

ROLLING INSPIRATION

The leading magazine for people with mobility impairments

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The Legend of Achillies

A patient that won't be forgotten

Ageing not for *sissies*

Proactive steps that can help

Sun, sand and waves

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Parents need a break too

Relieving pressure

Tips to manage pressure sores

Ready, Aim ... Shoot

Adaptive shooting for sport

Finding the balance

Relationship vs Caregiving





ADAPTIVE SPORTS FUND

NO LIMITS. JUST LIFE!



OUR VISION: is to encourage people with disabilities to have equal opportunities to participate in sports and physical activity, and where their abilities are celebrated and embraced by all members of the sports community.



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Essential rights for a better life

Knowing and exercising your rights as a person with a disability is essential to achieving a better quality of life

Recently, through our work in the North West and Free State provinces, we met many individuals who are actively pursuing opportunities for a better future despite numerous challenges. These experiences highlighted the critical role that rights play in protecting wellbeing, fostering independence, and ensuring full participation in society.

ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE

We often met individuals who struggled with access to healthcare due to physical barriers, a lack of disability awareness among healthcare staff, or limited resources. Such obstacles can discourage people from seeking essential care. Knowing your rights empowers you to advocate for the accommodations you need.

The National Health Act mandates that all healthcare providers treat patients with

fairness, respect and without discrimination, which includes providing accessible facilities, assistive devices and trained professionals.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Through our outreach work, we encountered individuals who faced unjust treatment, especially in accessing services or finding employment. Access to education and employment is crucial for independence, financial stability and personal growth.

Employers, service providers, and educational institutions are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations, whether that means adjusting a workspace, making facilities accessible, or offering materials in alternative formats.

ACCESSING PUBLIC SPACES

You don't have to travel far from home to experience instances where public spaces

are not fully accessible, limiting individuals' freedom to participate in everyday activities. This despite the laws requiring accessible spaces and transport.

ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION

Knowing your rights and speaking up can encourage change that improves your life and the lives of others. When more individuals exercise their rights, authorities are more likely to take accessibility seriously.

When you connect with advocacy groups, you gain a network of support and a voice to amplify your concerns. These groups push for policy changes that improve accessibility, provide resources, and expand opportunities for people with disabilities.

QASA is dedicated to supporting you in understanding and asserting your rights, providing resources, and offering a platform for addressing critical issues. By sharing experiences, supporting each other, and advocating for change, you contribute to a more inclusive society for everyone.

EMPOWER YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Reflecting on my experiences, it's clear that knowing and exercising your rights can significantly improve your quality of life. Being aware of your rights empowers you to seek support, demand accountability, and drive change. Each time you assert your rights, you improve your own situation but also help shape a more inclusive society.

QASA supports you in every aspect of this journey, providing guidance, resources, and a community of allies. Together, by exercising our rights and standing up for a fairer, more accessible world, we can build a better future for all. 

About The Author

Richard Barron serves as the General Manager of QASA. His journey began as a member, where he actively engaged with the organisation's empowerment programmes. Over the years, he transitioned to serving on the board before assuming the role of General Manager. Get in touch: gm@qasa.co.za

SFF key partner in mobilising members



The Strategic Fuel Fund (**SFF**) has been a key strategic partner for QASA when it comes to donating mobility aids to its members. In October, SFF and QASA along with one of the beneficiaries, Redewaan, met to share formal feedback on what the partnership has meant. SFF presented QASA with a plaque to commemorate the partnership.

Most recently, a new power wheelchair was donated to Charles Ramaru, which he says will enable him to travel to Polokwane for his internship. In his letter to QASA, he shares: "Your unwavering support has made a significant difference in my life. The wheelchair has exceeded my expectations."

A big thank you to SFF for their continued commitment and support. 



TOP: SFF management, QASA General Manager Richard Barron and beneficiary Redewaan.

ABOVE: Charles Ramaru with his new wheelchair.

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The legend of Achillies

Born with only three feet, one rhino became a patient Heinrich Grimsehl will never forget

In 2019, a legend was born when Achillies, the rhino, opened his eyes for the first time. There was only one problem. In the womb something went wrong and he only had three full-formed legs. The vet recommended that his life be ended.

Fortunately, Claudia Androne and Div Lambrecht had a different idea. For them this little animal's life was too valuable to let go, so they decided to adopt the little guy. I think it is safe to say that Claudia and Div could be called Achillies's mom and dad.

Claudia is most probably the world's most knowledgeable baby rhino orphan expert along with Div with his military background assigned to protect the rhinos on this farm. The baby rhino had quite the mom and the dad to fight for his life!

From a young age, Achillies had a prosthesis. Our paths crossed in June 2021 for the first time. Achillies was two and a half years old. We casted him for our first prosthesis because he outgrew his previous limb, and maintenance was becoming a problem.

I do recall meeting him for the first time out in an open camp. His current prosthesis was not usable anymore and he limped sadly forward with his nose in the dust so

MAIN PHOTO: Achillies the rhino will always be a memorable patient for Heinrich Grimsehl.



ABOVE: Achillies was born with only three feet.

LEFT: His ability to move around greatly impacted his mood.

that he could keep his balance on three legs. Div mentioned that it was sad to see him this way. He said that "Achillies looked depressed".

I had little understanding of the magnitude of the project that we embarked on. I also didn't realise the big lesson mother nature was about to teach us all.

It was the middle of Covid and we had to treat Achillies. We travelled with our medical permits. To go to the farm and get away from Covid hospitals with very sick patients did us the world of good. Therapy for the medical practitioners.

We quickly learned that Achillies has a personality of his own and a heart of gold. His mindset was very much depended on his mobility and the condition of his stump and his prosthesis.

During the next three years, we witnessed him getting depressed when losing



ABOVE: Div Lambrecht (photographed) and Claudia Andrione decided to raise Achillies, which started with getting him a prosthesis.

LEFT ABOVE: Achillies with his protective sister Noelle at the rhino orphanage.

LEFT BOTTOM: The staff on the rhino farm were always helpful, keen and positive.

mobility but then returning to health and happiness when things went well. Just like a child.

Another remarkable bond was the one between Achillies and his sister Noelle. In the rhino orphanage, babies get a buddy so that they don't get too attached to humans.

Noelle's love for her brother was a wonder of nature. She cared and looked after him like a mother and a bodyguard because she knew he had a disability.

Especially during the times he struggled, she would be overprotective, and hell would break loose if she thought he was being harmed. We learned that the hard way with quite a few bruises between us!





ABOVE: For Achillies's prosthesis, a cast was made.

LEFT: Achillies had several prosthesis over the years as he grew.

These big kind-hearted animals with the persona of big babies stirs compassion in your heart and mind, and it changes your perception of what you thought you knew about rhinos forever.

They are playful, happy, sad, depressed, mischievous, scared, protective and brave, and as you get to know them better, you can recognise the differences in their personalities.

Except for a few pressure sores usually obtained when not wearing the prosthetic limb, his treatment went well.

The staff on the rhino farm were always helpful, keen and positive with advice and information flowing freely. Looking after a three-legged rhino is an expensive and time-consuming job.

Donning and doffing of his prosthesis had to happen every single day, sometimes more than once. Not to mention the extensive effort of healing stump wounds.



ABOVE LEFT: One of Achillies's prosthesis.

ABOVE RIGHT: With his prosthesis, Achillies had a lot more energy.

When he decided to take a mud bath things sometimes went south, like walking around his large camp looking for where he left his leg!

On 27 November 2023, the call came that Achillies's life will be ended the very next day. His health declined radically within a few weeks. The veterinarian and his carers made this final very hard decision.

Achillies became just too heavy for his situation and the period that he had to spend not wearing the prosthesis (because you cannot wear prosthesis 24/7) was increasingly difficult.

Furthermore, his hips and lower back took its toll to the point where any movement was just too difficult and painful, and the big animal had very little strength left to manage his disability.

It was one of the saddest days in our practice. Our normal chatty reception and fitting rooms

were quiet for the rest of the day. We were shocked because giving up on a patient is not part of our frame of reference.

The staff of the rhino farm explained the situation to us clearly and we could understand their decision. We never knew that the veterinarian only predicted a three-year life span.

Achillies became just too heavy for his situation.

With love and sheer determination from everybody involved, including Achillies, we manage to prolong his life to one month short of five years.

To quote a poem by Dylan Thomas: "Do not go gentle into that good night ... Rage, rage against the dying of the light." **R**

About The Author

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Tackling our loss of normal

Ageing with a disability is not for *sissies*, but being proactive can help make the best of this time



As we grow older, we tend to share some common traits. Our hairlines recede or our hair goes underground only to pop out of our ears and noses. One thing we all share is that our hair turns into various shades of silver. Wheelchair users become Silver Rollers.

(How about a t-shirt, "Silver Roller", with a cartoon of an *ou-toppie* in a chair? On the back, a message to the able-bodied *slap-gats* of life: "If I can do it, so can you".)

Jokes aside, for people with mobility impairments the well-known saying "Growing old is not for *sissies*" can be accentuated by adding "most definitely not for *sissies*".

