustments.

Resistance bands can be attached to or around a chair or equipment in the gym, if the user is not strong enough to use the lightest weight on the machine. The key is to start with several different exercises of 20 to 30 reps each

and gradually increase reps and number of exercises. Workout time can be increased as the person builds endurance.

The programme focuses on upper body strengthening and core stability for beginner paraplegic wheelchair users. Do one to two sets of 15 reps for each exercise while sitting slightly away from chair's back support to challenge core stability. Warming up joints before exercising is crucial. Wheelchair users can use the ergo-machine (arm-cycling) or do some air boxing.

The warm-up should increase heart rate and warm muscles. Make sure to stretch after exercising. [?](#)

EXERCISE	HOW TO PERFORM THE EXERCISE	MUSCLES WORKED
Chest press	Face away from the cables. Extend arms, pulling cables to the front of the body.	Chest
Lats pull down	Face the cables. Pulley the bar or pulley down towards your chest. Focus on contracting the latissimi dorsi (lats) muscles and shoulder blades, as well as the stretch while returning to start position.	Back
Chest flies	Arms are shoulder height and fully extended to the side. Pull the cable until hands meet in front of the chest.	Chest
Reverse flies	Face the machine. Cross cables and hold in front of the chest. With a soft elbow (slightly bent) use the shoulder blades to contract and pull the cables back, extending the arms. Elbows should be in line with shoulders.	Back
Wood chop left and right	Pull the cable from above the right shoulder to the left hip (repeat on other side). Focus on keeping the hips still and only rotating the torso. Remember to move with force but also stay in control. Don't give into the momentum of the resistance.	Waist
Shoulder press	Use an under grip, wrist facing inwards, to lift cables from shoulder height to an overhead position and bring back to shoulder height.	Shoulders
Bicep curls	Grab handles in an under grip with wrists facing up and elbows into the waist. The waist supports the elbows so it doesn't use momentum. Lift your hands to your shoulder. Ensure full range of movement from the top to the very bottom of the curl.	Biceps
Tricep pushdown	Use over grip to bring the cables down next to the body for the start position. Keep the shoulder blades squeezed. Bend elbows backwards. The cable resistance will lift the elbows back and up simultaneously until 90 degrees are reached. Push cable down back to start position with elbows facing backwards the entire time.	Triceps





# AS WE GREET 2018...

ANTICIPATION BUILDS AS WE WAIT TO HEAR WHO WILL BE THE TEAM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2018 COMMONWEALTH GAMES, AND SOUTH AFRICA CAN BE PROUD TO BE ON THE FIVE-COUNTRY EXPERT PANEL FOR TOKYO 2020

**T**he World Para Powerlifting and World Para Swimming Championships have now been officially rescheduled, following the devastating earthquake that forced their postponement. The competition took place from December 2 to 7, 2017. Unfortunately, one of the top South African Para swimmers, Hendri Herbst, could not participate, as he had university exams to write. (I will give an update on the results of these events in the next issue.)

Apart from the Wheelchair Marathon and Wheelchair Basketball, the sporting season has all but ended for this year, but Ernst van Dyk keeps on being right up there in all the marathons, winning an awesome fourth place in the New York Marathon after a sprint finish.

Wheelchair Basketball South Africa hosted the IWBF Africa World Championship Qualifiers from November 18 to 24, 2017, at the Tongaat Indoor Sports Centre in KwaZulu-Natal. Both the South African men's and women's teams competed in extremely tough groups.

I was recently invited by the International Paralympic Committee to be part of an expert panel to travel to Tokyo, Japan, to give help and advice to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games local organising committee. It was a huge honour for me and South Africa to be part of a five-country expert panel and shows how we as a nation are highly regarded in the Paralympic Movement.


Let me also whet your appetite for Tokyo! What an amazing city. I think that it will put on a very special Olympic and Paralympic games. If you ever wanted to go to a Games as a spectator, this is the one you want to go to. The city doesn't sleep and the population is fully behind the games. I can't wait.

I have been following the new IPC President, Andrew Parsons, on social media, who has now completed his first 100 days in the position, and let me tell you, as I mentioned before, he has stepped into the huge shoes that Sir Philip Craven left in impressive style. He has accomplished a great deal in a short period and we can only get stronger with him at the helm of this mammoth ship. Keep it up, Mr President!