For those of us who suffered a spinal cord injury, the new normal that we settled into starts to change. Yesterday's norms fade and next year's norms become unpredictable.

For those of us with progressive disabling disorders, shifting norms is our expectation

but, like toilet rolls, as we near the end, our norms run out faster... (Please bear with another joke to soften a serious, life-changing reality.)

Life with a mobility impairment teaches us to be patient and instils a resilience that helps us to adapt and adjust to our new norms. But unfortunately for many, myself included, training in savvy is sorely lacking.

We do not look after ourselves. We use our disabilities as an excuse to indulge. "Eating is one of the few remaining joys of life, so why not?" and "Exercise is such a schlep and it doesn't take away my disability, so why bother?"

We grow fat and flabby while we enjoy what there is left for us to enjoy. Until age creeps up on us and we start to taste the lemons of our sloth...

What to do? Here are a few pointers. Not only for the elderly! The sooner we start, the better.



MAIN PHOTO, LEFT TOP AND BOTTOM: Strengthening you back, shoulders and core muscles through resistance exercises help mitigate the effects of ageing.

REASON FOR BEING

Find yourself a reason for wanting to get up in the morning. Anything, whatever grabs you. Don't give up on life. You have value. Just find it. Don't just regress into nothingness, Become someone of value.

Remember, we are human beings not human doings. We are defined by who we are more so than by what we do. Even if your disability limits your abilities, become a being of value.

DRINK MORE (WATER)

Water, not beer and certainly not fizzy cooldrinks. Drinking lots of water helps the kidneys to flush out all the bodily sewerage floating around in your blood. It also helps to reduce the swelling of **sausage feet**.

EAT LESS

Most of the food we eat is used for energy to keep the body and brain going. All excess food is converted into fat. If half or three quarters of your body is paralysed, your body uses less energy. Thus, more food is converted into fat.

See a dietician to plan an appropriate diet. Crash diets invariably don't work as your brain does not have time to adjust. Even if you lost a lot of weight quickly, your brain would make sure that you regain the lost weight just as quickly.

EXERCISE

If any part of your body is still functional, get an exercise programme from a Biokinetics. If you are able to roll yourself, shoulder care is of the utmost importance, followed by spinal, back and abdominal muscle care as these provide the core stability that allow your shoulders and arms to function optimally.

While maintaining strength is important, vertebral and shoulder joint stability must be your focus point. A shoulder rotator cuff injury could easily turn a paraplegic into a functional quadriplegic. Ask your therapist

for joint-stabiliser muscle exercises. Rather do more repetitions with lighter weights or elastic bands than trying to be young and ego-driven in your exercises.

Use smooth and slow movements. Jerking weights or bands for quick-lifts places tremendous strain on your aging tendon attachments and can easily land you with a tennis or golfer's elbow or a torn rotator cuff. (I write from personal experience. In my madness, I managed to suffer from them all over time.) Don't try to develop your own training programme, get yourself assessed and follow a professionally compiled exercise programme.

STRETCHES

Sitting in a wheelchair tends to cause haunching of our shoulders and our heads tend to slide down our chests. This results in our necks sitting in front of our shoulders rather than on top. If you don't believe me, look at your side profile in a mirror. I guarantee that you will be appalled at the sight. I certainly was...

On a more serious note, this posture can pinch the nerves that work your arms and hands, causing stiffness, pins and needles and loss of function. Rather than running to a Neurosurgeon, ask your therapist for stretching exercises to un-haunch your shoulders.

For my hunch, I do a John Travolta (*Saturday Night Fever*) straight arm stretch-swing from my knee to behind my ear; as well as a reverse-Alan-Donald bowling action, front to back straight arm reverse bowling action. For better alignment, I lie on my back looking straight ahead. I then push my head back against the pillow and hold it for 10 seconds with 15 repeats. (Don't look up.)

If I do these basic stretches, my arms are fine. If I stop them, my symptoms come back. So, every morning first thing, I do my stretches.

PASSIVE MOVEMENTS

For the part of your body that cannot exercise, passive movements by your carer are essential, especially when we grow older. Without passive movements you could end

up in a state of pre-mortem rigor mortis, which loosely translates as unmanageable stiff joints while still alive. Talk to your Biotherapist about a programme that will suit your needs.

PRACTICE ROUTINE FUNCTIONS

Short and to the point, if you find that you are starting to struggle with things that previously came naturally, make a point of practicing that movement to activate the brain-limb connection.

If this does not work, get utensils that will help: a tool to help with shirt buttons; a special fork or spoon to get food into your mouth. Don't be proud, be proactive.

SKIN AND NAIL CARE

As we grow older our skins become thinner and friable. A dry skin even more so. This makes us more susceptible to pressure sores and infections. Our nails become brittle and often thicken, making nail care difficult. Regular application of moisturising creams to our skins become important as does frequent nail care, including (if possible) periodic visits to a podiatrist.

EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN

Forgetting things does not necessarily mean dementia. As we grow older, we tend to forget things. So, exercise your brains. I hate Sudoku and word puzzles, but I like woodwork and planning a new project; designing and measuring, figuring out what lengths and sizes of wood is needed and how to put everything together. It keeps my mind active.

When everything comes together after fixing a few errors and the project is successful, the pleasure of accomplishment keeps my brain (relatively) sharp. (Writing articles like this one also helps.)

BE A FRIEND TO SOMEONE

Mobility impairment tends to make us lonely. Particularly so after retirement because we lose out on work-related socialisation. People are hesitant to invite us over because their homes are not wheelchair friendly and using their bathroom could be problematic.

Waiting for someone to strike up a friendship with us usually gets us nowhere. So, reach out actively. If you come across someone that you feel you can connect with, make a date for coffee at an accessible coffee shop. As the friendship grows, invite them over.

Be upbeat and positive in your relationships, it is uplifting to both and promotes the relationship. Try not to burden others with your own hardship, but at the same time be empathetic when needed. Having a relationship built on friendship, trust and empathy with one another enriches our lives.

MAKE TIME TO MEDITATE

Be sure to make place for me-time. Music, a good book or just stepping out of yourself and taking stock of your circumstances and emotions. Plan for your future instead of worrying about it. Especially so when you had a "three o'clock in the morning" experience where the whirlpool of your thoughts and emotions turns into an uncontrollable hurricane.

Stepping out of yourself and taking stock usually brings perspective and mountains return to being molehills. But, if the hurricane settles into a reality of a tropical storm, at least it will allow you to weigh up your options.

JUST A LAST WORD

I wrote this article for my seventy-one-year-old self, as a survival toolkit, because let's face it, as we get on in life, living gets tougher by the month as previous norms slip by the wayside...

I hope you find value in reading this. My wish for you is to maintain a sense of self-directed humour, build up a zest for life. R

About The Author

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. Get in touch: yorslo@icloud.com



ABOVE: Exercise in your old age is important, but it is recommended to follow a programme put together by a Biokinetics therapist to ensure it is appropriate.



Accessibility in Algarve



After a recent trip to Portugal, Mandy Latimore shares her tips for visiting the country and the Algarve

After travelling around Europe to visit family and friends, I'm sharing my experience of Portugal both good and bad.

FLYING IN

You are not able to fly directly into Portugal from South Africa. There are various options that have different conditions with both price and facilities.

I chose to fly via Amsterdam into Faro, Portugal, as I was staying on the Algarve. The flight to Amsterdam was nine hours. There was a six hour lay-over with the second leg to Faro only two hours. The total travel time is about 24 hours all in all.

Both Lisbon and Faro are international airports, so there are accessible facilities within the airports. I needed assistance to get my suitcase from the airport into a vehicle

and from the vehicle into the airport. It is best to have someone park and meet you inside or take you inside.

Always confirm that your assistance is booked on your air ticket. There are desks within the airports that assist passengers who require assistance and there are also trained staff to assist.

GETTING AROUND

There is a lack of wheelchair accessible taxis or Ubers, however, there are some taxis that are specially adapted in the main cities. There are also transport companies that will do airport transfers and tour companies that offer sightseeing tours in adapted vehicles.

The national bus service is not that accessible, however, the local buses in the cities are accessible. There is a new Alfa Pendular intercity bus that is accessible



MAIN PHOTO: Mandy Latimore visited Algarve, Portugal, to find that accessibility in the city varies.

TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Aside from a few adapted taxis in the main cities, there is still a lack of accessible transport in Portugal.

ABOVE: The cobbed streets and pavements with calcada pavers may leave you shaken and stirred.

and the train service guarantees access for passengers with disabilities.

The SIM service provide support for customers with special needs, but this requires prior booking for persons using mobility devices and is subject to the stations on their list that are accessible. The train from Lisbon to the Algarve takes about two hours – the same as driving the distance.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING

There are plenty of accessible parking bays throughout the country, at most beaches and within the city. However, you need the standardised European blue badge, so if you are a South African, you can't legally park in these bays.

PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

The one thing that is very difficult to manage is the cobbled streets in the smaller towns. The pavements have calcada pavers, which leave you “stirred and shaken”.