We are now looking forward to January 25 when the announcement will be made on the team to do battle at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia. Hopefully, there will be athletes competing in:

- Para Athletics
- Para Lawn Bowls
- Para Table Tennis
- Para Swimming

Good luck to the athletes to be selected: we know you will fly the flag high.

That's me for the year, Happy New Year all, and all the best for a great 2018! 



Leon Fleiser has been involved with sport in the disability sector since 1992, when he started playing wheelchair basketball. He captained the national team to the Sydney Paralympic Games and the 2002 World Championships. He started working for Disability Sport South Africa in 2001 as a Coordinator for High Performance. It merged into SASOC in 2005 and he is now the Manager for Team Preparation and Academy Systems. He has delivered Team South Africa to numerous Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth and African Games.



# JUDGE

## OF HIS OWN COURT





**FROM THE PARALYMPIC GAMES TO CORPORATE SUCCESS, JUSTIN GOVENDER'S JOURNEY HAS BEEN ONE OF OVERCOMING SETBACKS AND EMBRACING GROWTH AND INSPIRATION. JEAN-LUC HARDY EXPLAINS**

**A**t the young age of 17, Justin found himself facing an entirely new world after having his ability to walk stripped from him. In 1995, he was shot in the back and was paralysed from the chest down. Now, 22 years later, he is able to reflect on the experiences that moulded him into the person he is today and all the achievements that have come with it.

Justin, now 39, is fully integrated into South Africa's corporate world at E for Exec Recruitment as a specialist consultant. Long before he found himself in this position, he had made a name for himself hurtling down many a wheelchair basketball court. Today, having represented the country in two Paralympic Games, in addition to being an all-African gold medallist, he has contributed significantly to the sport that helped him through many of his own trials.

After his injury, Justin had to adapt to a way of life that was dramatically different to his previous lifestyle. Suddenly, now in a wheelchair, he had to go through a strenuous rehabilitation process – a “trial by fire” – to get used to the new body he found himself in.

“I was forced to grow up in a short space of time; I become a baby all over again and at the age of 17 had to face all the changes my body went through; every day was different and presented a challenge,” says Justin. Relationships, too, were bound to be put under strain.

“I didn't want to accept the fact that I had a disability. I believed I was going to walk again. But I was scared to leave the house and I was more embarrassed than anything to be in a wheelchair,” he explains. He lost a few relationships along the way, because he was now on a different path.

Another trial awaited him – how would he deal with his working future, given his new physical limits? As anyone with a physical impairment knows, integrating oneself efficiently into any working environment can present a challenge. South Africa was going through many changes at this time and the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace was only a secondary concern.

For Justin, although having a job was necessary, he soon had greater things in mind...

He was invited to watch a game of wheelchair basketball by a friend who also had a physical disability. Coming from a sporting background, he was immediately interested – and astonished at what he saw. He watched these individuals move in a way he never thought possible. Fascination turned into an excitement to get involved himself.

“A player collided with someone and went flying off his chair onto the court. My father and I looked

at each other in shock. I thought: ‘Gosh, I don't think I'd ever be able to handle that.’ What he did next, though, was to pick himself up, get back in his chair and recover the ball. I think, for me, that was the biggest moment in my life: it taught me the lesson that it's not how many times you fall down, but how many times you get up,” Justin says.

He worked hard and persevered to create opportunities for himself, and his achievements through sport were beyond his wildest dreams.




Things change, of course, and after a celebrated sporting career he still had to find a full-time job. This time around, though, he had a more positive attitude towards searching for a suitable career.

“There are many characteristics that I learned I could take from the sports field into the workplace – the skills are transferable,” Justin explains. After working for a bank, he became a specialist consultant. He now has the ability to give other people with disabilities a great career opportunity.

“It's time corporate South Africa changed its perceptions, because a contribution in the workplace can be made by both abled athletes and those with disabilities,” he says.

Plans for the future? He wants to assist in establishing the specialist division, E for Enabled, to promote the employment of people with disabilities in positions where they can make active contributions.

His aim is also to instil a sense of self-confidence in people with physical disabilities, so they can realise that there is nothing to stop them from succeeding in the workplace. 