ABOVE AND LEFT: Portugal has wonderful sites from medieval castles to cobblestone villages.

Not all pavements have curb cuts that line up, so, you could get off the pavement and cross the road only to find a curb without a cut. This would mean travelling in the road till the next curb cut.

Portugal is very hilly, so most towns and cities have quite steep roads. It is much easier to travel with someone and have a motorised mobility aid.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Not all shops are accessible, especially those in the older buildings. The newer shopping centres all have facilities for persons with disabilities.

THE ALGARVE

This region has really made strides in improving accessibility with accessible features like curb cuts, ramps, and accessible beaches with walkways onto the beach. There are beach wheelchairs for hire and accessible toilets.

You must ensure that there are staff available to open these as they are usually locked. Enquire before you go to the beach and now need to use the loo urgently!



PLACES OF INTEREST

Portugal has wonderful historical sites from medieval castles to cobblestone villages. There is fabulous scenery and excellent beaches, and the food and wines are a culinary delight.

TOURS AND ACTIVITIES

Use well-established websites that offer specific information on which tours and activities are accessible to your specific needs. I find [Get Your Guide](#) an extremely helpful site as they explain each tour and activity, and how accessible it is. Other sites for information on accessible travel include [Disabled Accessible Travel](#), [Wheelchair Travel](#) and [Visit Algarve](#).

In order to enjoy this fascinating part of Europe my advice is: “*Always check first!*” Do your research before leaving home. Contact the venues, hotels and places of interest before the visit to ensure that they actually can cater to your needs.

Always be prepared to compromise so that you can get to experience the sights and buildings that you want to see. Happy Travels! 

About The Author

Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access. Get in touch: mandy@noveltravel.co.za



ABOVE: Portugal has some beautiful, accessible beaches. There are even beach wheelchairs that enable you to go onto the beach and into the water.

Beach wheelchairs



Sun, sand and waves this summer

Enjoy the water and waves with the beach wheelchairs available at selected beaches across South Africa

There is nothing quite like a beach day on the sand with crashing waves and a salty breeze under a baking sun. Getting onto the beach, particularly when there is loose sand, can be a challenge or completely impossible for people with mobility impairments or the elderly, especially when using a traditional wheelchair.

Fortunately, there are several beaches across South Africa that have beach wheelchairs that are specifically made for going onto the sand. Some can even be taken into the water.

In most cases, these chairs are free to use and don't require any booking. With most, you simply need to enquire at a restaurant or with the lifeguards on duty. Many of the chairs can't be removed from the beach and you might be restricted to using the chair with the lifeguard's supervision.

This is beneficial as the lifeguards can take you into the water and ensure your safety while in the waves. We've compiled a list of some of the beaches that have beach wheelchairs available. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list. We will continue to add to the list as we learn of more or new chairs available.

CAPE VIDAL BEACH (ST LUCIA)

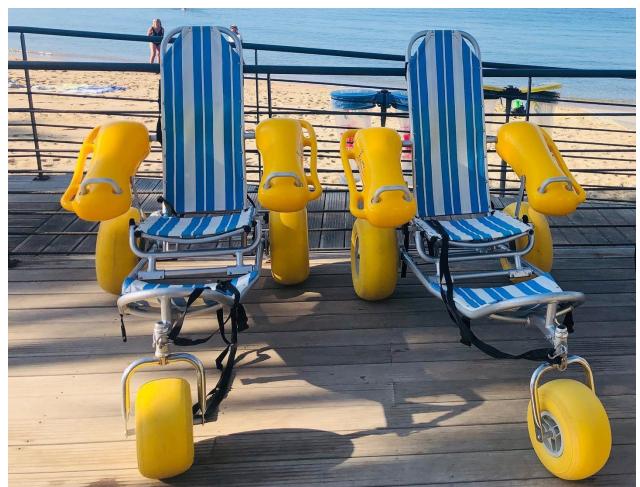
Bushbaby Safaris Zululand, along with The Little Bushbaby Company, have beach wheelchairs available to rent. These chairs can be taken into the ocean. Pre-booking is essential. The chair can be collected or delivered to your accommodation in St Lucia.

It is R475 per day to rent the chair for one to three days, and R425 per day if you rent the chair for four or more days. You can contact Larni on 060 615 2746 or Katie on 076 585 2619, or send an e-mail to beachwheels@bushbabysafaris.co.za to book the beach wheelchairs.

AMANZIMTOTI (DURBAN)

Wheels on Waves has made a beach wheelchair available at Amanzimtoti Beach. The chair is free to use and available at the lifeguards during official lifeguard hours.

If you need assistance or would like to enquire further, you can reach out to Wesley from Wheels on Wave at 082 802 1349 or Reece from Rolling with Reece at 064 880 0834.



MAIN PHOTO: Patrick Saayman making use of the beach wheelchair available in Mossel Bay.

ABOVE: Floating beach wheelchairs are available at Cape Vidal Beach in St Lucia.

SOUTHBROOM

There is a beach wheelchair available in Southbroom at the Granny Pools. The chair is free to use, aside from a small R100 deposit, and doesn't require booking.

The wheelchair is stored at the [Riptide restaurant](#) under lock and key. It can be collected during the restaurant operating hours, which is daily from 11 AM to midnight.

On paying your deposit, you will be given a key that allows you to collect the wheelchair. On returning the chair and key, you will receive your deposit back.

If you are planning on visiting another beach in the area, you can book a beach wheelchair at a daily rate. You can contact Anne at 082 896 7814 for more information or to book a chair.

HUMEWOOD BEACH (GQEBERHA)

A beach wheelchair is available for free at the lifeguard tower during official lifeguarding hours.

KINGS BEACH (GQEBERHA)

Only a few kilometres away from Humewood Beach, another beach wheelchair is available for free at the lifeguards during official lifeguarding hours. There is no booking required.

KABELJAUWS BEACH (JEFFREYS BAY)

The Quadriplegic and Paraplegic Charitable Trust of South Africa ([QPCTSA](#)) secured a beach wheelchair for Kabeljauws Beach. The chair is at the [PiliPili](#) restaurant, which is open from 8 AM till 9 PM daily. There is no booking required, however, you do need to complete a disclaimer form.

It is worth noting that the chair isn't fitted with buoyancy aids; therefore, it might not float when in deeper waters. Ideally, the chair should be used on the sand and shallow waters.

DOLPHIN BEACH (JEFFREYS BAY)

There is a municipal beach wheelchair available at the lifeguards at Dolphin Beach during official lifeguarding hours. There is no



ABOVE: There are beach wheelchairs available at Jeffreys Bay and Sedgefield thanks to the [QPCTSA](#).

fee or booking required, however, use of the chair is supervised by the lifeguards on duty.

MYOLI BEACH (SEDGEFIELD)

The [QPCTSA](#) also acquired a beach wheelchair for the Myoli Beach, which is stored with the Sedgefield branch of the [PiliPili](#) restaurant. Similar to the Jeffreys Bay chair, no booking is required and the chair is free to use.

Donations are welcomed as this will help with maintaining the chair. The restaurant is open from 8 AM till 10 PM daily. This chair is also better suited for the sanded areas or shallow waters.

SANTOS BEACH (MOSSEL BAY)

This pristine Blue Flag beach has a beach wheelchair available during the festive season (1 December 2024 till 31 January 2025). The chair is available at the lifeguards, but booking is encouraged.

"The Mossel Bay Municipality strives to make beach experiences accessible to persons with disabilities. For this purpose, a special beach chair has been obtained in 2022," the local municipality states.

"Members of the public wanting to use the beach chair are requested to make arrangements with the lifeguards on duty at Santos Beach. It is advisable to book the beach chair in advance, if possible. Enquiries can also be made to 044 606 5000 or send an email to admin@mosselbay.gov.za."

STRUIS BAY

A beach wheelchair is available at the offices of Dr Deon Venter. The chair is free to use although donations to help fund the upkeep of the chair are welcomed. The chair can be collected during official office hours, which is 8 AM to 5 PM from Monday to Thursday, 8 AM to 12 PM on Fridays and Saturdays with the offices closed on Sundays.

If you would like to make use of the chair outside office hours, you can make arrangements. While booking (during office hours) isn't required, it is encouraged. The team can be contacted on 028 435 7654 during office hours and on 081 042 2652 outside of official hours.

GROTTO BEACH (HERMANUS)

A municipality beach wheelchair is available at the lifeguards at Grotto Beach during official lifeguarding hours. There is no fee and no booking required. The chair can be used to swim in the ocean.



ABOVE: There are beach wheelchairs available at the lifeguards at Grotto Beach, Hermanus.

MUIZENBERG BEACH (CAPE TOWN)

There is a beach wheelchair available to use for free at the Muizenberg Beach. Visit the lifeguards during official lifeguard hours to enquire. This chair is adapted to go into the water. Please note that there are planned renovations for the Muizenberg beachfront that will start in February 2025 and carry on into 2026, which could impact beach access.

CONTINUED ACCESSIBILITY

While doing our research for this article, we spoke to several people to confirm the process of booking the chairs. We are grateful to everyone's contribution, particularly the individuals who have made it a personal mission to create better access for their community.

If you would like to secure a beach wheelchair for your area, you can look to the community of Hermanus as inspiration. Karin Coetzee, owner of [Disabled Travel](#) explains that the first chair was a joint effort of the community and municipality.

The community raised half of the funds, which the council then matched. It was so popular, that the municipality bought a second chair. With her personal experience in what accessibility truly entails, she notes: "All blue flag beaches should have a beach wheelchair."

"The blue flag beaches need to have an accessible bathroom. However, the point of going to the beach is getting onto the sand. An accessible bathroom is not enough to create an inclusive experience," Karin shares.

To our knowledge, floating beach wheelchairs are not manufactured in South Africa. They need to be imported. There are locally manufactured beach wheelchairs that can go onto the sand and into shallow water. The chairs secured by QPCTSA for Jeffreys Bay and Sedgefield were made by [Mobirider](#).

We would like to continue expanding our list of beach wheelchairs in South Africa. If you have any information on a chair in your area, please let us know at rollinginspiration@qasa.co.za. R



Mother of the Disability Rights Movement

Continuing his series on exceptional wheelchair-liberated persons in history,

George Louw explores the life of
Judy Heumann

Judith Ellen "Judy" Heumann was recognised internationally for her leadership and advocacy for the civic rights of persons with disability. Her work with various governments, NGOs and a variety of disability interest groups contributed significantly to the establishment of legislation and policies on the rights of persons with disability internationally.

Born in 1947 in the United States, Judy grew up in Brooklyn, New York. At the age of 18 months, she contracted polio and spent three months in an "iron lung" – a precursor to modern ventilators.

An iron lung was a rather horrible monstrosity that enclosed most of a person's body and varied the air pressure in the enclosed space to stimulate breathing. It assisted with breathing when muscle control is lost, as happened in persons with polio.

Her eventual recovery left Judy as a paraplegic toddler in a wheelchair facing a society without any formal rights for persons with disability – worse still, a society with many preconceived negative notions about disabilities.

DISCRIMINATED AGAINST FROM A YOUNG AGE

From early on, Judy and her family were exposed to discrimination. These experiences eventually culminated in the establishment of the Disability Rights Movement. She shares her journey in a [2016 Ted Talk](#) noting: "We had lots of neighbours in our Brooklyn neighbourhood. Some of them were really very helpful for my parents. Some of them were really afraid of contagion."

"They wouldn't even walk in front of our house. They would literally walk across the street. I think this was a time when my family



LEFT: Judy Heumann during her [2016 Ted Talk](#).

really began to realise what disability meant to some people: fear."

This fear or avoidance of disability was even encouraged by medical practitioners. A doctor advised Judy's parents to send her to live in an institution when she was two-years old.

"They could just go ahead with their lives and raise their kids and kind of be done with having to deal with all the disability-related things," Judy shares the advice given to her parents that they thankfully didn't take.

At age five, her parents tried to enrol her in a school nearby, but she was refused as the building wasn't accessible. The principal proposed sending a teacher to Judy's home as a solution.

"He told us not to worry, because the Board of Education in fact would send a teacher to my house," she recalls the incident. "They did. For a total of two and a half hours a week."

While Judy was able to eventually join a formal school at age nine, she shared her class with other students with disabilities, despite the school mainly educating students without disabilities. Some of these students were 21 years old.

"And then, after 21, they went to something called sheltered workshops with menial work and earning either nothing or below minimum wage. So I understood discrimination. My parents understood discrimination," Judy noted in her presentation.

BATTLES AS A YOUNG ADULT

High school would prove to be just as challenging to access. Fortunately, her parents had some experience advocating for their daughter. Rather than allowing their daughter back into home instruction, they challenged the Board of Education.

"None of the high schools in New York City – in the entire city – were wheelchair accessible

... So, my parents banded together with other parents. They went to the Board of Education, and they demanded that the Board make some of the high schools accessible."

"And they did! So, I and many others were finally able to go to high school, a regular high school, and take regular classes," Judy shared.

"I was learning more and more about what discrimination was, and equally important, I was learning that I needed to become my own advocate."

Judy enrolled in the Long Island University to qualify as a teacher. When it was time to get her licence, she had to take a written, oral and medical exam.

"At the time, all three of those exams were given in completely inaccessible buildings, so I had friends who carried me up and down the steps for these exams," she laughingly remembered.

She passed her written and oral exam, but the medical exam proved a challenge. She was ultimately denied her licence because she couldn't walk. Fortunately, Judy didn't give up.

"This is a really important time in my life, because it would be the first time that I really would be challenging the system, and although I was working with a lot of other friends who had disabilities who were encouraging me to move forward with this, it was nonetheless quite frightening," she recalls.

She approached a journalist friend who wrote an article about what happened. Soon after, the *New York Times* did an editorial piece in support of her getting her licence.

The same day, an attorney contacted her for an interview on civil rights for a book he was writing. By the end of their discussion, he had agreed to represent Judy in her case against the Board of Education. They won the case, and some months later Judy found a job and could finally start teaching.

ACTIVISM IN ACTION

Due to the press coverage of her lawsuit against the Department of Education, Judy received many letters from persons with disabilities sharing their own experiences of discrimination because of their disabilities.

"I was learning as my friends were, and people I didn't know around the country, that we had to be our own advocates, that we needed to fight back people's view that if you had a disability, you needed to be cured, that equality was not part of the equation," Judy reflects.

“

I was learning ... that we had to be our own advocates.

—

"We were learning from the Civil Rights Movement and from the Women's Rights Movement. And what was born is what we call today the Disability Rights Movement."

The organisation focused on securing protection for persons with disabilities under civil rights laws, through political protest. Two early versions of a Rehabilitation Act were vetoed by President Richard Nixon in October 1972 and again in March 1973.

The movement retaliated with, among other actions, a sit-in in New York City, protesting one of the vetoes. Led by Judy, 80 activists staged this sit-in on Madison Avenue, stopping traffic. Eventually the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was promulgated, with emphasis on the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

She continued her life as an advocate for disability rights, influencing many policies and legislations and organising protest actions such as the sit-in of 1977 when the United States Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare refused to sign meaningful regulations.

Efforts by government officials to terminate the action merely resulted in various organisations and individuals stepping up in support by providing meals and moral support. This became the longest sit-in in a federal building with 125 to 150 people sitting it out for 28 days until eventually the required regulations were signed in April of 1977.

The work of the movement is beautifully documented in the *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* documentary available on Netflix.

Judy was asked to move to California to work for the Centre for Independent Living, where she served as deputy director from 1975 to 1982.

She was an early proponent of the Independent Living Movement and was responsible for the implementation of federal legislation for programmes in special education, disability research, vocational rehabilitation, and independent living, serving more than eight million youth and adults with disabilities.

For the rest of her active life Judy co-founded the World Institute on Disability, served in the Department of Disability Services in Washington, and served under the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.

From 2002 to 2006, Judy served as the World Bank's first advisor on disability and development. She served as special advisor in various capacities.

She wrote a book in 2020, *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*, and she started a podcast in 2021, *The Heumann Perspective*, where she spoke with change-makers with disabilities and their allies.

Judy married Jorge Pineda in 1992. They lived in Washington. She passed away there on March 4, 2023, at age 75. She was a truly remarkable woman who opened new frontiers for the disability community. Rest in peace Judy after a life well lived. R



Economic growth potential to boost employment



Positive economic indicators could potentially lead to better employment opportunities for people with disabilities through remote work

The South African economy is showing promising signs of recovery and growth with increased GDP, employment rates and rising investor confidence. This holds significant potential for various demographics, including persons with disabilities, in the remote work sector.

To be adequately equipped for remote work, several key tools and resources are needed:

- Reliable internet connection, which is high-speed and stable.
- Appropriate hardware, including a computer or laptop, and specialised equipment such as an adaptive keyboard or voice recognition software.
- Software and applications such as Microsoft Office Suite.
- Ergonomic workspace, which can include an adjustable desk and proper lighting to enhance productivity and reduce physical strain.

Along with the right equipment, persons with disabilities who work from home or started their own business would benefit from support such as:

- Access to training programmes that focus on digital literacy, business management, and skills relevant to their field.
- Grants, loans, and subsidies can help cover the costs of necessary equipment

and provide a financial cushion during the initial stages of a business.

- Connecting with mentors who have experience in remote work or entrepreneurship can provide valuable guidance and support while networking opportunities can also help in building professional relationships.
- Assistance with understanding and navigating legal requirements, such as business registration, tax obligations, and compliance is crucial.
- Access to healthcare services, including mental health support, can help with overall wellbeing while working from home.