# MUD, SWEAT AND FEARS

TRAVELLING ON MUDDY, ROCK-STREWN ROADS WITH HAILSTORMS BREWING OVERHEAD IS NO EASY TASK, BUT IT IS LIFE-CHANGING. ALL THE MORE REASON TO SIGN UP FOR QUADS4QUADS 2018

**I**t's that time of the year. People get Novemberitis. It's a frustrating time. It's too early to close your doors and too late to start something new. Despite this, I know a crowd of people who are operating like machines at 110 percent. They are the ones who participated in the 2017 Quads4Quads event.

Quadriplegics, paraplegics, amputees and people with no disability (not that I think such people exist) all participated.

Later that day, the mother of all obstacles was a rock-strewn, mud-covered mountain. Some of the motocross bikes were recovered as late as 8pm that evening. By "recovered", I mean physically carried over the mountain.

Day two, the weather and the route was half wet and half dry with no consistency. Cautious fuelling and braking was the order of the day. A miscalculation while negotiating rocky hills and evergreen plantations on roads that seem to be tied to the edges of the mountain could have you falling a few hundred metres. Breathtaking is the word to describe the route, and also the scenery.



**ABOVE:** Mud clings to the front wheel of a bike after the four-day journey to Johannesburg.

This 1 000-km migration of quad bikes, MX bikes, big trailies and side-by-sides from Durban to Johannesburg will change your life. I promise you.

Every year presents its own challenges. The KwaZulu-Natal floods set the backdrop as we launched near Ballito in the pouring rain.

Day one, I found myself fishtailing up a 40-degree sugar-cane hill and grabbing at the quad's 4x4 button for traction.

*“It was one of those life moments I will never forget.”*

Day three, we were steadily moving north when the sky suddenly turned dark blue. Hiding underneath my quad bike five minutes later, I realised that body armour and helmets provide dual protection. Not only do they come into play when you fall, they are also quite effective in a hailstorm.

Lying flat on my belly observing the soil around me turn from a light brown to snow white while the temperature dropped radically and the lightning danced on the power lines directly above was one of those life moments I will never forget.

The last day was all mielie-field and train tracks. Racing a 100-t freight train with three locomotives for 40 km off road while Carnival City was waving on the horizon might not be everyone's cup of tea, but it surely did it for me and it was the perfect ending to an epic adventure.

May I leave you with a little advice? Forget about all the mundane stuff you do in a year. Plan for this event. It will change your life! *R*



Heinrich Grimsehl is a prosthetist in private practice and a member of the South African Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (SAOPA). email: [info@hgprosthetics.co.za](mailto:info@hgprosthetics.co.za)



# EARLY WRITING FUN

IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET YOUR CHILD INTERESTED IN WRITING FROM AN EARLY AGE. HERE ARE SOME FUN WRITING ACTIVITIES TO TRY



here are many things we can do to encourage writing skills in a young child. Writing should be fun and you need to make sure that it is relevant to the age, development level and interest. When

children are young, they love to try to write their own names as well as the names of family members and even pets.

A fun way to help start an interest in writing is to let the child draw a picture and you help to label the objects and people. Encourage the child to tell you what is happening in their picture and decide together what to call objects. Letting children "make up" their own writing should be encouraged.

It doesn't matter what the letters look like. At this stage you are just letting them have fun and experiment with making marks on the page. Once they have identified some of the letters in their names, encourage them to find the same letters on shop names, advertisements, newspapers, street names and so on.

Before a child is able to form letters correctly on a page, there are many skills they need to master first. These include fine-motor skills, coordination and movement.



Activities that encourage these skills include cutting and tearing paper, picking up and arranging objects such as blocks, threading beads or spaghetti on a string, and rolling, pinching and cutting clay or playdough.

Children should be encouraged to scribble, make loops and doodle using a variety of materials - thick chubby wax crayons, thin pencils, finger paint, sand, glitter glue, chalk, etc. Writing doesn't only happen with pens on paper.

Let them experiment using different surfaces, including paper, cardboard boxes, newspaper, even outside (with washable substances) on bricks and in the sandpit. You can draw the letters of their names on a page and let the child trace them or tear and stick pieces of paper over the lines.

Using glue, you can write their names and let them stick pieces of macaroni along the lines.

They can make letters by rolling 'snakes' using clay or playdough, using a wet paintbrush outside on concrete to paint large letters, or you can write a very large letter on the floor and let the child walk around it.