As the economy grows, it is essential to ensure that the benefits of this growth are inclusive and accessible to all. By providing the necessary tools, resources, and support, we can create an environment where persons with disabilities can thrive in remote work or entrepreneurial ventures. **R**

About The Author

Rustum Ariefdien is a disability expert extraordinaire who assists businesses to "let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility" through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability. Get in touch: rustim@rustimariefdienconsultants.onmicrosoft.com



Smartest way to succeed at your goals

The SMARTEST method is designed to keep you focused and make your goals achievable

The subconscious mind is your strongest ally when trying to achieve your goal. This part of the mind, which controls the majority of our actions or habits, finds it difficult to distinguish between what is vividly imagined and what is actually happening in reality.

It's like watching a movie. We all know that the movie took a year to make with actors in a studio. Yet, when we watch it, we are there in it, feeling the emotions as if it is real.

When setting a goal, you need to look "for a little movie in any goal". That's where the SMARTEST method comes in.

MAGIC IN THE DETAILS

The first thing that this method calls for is specifics. Vague goals are like trying to nail jelly to a wall. Instead of saying, "I want to get fit", consider setting a detailed goal for example: "I want to wheel five kilometres in under 30 minutes by 14 June 2025".

Now, that's a goal with some meat on its bones. Remember the subconscious mind is looking for a little movie or a documentary that is honest.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE PRIZE

If you can't break it down and measure it, how will you know when you've achieved it? Set clear criteria for success as well as smaller milestones to measure your progress.

For example, you might do five kilometres three times a week to track your progress by noting the time on that distance each time. Additionally, you could aim to reduce your time by a minute a week.

It's like having a scoreboard for your life. Who doesn't love a good win? You must be able to break it down into mini goals.

DREAM BIG, BUT DO SMALL

Ambition is great, but it is good to keep your goal and milestones realistic. Setting



a goal to do a marathon next month might be a tad overzealous. You can dream about completing a marathon, but you should start small and build momentum.

Perhaps you can start with a five kilometre race under 30 minutes in three months, then 10, then 21 and finally a marathon. Baby steps, every journey starts with a single step... You must be able to achieve it.

KEEP IT REAL

Your goal should matter to you. It should be relevant. If it's not, why bother? Make sure your goals align with your broader life objectives. If your aim is to improve your health and fitness, setting a goal of completing five kilometres under 30 minutes is highly relevant. Your goal should help you work towards your ideal life.

CLOCK IS TICKING

Every goal needs a deadline. Without one, it's easy to procrastinate. Set a realistic timeframe and break it down into smaller milestones. Draw up a programme (or find one online) that will provide smaller goals.

Perhaps that might mean doing five kilometres in under 50 minutes in February, in under 40 minutes in April so that you can do it in under 30 minutes by June.

Your subconscious mind needs to know by when this must be completed to keep you motivated and on track.

ENERGY IN MOTION

Emotion is said to be energy in motion. Adding an emotional component to your goals will be a game-changer. Think about how achieving your goal will make you feel.

When writing your goal, include this emotion in your writing so that you experience it every time you read your goal (which should be daily). For example, you might write: "Eventually, I want to do a marathon to honour my late father who was an avid runner." This tugs at the heartstrings and will keep you motivated, create energy.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR GOAL

Self-directed goals are those you set for

yourself, not ones imposed by others. When you take ownership of your goals, you're more committed to achieving them. Reflect on what you truly want to accomplish.

Include your reason for achieving your goal when writing it all out. For example, "I want to finish five kilometres in under 30 minutes to improve my fitness and eventually do a marathon." This is a self-directed goal that resonates deeply.

CHANGE IS GOOD

Transformational goals lead to significant personal growth. These goals challenge you to step out of your comfort zone. When writing your goal, think of how it may lead to transformation.

For example, you may say: "I want to do a five-kilometre race in under 30 minutes to build my endurance and boost my confidence." This is sure to lead to profound change.

EMBRACE THE JOURNEY

As you gear up for the New Year, consider using the SMARTEST method to set goals that are not only specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound, but also emotional, self-directed and transformational.

This approach ensures your goals are meaningful and aligned with your personal beliefs and values, which leads to greater motivation and success.

Read your goal daily and imagine what it would feel like when it is achieved to make full use of your subconscious. Consider sharing your goal with a friend or life coach so that they can help you stay accountable.

Remember, the journey towards achieving your goals is just as important as the destination. Embrace the process, celebrate your progress, and enjoy the ride. R

About The Author

Len Davey is a qualified life coach. To book a session, contact him via his website: www.theworldwithin.co.za. A free "goal setting" session is offered without any obligation so that you can experience life coaching first hand. Get in touch: len@theworldwithin.co.za



Emma McKinney • Rolling Kids



Getting away to be a better parent

Taking time for yourself could feel selfish, but is important to helping you be a better parent for your child with a disability

We know that being a parent or caregiver to a child with a disability is not always easy, and that there are no manuals on how to cope! Self-care for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities is vital, especially when things are tough and unpredictable.

As parents, we want the best for our children, but can feel overwhelmed with the day-to-day experience of parenting a child with a disabilities. For some of us, our children require constant care, to be turned throughout the night, fed specialised formula, assisted with bladder and bowel routines, help with transferring from wheelchairs, exact medicine schedules, regular doctors and rehabilitation visits, etc. – all of which can be exhausting, financially draining and emotionally taxing.

It is easy to resent our children with disabilities, our partners and friends who live such different lives. Many of us had dreams for our children which now may not be relevant anymore, and many of us grieve for what we will no longer have. It is important to remember that everything is relevant, and that as tough as things are, there are things that you can do.

When flying in an aeroplane, we always hear the cabin controllers tell us to place the oxygen masks over our mouths if there is a loss of cabin pressure before helping others and children. If we don't help ourselves, we cannot help others. This is true for parents of children with disabilities. We often feel that we cannot leave our children and do things for ourselves as our children should be our priority, and often feel guilty even considering doing something for us.

Financially, things are often very tough due to the many additional and sometimes unpredictable costs associated with disability such as catheters, assistive devices, medications, medical care and therapy. Even with time, energy and financial constraints, there are things that we can do, and through doing these things for ourselves, we become better people who are better able to cope as parents and deal with the stresses life throws at us.

As a mom of a child with a disability, married to my husband who is a quadriplegic, I have had to work hard to make time for myself. For me, my 'fuel' is going for a short run by myself where it is just me and my thoughts. For the 20 minutes, I switch off and focus on what I see around me, what sounds I hear and how I am feeling. This is my time.

I joke and say that I run away from my children to come back a better mom, but it is actually true. Sometimes I am exhausted and just don't have the energy to run, so rather than beating myself up that I cannot even run, I just take a slow walk and clear my head.

I joke and say that I run away from my children to come back a better mom.

Other things I do is having a long bath once a week where I switch off the lights, close the bathroom door and listen to a podcast on something that interests me. Other days it is finding a safe spot, parking my car, listening to music and just switching off for 15 minutes.

Financially, it doesn't cost me anything, and it's all about scheduling the time. I started off aiming for once a week and slowly built up to five days a week of scheduling short, 20-minute 'me time' activities, and I feel like I can better cope as a result. Some weeks, I get it right, while other weeks I don't.

So often we get so caught up in the day-to-day, never ending stresses, and don't make time to get perspective. This month, I challenge you to take 15 minutes three times a week to do something just for you. Something that fuels you, gives you energy and brings you joy. **R**

About Author

Dr Emma McKinney owner of Disability Included Consultancy, a company providing disability employment and educational research, training, support, and resources. Get in touch: emma@disabilityincluded.co.za



Carving space for artists with disabilities

Pinky Khotsholo is on a mission to set the stage for artists with disabilities to showcase their talents and earn a living from their craft

Drumroll Entertainment, a non-profit organisation started by Pinky Khotsholo, aims to provide a platform for artists with disabilities to showcase their talents. Founder Pinky shares: "I was inspired to start Drumroll because I wanted artists with disabilities to be given a platform where they can perform and get paid for their craft. I wanted to break the stereotype that a person with a disability belongs indoors; not seen as someone who has a life or a career."

"As a musician, I always had the love for stage performances and I realised that not many artists with disabilities are given an opportunity to perform on stage in front of a cheering crowd, which really boosts your confidence as an artist," she notes.

Pinky's own passion for music started in primary school where she volunteered to sing at events. By her teens, she was performing at weddings, anniversaries and parties. Unfortunately, she suffered a spine infection that left her a paraplegic. Pinky felt lost.

In 2021, she entered the Isphiwo Samaciko Disability Talent Show and won! This victory reignited her passion for music. She began recording music professionally as an Afro-pop artist. She released her single "Ngyakukhumbula", which has been promoted on prominent radio stations, including Ukhoozi FM.

"It is important for artists with disabilities to get a platform to showcase their talents because we can make a living out of art. Such

a platform helps put food on our table and gives us exposure for promoters, sponsors and people to recognise us and see what we are capable of."

To help her fellow artists, Pinky hosted the Pinky First Lady and Friends Music Festival at the KZN Music House in Durban during August 2024.

The event provided an opportunity for musicians, dancers, poets and fashion designers to showcase their talents and creativity. Everyone is said to have enjoyed the festival. Pinky hopes to make this an annual event.