The most important thing is that writing at this stage should be shown to be fun, without pressure.



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# TENDON TRANSFERS

PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM AN SCI THAT HAS COMPROMISED THEIR UPPER LIMBS MAY CONSIDER THE OPTION OF TENDON-TRANSFER SURGERY



iving with spinal cord injury (SCI) is challenging at the best of times. Individuals with an SCI where upper limb function is normal and preserved (paraplegics) are usually functionally independent in all their activities of daily life (ADL).

However, for those patients who suffer a SCI where the function of the upper limbs is compromised (tetraplegia), total independence in ADL usually is impossible and assistance is required in some activities that require advanced upper limb function.

Take, for instance, someone who suffers an injury at the C5 level. This means that shoulder function and flexion at the elbows is possible, but all other movements are impaired or absent – so no wrist or finger function. The result is that the person will require assistance in ADLs that require intact hand function.

Besides the use of splinting devices to assist with functional activities, there are many surgical options available to improve function of the paralysed limb. These operations are known as tendon-transfer operations. They can improve function in the arm and hand by using working muscles and transferring them to act as “motors” for paralysed muscles.

A tendon is the part of the muscle that crosses a joint (elbow or wrist) and attaches to the bone. When the tendon crosses the joint, it helps to transmit muscle action into joint movement. By connecting a strong working muscle to the tendon of a paralysed muscle, movement across a joint can be restored.

So, let's look at who could benefit from these procedures.

## C5 AND C6 INJURIES

### Elbow extension

The ability to actively straighten the elbow from a bent position adds greatly to a person's independence. This is one of the most important functions to restore in

tetraplegia. The working deltoid muscle, or part of biceps-to-triceps tendon transfer, restores reasonable elbow extension (movement against gravity and light resistance).

Activities such as dressing, reaching overhead, driving a power wheelchair (or a car) and supporting oneself in sitting become easier, as the strong pull of the biceps muscle is balanced by the action of the triceps muscle.

### Wrist extension

The ability to actively extend the wrist removes the need for a wrist orthosis (splint). Muscles that remain active in the forearm (brachioradialis) are used to augment function. At the same time a procedure to bring the thumb into contact with the index finger is performed to improve pincer grip with obvious advantages.

## C6/7 AND C8 INJURIES AND HAND FUNCTION

Improvement in the overall functioning of the hand with improved grip can be achieved through various tendon transfers in the forearm. Activities such as eating, writing, and picking up heavier objects are improved with these transfers. In conjunction with the key grip procedure, a tendon transfer to enable grasping ability with the fingers is generally performed at the same time.

C6 and C7 injuries can result in the tightening of the fingers due to spasticity in the hand and/or contracture of the finger joints; this can make it difficult to open the hand to release objects. The problem may develop years after injury due to tightening of the natural tenodesis of the hand. A procedure can be carried out that improves the passive opening of the fingers when the wrist is relaxed.

These surgeries are extensive, however, and mean many months of post-operation hand rehabilitation in order to strengthen and learn the new functions. They should not be undertaken by those who are not committed to the post-operative rehabilitation programme or don't have a full understanding of what is possible with tendon transfers. <sup>[R]</sup>

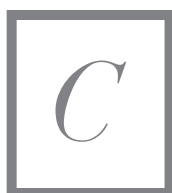


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# ROLE CHANGES AFTER SCI

**A RELATIONSHIP CHANGES WHEN A PARTNER SUSTAINS A SPINAL CORD INJURY (SCI), BUT WITH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, IT CAN BE AS STRONG AS EVER**



Couples often experience a change in roles after one partner has experienced an SCI. This can be emotionally challenging. It is quite common to experience a sense of loss because of roles and activities that one might not be able to fulfil any longer. This is where effective communication is vital.

Talking openly about fears and anxiety that you experience due to changing roles can ease some of these emotional difficulties. At times, it is possible to do the things you used to do, but it just means finding new ways of doing it. In other situations, it might be necessary to adopt new roles. If, for example, you were the person who usually initiated sexual activities, you might still be able to fulfil this role, but you might have to be creative in doing it.

You could discuss with your partner different ways of letting him/her know that you are interested sexually and if there is anything you'd like to do or try. It is quite common for the partner of a person with an SCI to approach the subject of sex cautiously. The partner could be concerned

about causing pain or discomfort.