"It is my dream for this music festival to happen every year. To get more funders, more promoters, more recognition so that the event will grow. If the event is growing, it will mean more jobs for artists. My dream is for Drumroll to have an art centre one day," she shares.

One of the performers at the event, Nelisiwe Sibiya, a dancer with a disability, shares why this festival is so important: "Many organisations claim to cater to people with disabilities, but often they are unsure of how to include us in a dance piece, or they use us merely to secure funding."

"Many individuals are stuck in roles they don't enjoy because the entertainment industry overlooks them, leading to neglected gifts."

Nelisiwe is familiar with the hardship of having to carve a space for yourself in the

industry to practice your craft. She started dancing in school, but there weren't any accommodations made for her.

"In school, I always participated in dancing and did most of the choreography, especially in high school, as the dance classes did not cater to wheelchair users," she notes.

Fortunately, she would go on to audition with her dance partner at the Playhouse Durban, which was hosted by African Sinakho Arts. This platform provided her with many more opportunities.

"They appreciated our performance, and we became part of their organisation. This opportunity led to collaborations with other groups like Dance Movement and City Celebration, who noticed my work and invited me to join them," she adds.

Aside from the opportunities and income that a stage for artists with disabilities can offer, it brings awareness.

"Growing up, I thought that not being able to walk meant that I could never dance until I saw other people in wheelchairs dancing. This exposure ignited my passion for dance. Dancing brings me immense joy, and it feels fulfilling to be paid to do something I love," Nelisiwe shares.

"Drumroll is a crucial stepping stone for uplifting artists with disabilities. What sets Drumroll apart is that it is run by someone with a disability, who has faced industry hardships and identified a gap, then created an organisation to support us. I believe that having a space like Drumroll is essential for allowing us to pursue careers using our talents," she concludes.

Pinky plans to bring the festival back in 2025 and is seeking assistance with funding. She shares: "I'm seeking funding to support my 2025 event, to cover catering, venue hire, sound system hire, and artist fees, to surpass last year's success."

Reach out to Pinky on 079 672 4246 or pinkymbaliphiri@gmail.com to learn more. **R**



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Life lessons from the Remarkable Mats

Through his gaming, Mats Steen was able to touch the lives as many as shared through the documentary, *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*

The 2024 documentary, *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*, which is currently available on [Netflix](#), follows the story of Mats Steen who was born with a degenerative muscular disease that limited him in many ways. As he grew older and his muscles weakened, Mats retreated into the world of gaming. In 2014, at 25, he passed away. His parents mourned what they thought had been a lonely and isolated existence.

On announcing his passing online, they learned how rich his life truly was. Mats had built an entire community through *World of Warcraft* as his character Ibelin.

Beautiful, honest and layered storytelling makes this documentary a must-watched for anyone who has ever felt isolated or restricted. Mats's story reminds us of all the ways in which we can impact the lives of others – even when we aren't aware – and that we can create community in very unconventional ways.

There are so many wonderful things to take away from the story of Mats. Here are just a

few that stood out. Take note that there are some spoilers ahead.

NEVER QUITE WHAT IT SEEMS

A recurring theme throughout the documentary is that things are never quite what they may seem. From the outside, a life may look a certain way, but be experienced very differently – whether good or bad.

To Mats's parents, it seemed like Mats was living a very lonely and isolated life. They thought that he would never get the opportunity to build true friendships and make a difference. Yet, through gaming, Mats found an escape, built a community and was able to help many. As he noted: "It's not a screen. It is a gateway to wherever your heart desires. I boot up the computer, music pumping, and then I leave this world."

To his online community, Mats seemed like someone who could easily build relationships and give good advice. Yet, he battled with the fears and anxiety of his declining health.

Similarly, his friends had their own struggles that might not have been obvious. Among



his gamer friends, some battled depression and loneliness, while others couldn't connect with their family or had their own disability. Everyone was facing some obstacle.

This honest reflection of how complicated our lives can be reminds us of why it is important to treat others with compassion and understanding. Moreover, it teaches us that despite what the world sees, we can find joy. Afterall, it is not what a life looks like to other, but how it feels to the person living it.

COMMUNITY, FRIENDSHIP AND HEALING

Mats had found perhaps an unconventional way to build connections, but they were true and meaningful regardless. As he grew closer to his online community, many of his friends opened up about their struggles. Mats was able to offer great advice and support, which would help many to overcome their challenges.

Understandably, Mats was less forthcoming about his situation. None of his online friends knew about his disability. As his health declined, he developed anxiety around his death, especially after a few scary incidents. He started pulling away and lashing out at his community.

He also found himself reflecting on his life. He had always wanted to feel valued and respect, but didn't believe he had achieved those things. When he finally opened up to one of his online friends, he learned how much he truly impacted the lives of the people around him.

Whether it is Mats opening up to his friends, or others coming to ask help, we are reminded

MAIN PHOTO: A recreation of Mats's character, Ibelin.

TOP LEFT: Mats was born with a degenerative muscular disease that restricted his mobility.

TOP RIGHT: Mats escaped into *World of Warcraft* and found his community.

of how being vulnerable with our community can help and heal us. It is a privilege not a burden to be able to help others. By asking for it, we are giving our loved ones the privilege of supporting us, giving back and sharing in our lives.

As we learn how much Mats had meant to the people he met online, we are also reminded how true friendship and connection can be built even in the strangest or most unconventional ways.

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

Mats had missed out on many things because of a lack of access, but also because of his own shyness in public spaces. However, he didn't give up on his dreams of adding value to his community. He found a way to contribute even if that didn't look like what he or others might have expected.

We are reminded that life is truly what you decide to make of it. Whether you invest in your online or physical community; serve others through your career or friendship; travel the world or never leave your hometown, your life can be beautiful, fulfilling, remarkable.

Perhaps learn from Mats and seek out a place where you feel unbound and free to express the best parts of yourself and build the community that will honour you in this life and the next. **R**



Relieving the pressure

Johane Botha and Juan Vermeulen, intern biokineticists at the Enable Centre, share some advice on managing pressure sores

If you make use of a wheelchair, chances are that you have heard the term “pressure sore” and may have also had one before. Pressure “sores” or ulcers, also called decubitus ulcers or bedsores, are a major concern for individuals with disabilities, especially those who make use of a wheelchair or are on extended periods of bed rest.

Knowing what they are, how they occur as well as treatment and prevention measures is crucial for both the person with a disability and their carer.

THE WHAT

A pressure ulcer is an injury to the skin or underlying tissue, usually over a bony part of

your body, caused by the shearing force of unrelieved pressure on that area.

The severity may differ from a reddening of the skin in mild cases to deep craters with exposed muscle or bone in the most severe cases. Untreated pressure ulcers can be life-threatening.

THE HOW

Pressure ulcers are caused by large amounts of force applied over a short period or less force applied over longer periods. Just like pressure on a hosepipe will affect the waterflow, this force disrupts the blood supply to the affected area which deprives tissues, such as the skin, of oxygen and nutrients.

Unsurprisingly, the most common areas for pressure ulcers to form are the sacrum and buttock bone (ischial tuberosity), heels and the bony parts of your ankle (lateral malleoli).

Elderly people are usually at a higher risk with 70 percent of pressure ulcers occurring in persons over the age of 65. However, people with neurological impairments are also at risk, particularly those with reduced sensation.

Other risk factors include, but are not limited to, increased body temperature, limited mobility, poor nutrition, friction, shear, moisture, general health status and anti-cancer drugs.

THE TREATMENT

If a pressure ulcer does develop, you should consult your doctor as soon as possible. Treatments include offloading strategies, management of infections and maintaining a moist environment to promote wound healing. In severe cases, surgery may be necessary to remove dead tissue and transplant healthy skin.

THE PREVENTION

Prevention is better than cure and the best approach when it comes to dealing with pressure ulcers. It is difficult to imagine anything worse than lying on your stomach for six months while waiting for an ulcer to heal.

A repositioning schedule is one of the most important tools in your toolbox. How often you reposition yourself is determined by tissue tolerance, level of activity and mobility, general condition, skin condition and comfort.

Repositioning should be done as often as possible, avoiding extended periods in the same position.

The following are some practical measures to help prevent pressure ulcers:

- Use pressure-reducing surfaces like air, gel or water mattresses and/or cushions.
- Replace wheelchair cushions roughly every three years.
- Have a wheelchair fitting and seating done by a professional.



ABOVE: To relieve pressure, do some pressure lifts or lean forwards and sideways as demonstrated by the team at **Dalhousie University**, Canada.

- Do “pressure relief” lifts.
- Avoid a slouched position that puts pressure on the lower back and tailbone.
- Stay hydrated.
- Clean skin following incontinence.
- Apply skin moisturiser to dry skin.
- Consider using silk fabrics as opposed to cotton or cotton blend fabrics – this will help reduce shear and friction on the skin.
- Do not massage or vigorously rub skin in areas prone to developing pressure sores.
- Get assistance to regularly check body areas that you cannot see.