Again, communication is paramount, as information such as what you enjoy or what makes you uncomfortable assists your partner in understanding your needs. Due to the loss of sensation in certain areas of your body and increased sensation in other parts, erogenous zones change. This creates an opportunity to discover new ways of experiencing sexual pleasure together.

Sexual experiences are different, but that doesn't mean that you can no longer be sexual and experience intimacy. When it comes to sex, the physical side is often overemphasised while the role of the brain is underestimated. The brain is the most important sex organ and a crucial component in meaningful sexual relationships.

Preparation, both physically and mentally, is just as important as the act of having sex. While this stage might take longer for someone with an SCI, it can be incorporated as part of the foreplay. For example, texting your partner throughout the day could stimulate the mental side, while showering together could be a physical turn-on. The only limit is your own creativity. [\[1\]](#)



Danie Breedt is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of psychology. He divides his time between training future psychologists, research and clinical practice. Danie works from an integrative interactional approach in therapy dealing with a wide range of emotional difficulties. He is currently working as a psychologist at numerous physical rehabilitation hospitals across Gauteng for Charis Psychological Services where he does supportive counselling as well as sexual education for patients with disabilities. Column courtesy of Charis Psychological Services.

# WHEN DEPRESSION COMES KNOCKING

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DEPRESSION IS COMMON AMONG WHEELCHAIR USERS  
SHORTLY AFTER THEIR SPINAL CORD INJURY (SCI).  
MARISKA MORRIS LEARNS MORE ABOUT THE SIGNS,  
TREATMENT AND PREVENTION







he prevalence of depression and anxiety among people who have suffered an SCI is between 20 to 45 percent, notes Dr Lissele Botha, who is based at Life Riverfield Lodge in Fourways, Gauteng. This is simply because patients who now depend on a wheelchair for mobility will experience a period of loss. For many wheelchair users, this loss of independence is aggravated by feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially during prolonged periods in hospital.

Head social worker at Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre Tertia McKee says: "From my experience, it appears that depression is more prevalent as of three months or more post-injury. If the patient is going to experience depression, more often than not it occurs six to 12 months after discharge from rehab."

She adds that this is when the reality of the situation sets in and the patient receives less attention from the household. Patients, who might have held onto hope that they would walk again, start to lose that hope around this time. It can also exhaust a new wheelchair user's emotional reserves to try to navigate an environment that is not wheelchair accessible.

For many wheelchair users in South Africa, all these feelings are aggravated by their socio-economic situation. Clinical psychologist Antoinette Oakes from Western Cape Rehabilitation points out: "Wheelchair users, specifically those dependent on the government health system, often experience many challenges."

"They are often from poor socio-economic backgrounds and return to areas with poor infrastructure, which are poorly resourced. For instance, they may struggle to find employment after becoming wheelchair users or are unable to use public transport to get to work."

A 2011 census by Stats SA showed that people with disabilities were often unemployed, struggling with lower income and decreased access to housing and other basic services. All this could contribute to the patient's feelings of low self-worth and hopelessness.

Clinical psychologist Christopher Langsefeld, of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), notes: "Wheelchair users often lack the motivation to develop a meaningful outlook of their condition."

Luckily, like most diseases known to man, depression can be managed and cured. Oakes points out: "Depression is a medical disorder and therefore it is important to seek professional help if you are experiencing symptoms. Depression is managed through a combination of medication, therapy or counselling, and lifestyle management, for example exercise and healthy eating."

"Most people respond well to treatment using a multidisciplinary approach, especially if they have good social support. It is important to seek support from family and friends, and try to be open about how you are feeling. Others may never fully understand the experience of being a wheelchair user but family and friends are often very willing to try to understand and do what they can to support the individual," she adds.

Langsefeld supports this view.

"Support groups can be helpful as they allow one to see that they are not alone in their suffering and it allows an opportunity for one to talk about and express their pain to people who can relate," he says. The SADAG frequently hosts discussion forums on Facebook, during which a medical profession answers questions about depression and anxiety.

Other lifestyle changes that can also assist in managing depression are keeping a diary, following a healthy routine and trying something new.

"If you are unable to do something new, then try something as simple as a regular exercise routine. Exercise releases endorphins which can assist with feeling down, hopeless and helpless," says Langsefeld. This is especially true for wheelchair users.