Pressure ulcers can be serious, but taking the right preventative steps as part of a daily routine, just like brushing your teeth, can help you protect your mobility and maintain a high quality of life. R

About The Enable Centre

The **Enable Centre** is an outpatient physical and cognitive rehabilitation centre with branches in Cape Town and Durban. It operates as a social enterprise, meaning it provides therapy to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds whilst incorporating innovative technology and evidence-based treatments. Get in touch: admin@enablecentre.org



Ready ... Aim ... Empower with Adaptive Shooting

Golan Shooting Range is empowering people with disabilities to pursue the sport of shooting with their welcoming and accessible environment

Shooting sports might not be for everyone, but for those who give it a try, it's an adrenaline-filled experience like no other. Adaptive shooting, in particular, offers excitement, focus, and achievement under safe conditions. What makes it special is its inclusivity, allowing people with disabilities to enjoy shooting alongside their able-bodied friends and family.

The Golan Shooting Range, known for its welcoming and accessible environment, has become a key location for adaptive shooting. For many, shooting is an entirely new experience. Not having been exposed to guns before, handling one can cause some nervousness.

However, Golan's staff are friendly and create a reassuring atmosphere that eases first-timers into the activity. They provide clear guidance to ensure everyone feels confident in their abilities no matter their level of experience. The strong sense of community at the range also plays a huge role with staff and regulars always offering advice and encouragement.

"Adaptive shooting is not just about hitting a target," says a participant. "It's about focus, control, and overcoming barriers. It's empowering to know that, despite physical limitations, you can excel in a sport that tests both mind and body. Shooting gives you a sense of achievement that stays with you beyond the range."

Adaptive shooting offers people with disabilities a chance to compete on equal terms with able-bodied peers. The sport accommodates adjustments to equipment, making sure shooters can safely and comfortably engage with the activity. Beyond that, it provides a space to enjoy the thrill of an adrenaline-pumping sport that challenges concentration and control.

The accessible setup at Golan Shooting Range plays a key role in making this inclusive environment possible. With ramps, accessible bathrooms, and dedicated staff, Golan ensures that people of all abilities can participate in shooting sports. The range's commitment to inclusivity means that everyone, regardless of their physical condition, has the chance to be part of the experience.

It's also a sport that families can enjoy together. Able-bodied friends and family members are welcome to join in the fun, making adaptive shooting a great bonding activity. The welcoming environment, combined with the rush of the sport, makes for an unforgettable experience.

A special thanks to Golan Shooting Range for providing an accessible venue and for their helpful, friendly staff who ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment.

For those interested in a new challenge, adaptive shooting at Golan offers a perfect introduction to the sport. The shooting range is situated in Sherwood Gardens, Brakpan. For more information on the training, contact Dirk at 082 720 6573 or Andries for bookings at 081 591 1612. Ready, aim, and empower yourself at the range. **R**

About The Author

Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF) is a non-profit company, committed to supporting individuals with disabilities and breaking down barriers and creating a more equitable and just world for all people, regardless of their abilities. and with the following objectives: Supporting, enriching, encouraging, motivating and providing resources that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve their goals for them to live their best lives and creating a more accessible and equitable society for all. Get in touch: info@adaptivesportsfund.org





Rebuilding with Project Liberty

The Players' Fund has launched its Project Liberty to raise funds that will help rugby players who suffered life-altering injuries rebuild

Home is where the heart is. For two former rugby players, however, their homes are not the place of solace it's supposed to be. Key adaptations are required after catastrophic injuries left Anzil Williams and Heinrich Erasmus wheelchair users. The pair are positive but admit that their home situations make an already ultra-difficult time that much more challenging.

DEVASTATING CONTACT

Representing Humansdorp Senior Secondary School at the Titans Knysna sevens tournament, a 16-year-old Anzil suffered a broken neck (C5/6) when his head slammed into the hip of a ball carrier in an attempted tackle on 30 September 2023. This left him paralysed and in a motorised wheelchair.

After his time at Groote Schuur Hospital, he underwent four months of secondary rehabilitation at Aurora Special Care Centre before returning to his Humansdorp home, where he's in need of a ramp to get into his house as well as a walk-in shower.

The teenager admits he faces "emotional challenges" and has to "navigate stages

of trauma and healing" but adds: "I am resilient and choosing to focus on the present and approach each day with courage and positivity. Life at home is incredibly tough for me as our house isn't wheelchair accessible. Simple tasks become daunting obstacles, but with renovations, particularly the bathroom makeover, my world would expand exponentially. Showering would cease to be a challenge and become a therapeutic haven, restoring my independence, dignity, and joy."

Anzil is continuing his education at a new school and remains positive despite the challenges he faces in this regard. He says: "Following my injury, I was reintegrated into Grade 10 as recommended by the Department of Education. I currently attend Global Leadership Academy in Jeffreys Bay."

"However, the 15 to 20-km commute from home poses significant logistical challenges, requiring daily transportation that's exhausting. In light of these difficulties, as a family, we intend to explore alternative educational options, including homeschooling, for the upcoming year to ensure my educational and personal wellbeing," he shares.

Looking towards the future, he says: "My plans include completing my matric with distinction and pursuing higher education in either Traffic Management or Sports Management. I'm determined to achieve these goals."

TACKLE GONE WRONG

Heinrich, who played lock, broke his neck (C4/5) in a tackle gone wrong on a tackle bag during a training session at Brighton Rugby Football Club in February of 2024, forever altering his life. He, too, had a stint in Groote Schuur Hospital and returned to his Oudtshoorn home in July after completing 12 weeks of secondary rehabilitation at the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre. The 35-year-old is in need of a ramp leading up to his home, a bigger room for greater accessibility and a bathroom.

"It's been a tough journey, both physically and emotionally. Some days are harder than others but I'm trying to stay positive and taking it one step at a time. The support from my family and friends has been crucial, but I'm still adjusting to the new reality," he says.

"It's been very challenging. With my home not being equipped for someone in my situation, even a simple task can be overwhelming. If the necessary renovations could be made, it would mean the world to me. It would give me more independence and make daily life more manageable, which is something I desperately need right now," he shares.

As for his future, Heinrich shares: "My focus is on rehabilitation. However, I'm looking into opportunities to further my education or perhaps even get involved in advocacy for spinal cord injury awareness. It's something I'm passionate about now, given my experience. In the long term, I want to live as independently as possible

and make the most of this new chapter of my life," he adds.

PLAYERS' FUND OFFERS SUPPORT

The pair thanked their families for their support and had special thanks to the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund for their assistance. Anzil says: "The Players' Fund has been a lifeline since my injury, providing emotional, financial, and practical support. Their care and guidance have eased my family's burden, enabled my rehabilitation and given me hope. I'm deeply grateful for their unwavering assistance."

Heinrich commented: "The Players' Fund has been there for me from the beginning to offer not just financial support but also emotional encouragement. Their help with rehabilitation expenses and adapting to my new circumstances has made a huge difference. Their support means everything to me. It's a reminder that I'm not in this alone."

Known as Rugby's Caring Hands, the Players' Fund has supported over 500 players since its inception in 1980 and currently assists 88 recipients who sustained catastrophic head, neck and spinal injuries on the rugby field.

The Players' Fund has launched [Project Liberty](#) to raise funds for the necessary home adaptations and appeals to the public to support the cause. Their target is R500 000. To donate, visit the [Project Liberty page here.](#) 

Donate to the Player's Fund

If you would like to support the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, visit their website at www.playersfund.org.za and select any number of the giving options available, which include EFT, payfast, Snapscan and Zapper. Get in touch: contact@playersfund.org.za





A village behind wheelchair rugby

Like with most things, it takes a village to host a wheelchair rugby match, which means there are many ways to get involved in the sport

Wheelchair Rugby is an exciting action-packed Paralympic sport that has been designed especially for people with a wide-range of disabilities. In South Africa, we are fortunate that there is an active wheelchair rugby league that is administered by a well-established national organisation, South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR).

While we typically associate sports with rules, equipment and the athletes, wheelchair rugby also offers non-athletes a variety of opportunities to get involved in the vibrant community surrounding it.

COACHING

Wheelchair rugby is a tactical game where position, pace and power must be aligned

for a team to emerge victorious. A wheelchair rugby coach plays a vital role in empowering athletes and promoting inclusivity.

What does a coach do?

- Develop and implement training programmes tailored to individual athlete needs.
- Conduct drills, scrimmages as well as strength and conditioning sessions.
- Analyse game footage, identify areas for improvement, and adjust strategies.
- Foster teamwork, camaraderie, and sportsmanship among athletes.
- Collaborate with support staff (physiotherapists, trainers, classifiers).
- Manage game-day logistics, tactics, and player rotations.
- Mentor and develop assistant coaches and volunteers.

Are you a leader and strategic thinker? Perhaps fitness training and practice drills are your thing? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby coach and help guide your team to success!

REFEREE

The rules of wheelchair rugby are technical and require the sharp eyes of two referees in each game. A referee must make accurate, impartial decisions under pressure.

What does a referee do?

- Enforce rules and regulations.
- Monitor player safety and intervening when necessary.
- Handle misconduct, penalties, and fouls.
- Collaborate with other referees and game officials.
- Provide clear, concise explanations for decisions.
- Maintain game flow, minimising disruptions.