"Adequate nutrition and exercise is of the utmost importance. Multiple studies have been conducted to assess the psychological state of wheelchair users who compete in sports, compared to those who don't, and the results indicate a significant difference between the two groups. Users who participate in sports have a lower incidence of depression and anxiety and show increased self-esteem," Botha says.

She adds that it's important to consider the unique physical challenges that wheelchair users face, such as pressure sores: "Physical deterioration or complications may impact on a patient's psychological wellbeing, and therefore this needs to be managed too. The prevention and treatment of complications include pressure care, catheter care, wound care and pain management."

While depression can be managed with professional assistance, the best approach is still prevention. "Due to the high probability of depression and anxiety among wheelchair users," she says, "it is best to follow a proactive approach. Patients and their support systems need to be educated about the warning signs and a plan should be in place in the event of diagnosis."


It is useful to monitor sleeping patterns, eating habits, energy levels, concentration and interest in activities. This can assist in identifying depression as early as possible so that treatment can be sought.

"Consult a doctor if there's a noticeable disturbance in any of these aspects. The most important measure is to apply early diagnosis and intervention practices and to include the patient's support structure," Botha says.

Other preventive measures, as suggested by Langsefeld, include these:

- Live a healthy and active lifestyle
- Have a confidant to talk to in difficult situations
- Take care of yourself by reducing stress and pressure.

"Taking regular 'time-out' moments to breathe and reflect on your situation is a must. In addition, finding enjoyable activities or hobbies to destress and declutter your mind on a regular basis is invaluable," Langsefeld concludes.

The SADAG can be contacted on its helpline at 0800 21 22 23, on Facebook at The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, via Twitter with the tag @TheSADAG, or its website [www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org). 



## INJURED, NOT IMPAIRED

Irene Fischer was in a horrific car accident in 2009, which caused severe damage to her brain. In her memoir, *I Am Still Here*, Fischer takes the readers on her journey through recovery, sharing her most intimate thoughts on her condition, human nature and the way people refer to brain injury survivors.

Written with honesty and openness, the novel shares intimate photographs, email correspondence and even snippets from her sister's diary written during the first few months after the accident. She provides insights into her post-accident life – learning how to walk, talk and write – as well as the response of her family.

*I Am Still Here* is an unashamed telling of Fischer's curiosity about her condition, her struggle with depression and her frustration with people who don't understand severe trauma to the brain. Her determination and candour will leave you laughing, crying and inspired. It should definitely be on your list of books to read in 2018.

Read more about Fischer and her novel at <http://www.mylifewithabrokenbrain.co.za>.



## THE (IM)POSSIBLE DREAM?

What if you spent your entire life training for one special moment only to see that moment disappear in a heartbeat? Joey Evans was passionate about riding a motorbike from a very young age. He had overcome numerous obstacles (including a horrific accident which involved 10 years of recovery) to participate in his one big moment – the 2017 Dakar Rally.

However, during the intense race, his motorbike was crushed and so were his hopes of finishing. *From Para to Dakar* is Evans's journey from a little boy on his BMX to a champion motorcyclist, racing to complete one of the toughest sporting events in the motorbike world.

The novel reads more like a work of fiction than a biography: its descriptions are so evocative that you'll feel as if you yourself were standing next to the dusty road, looking down at your crushed motorbike and shattered dreams. You don't need to be a fan of motorbikes to relish *From Para to Dakar* – put it on your bedside table or Christmas list.

## BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR IRENE FISCHER SHARES HER STORY

ROLLING INSPIRATION sat down with author Irene Fischer to discuss her memoir *I Am Still Here*, which tells the story of her car accident in 2009 that caused extensive damage to her brain, and her journey through rehabilitation. The book recounts her feeling and thoughts about herself, human nature and self-motivation after her accident.

### Why did you decide to write a memoir?

There are two reasons. The first was that in South Africa there is very little info readily available concerning traumatic brain injury (TBI) and its possible consequences. I heard from my family how much they struggled to find any information, any hope, any encouragement after I sustained a TBI.

The second reason is that there is a massive information deficit regarding brain injury, and most people don't know how to act around me or treat me. I decided the best way to change this is by educating as much as I can. US poet and author Maya Angelou said it brilliantly: "The need for change bulldozed a road down the centre of my mind."

### What was some of the challenges of writing the book?

It took me four years mainly because I have never written a book and no-one can tell you how to do it. There is no formula. Secondly, I wanted my book to be informative and factual as well as to tell the emotional part of my journey. I had to do extensive research by asking questions of my various therapists, neurosurgeon, psychologist and psychiatrist.


### You include lots of personal items, such as photographs, email correspondence and excerpts from your sister's diary. Why did you put these in?

I wanted my book to be personal, to hit home. I used the diary my sister kept during my stay in hospital because it told part of my story that I couldn't tell due to amnesia. I thought it was very important to show how it affected one of the people dearest to me. A picture tells a thousand words and I think the photos said much more than I ever could. The email correspondence is to make my book multidimensional by offering the opinion of others, also to lend it more credibility.

### The cover is very beautiful and interesting. Did you decide on the cover for a particular reason?

Yes, because I am a hemiplegic half my face is kind of blotted out. That is to tickle people's curiosity, because hemiplegia is relatively unknown, unlike paraplegia and quadriplegia, which are almost household terms. Hemiplegia is when one half (hemisphere) of a person's body is either completely paralysed or weaker than the other half of the body. I tried to hint towards that with this cover.

### Would you ever consider writing another book?

Yip! But this book would be a work of fiction, not nonfiction, because I feel I've now told all I can to create a healthy platform for compassion, consideration and respect for all disabled persons. 





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## DON'T MISS OUT

Be sure to diarise these important upcoming events

### 13 - 21 JANUARY SCUBA DIVING TRAINING

Handicapped Scuba Association South Africa is holding  
scuba training sessions on January 13, 14, 20 and 21

### 17 MARCH BALL FOR ALL

Put on your dancing shoes and join the ballroom dance for  
wheelchair users hosted at the Voortrekker Hall in Pretoria.

### 6 MAY WINGS FOR LIFE WORLD RUN

Join runners from across the world. Entry fees go to the  
Wings for Life Foundation to research treatment for SCI  
and paraplegia.

### 21 - 25 MAY WFOT CONGRESS

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists  
Congress will be held in Cape Town.

### TBA SABAT POWER WHEELCHAIR RACE

QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA)'s annual  
Power Wheelchair Race in association with Sabat Batteries  
will once again take place in 2018.

### TBA QUADS4QUADS

The annual Quads4Quads journey from Durban to  
Johannesburg to raise funds for QASA will take place  
later in 2018.

### 16 - 26 AUGUST IWBF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The International Wheelchair Basketball Federation  
World Championship will take place in Hamburg,  
Germany.

### 5 SEPTEMBER WORLD SCI DAY

Join people around the globe in raising awareness  
about SCI on World Spinal Cord Injury Day.

### 7 SEPTEMBER CASUAL DAY

Buy a Casual Day sticker to raise funds for people with  
disabilities as well as raise awareness of the inclusion of  
people with disabilities into communities.

# THE QUEST FOR TRUE LOVE

**MANY OF US DESIRE A LONG-LASTING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP, BUT YOU DON'T NEED A PARTNER IN LIFE TO BE COMPLETE**

**L**ove is one of the most profound emotions known to human beings. There are many kinds of love, but, for most of us, it finds expression through a romantic relationship with a compatible partner. For some people, a romantic relationship is the most meaningful part of life and provides them with deep fulfilment.

In my experience, though, the ability to have a healthy, long-lasting relationship is not guaranteed. And I have observed that although personal relationships seem to be the first priority for many of us, hunting for love does not always attract the right partner. Why should this be? Perhaps it's because our reasons for wanting to love and be loved may be unclear, or because we idealise love as the answer to everything. We tend to think: "If only I had someone who loved me, my life would be so much better." That isn't the way it works.

It's a pity that people still tend to rely on the concept of "you complete me" – that without that special person you



are not in fact complete. When you learn to love yourself, flaws and all, you become aware that you are complete just as you are. We're made in the image of God, who never relied on another person to make Him complete.

Love yourself and spread the love this festive season. 



Emilie Olifant is a disability activist, entrepreneur and motivational speaker. She is the director of the Emilie Olifant Foundation, an organisation that strives to address socio-economic issues experienced by people with disabilities.  
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