Are you someone who can command authority? Are you a stickler for the rules? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby referee to keep the game flowing and the players safe!

TABLE OFFICIAL

Wheelchair rugby referees are supported by table officials on the sidelines who keep time, score and statistics related to the match. A wheelchair rugby table official is a crucial support role responsible for managing game logistics.

What does a table official do?

- Manage game clock, timeouts and scoring.
- Track penalties, fouls, and player misconduct.
- Maintain accurate records of game statistics.
- Provide administrative support to referees and coaches.
- Coordinate with scorekeepers, announcers and other officials.
- Ensure smooth game flow, minimising disruptions.

Are you good at multi-tasking? Do you have a knack with electronic equipment? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby table official to make sure everything stays on track!



MAIN PHOTO AND TOP: Coaches play a vital role in wheelchair rugby by empowering the players with the skills and fitness needed to perform in a match.

MIDDLE LEFT: Referees need to make accurate and impartial decisions under pressure.

MIDDLE RIGHT AND BOTTOM: Table officials support the referees with time keeping and are responsible for managing game logistics.

CLASSIFIER

Wheelchair rugby athletes are assigned a classification score based on their level of physical ability. Teams are not allowed to exceed a maximum combined athlete score on the court. Classifiers evaluate athletes' functional abilities through assessment and observation.



What does a classifier do?

- Conduct athlete evaluations, assessing physical function and mobility.
- Assign classification points (0.5 to 3.5) based on athlete's functional ability.
- Ensure accurate classification for fair competition.
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism.
- Collaborate with other classifiers, coaches and officials.

Are you a physiotherapist or occupational therapist who works with people with disabilities? Do you have strong analytical and observational skills? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby classifier to ensure fair competition!

EQUIPMENT TECHNICIAN

Wheelchair rugby chairs are specialised sports equipment that are designed for full contact situations and player safety. Equipment technicians ensure that wheelchairs and equipment meet safety and performance standards.

What does an equipment technician do?

- Inspect and maintain wheelchairs, ensuring safety and performance.
- Conduct pre-game and post-game equipment checks.
- Repair and modify wheelchairs to meet athlete needs.
- Advise athletes and coaches on equipment optimisation.
- Collaborate with manufacturers, suppliers and other technicians.
- Develop and implement equipment maintenance schedules.
- Troubleshoot equipment issues during competitions.

Is attention to detail and precision your thing? Are you good with tools and enjoy getting hands-on? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby equipment technician to keep the team rolling!

ABOVE FAR LEFT: Physiotherapists and occupational therapists are encouraged to become classifiers.

ABOVE MIDDLE: Equipment technicians ensure the equipment meet safety and performance standards.

ABOVE FAR RIGHT: Team volunteers assist all round with whatever the team needs.

TEAM VOLUNTEER

Just as good bands need good roadies, a wheelchair rugby team needs a dedicated crew of team volunteers to lend a helping hand.

What does a team volunteer do?

- Game day support: Assist with setup, teardown and logistics.
- Event organisation: Help plan and execute fundraising events and tournaments.
- Administrative tasks: Assist with mailings, data entry and communications.
- Player support: Provide transportation, meal assistance or run errands.
- Fundraising: Help with campaigns, sponsorships and donations.
- Marketing and promotion: Assist with social media, photography or videography.
- Training sessions: Assist coaches, athletes or equipment technicians.

Do you have strong teamwork and communication skills? Want to lend a hand? Consider becoming a wheelchair rugby team volunteer to be part of the family!

At SAWCR, there are programmes and support designed to help you find your place in the wheelchair rugby community. Contact admin@sawcr.co.za for more information. 

About South Africa Wheelchair Rugby

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is the official administrator of the wheelchair rugby in South Africa. The association is involved in all aspects from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league. For more information, please contact admin@sawcr.co.za or visit the official Facebook page at [@SAWheelchairRugby](https://www.facebook.com/SAWheelchairRugby).

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Balancing independence and support

It can be difficult for couples to balance their relationship with the responsibilities of caregiving, but prioritising independence can help

As individuals with spinal cord injuries (SCIs) age, they face a unique combination of challenges related to sexual health, intimacy, and relationships. Aging naturally affects sexual health for everyone, but for those with an SCI, these changes can be more complex due to pre-existing physical limitations or complications related to the injury.



This includes decreased sensation, difficulty achieving or maintaining erections, vaginal dryness, hormonal changes, and a decrease in sexual desire.

Compounded by aging-related conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or arthritis, these factors can significantly impact sexual functioning on a physical and emotional level.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

From a physical point of view, increased muscle stiffness or spasticity can be a challenge. As one ages, muscles may become stiffer, worsening mobility issues and making certain sexual positions uncomfortable or challenging.

Pelvic floor muscles play a critical role in sexual health and function. As they weaken with age, it can affect sexual performance and pleasure for both men and women.

Hormonal changes is another common complicating factor of aging. Decreases in testosterone and estrogen levels can lead to diminished libido, increased vaginal dryness, or erectile difficulties, all of which may be more pronounced in individuals with an SCI.

There are also medical conditions that can indirectly affect sexual activity. Cardiovascular disease, for example, influences sexual stamina and the ability to engage physically during sexual encounters.

Another common group of medical conditions relate to bladder and bowel difficulties. These types of complications could create anxiety around sex, making individuals self-conscious or reluctant to engage in intimacy.

A compounding difficulty for patients with high-level SCIs is Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD), which may increase in frequency with age, particularly if the individual is dealing with bladder or bowel issues that trigger this reflex. This can lead to a fear of sexual activity due to the unpredictability of such an episode occurring.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The psychological aspects of aging with an SCI also play a significant role in sexual health. As individuals age, they may struggle with body image, reduced confidence, or fear of being less desirable. These emotional hurdles can create barriers to sexual intimacy, even when physical function remains intact.

Aging and SCI may also bring about feelings of isolation, especially if one's partner is experiencing health challenges of their own. It's not uncommon for long-term couples to experience shifts in their sexual dynamics as both partners age, and an SCI adds another layer of complexity to these changes.

In some cases, people may experience a mismatch in sexual desire or physical ability with their partners, leading to frustration or resentment.

POSSIBLE REMEDIES

Maintaining intimacy requires both partners to adapt, communicate openly, and remain committed to exploring new ways to connect sexually. It's crucial to address not just physical challenges but also emotional and relational dynamics that may shift with age.

In light of these physical challenges, individuals with an SCI and their partners are encouraged to adopt a proactive approach that includes open communication with healthcare professionals who specialise in sexual health.

Treatment options like psychotherapy, hormone replacement therapy, medication, or pelvic floor exercises can help address many of these difficulties. R

About The Author

Dr Danie Breedt is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of psychology. He divides his time between training, research and clinical practice. Danie works from an integrative interactional approach in psychotherapy, dealing with a wide range of emotional difficulties and sexual rehabilitation for patients with disabilities. He is the co-owner of Charis Psychological Services, a psychology practice that specialises in physical rehabilitation across South Africa. E-mail: danie@charispsychology.co.za

Upskilling more doctors in rehabilitation

The International Rehabilitation Forum (IRF) is working to upskill more local physicians in physical medicine and rehabilitation. According to the IRF website, an estimated 80 percent of people with disabilities live in low-resource countries, yet these areas often lack the expertise needed to provide good quality rehabilitation to patients. The IRF estimates that there are fewer than 0,5 rehabilitation professionals per 10 000 people across Africa.

To address this, IRF established its fellowship programme through which it hopes to combat the shortage of physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists in low-resource regions.

“Since 2018, we have provided a two-year virtual physical medicine and rehabilitation training programme for local physicians in Africa, focusing on physical medicine and rehabilitation specialty knowledge, workforce development, and advocacy to integrate



physical medicine and rehabilitation practices in their contexts,” the IRF states on its website. “Over three years, the initiative trained over 30 physicians in Ghana, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and South Africa.”

For 2024, there are seven [South African doctors](#) on the programme. A big thank you to IRF for its commitment to rehabilitation and thank you to the doctors participating in the programme. You can learn more about the programme on the [IRF website](#). R

Call for actors with disabilities

The Disabled Audiovisual Workers Network (DAWN) and South African Guild of Actors (SAGA) are building a database of actors with disabilities in South Africa.

Casting director Richard Lothian, who is assisting with setting up the database, notes: “The goal of this database is to contribute to an acting industry ecosystem that promotes accessibility, representation, and inclusion of disability perspectives in the film and television space.”

Professional actors can get in touch to arrange an audition. If you would like to learn or try acting, Richard will be offering courses, coaching and assisting members on the database.

In these initial stages, anyone interested in participating needs to [sign up](#).

Live and virtual auditions will be held in December. Those who are unable to attend can submit a recording of their monologue.

This round of live auditions will be held in Cape Town with plans to visit Johannesburg early in the new year. There is no charge to joining and, at your request, you can be removed from the database.

For further information or any queries, we suggest that you reach out to Richard at richard@richardlothiancasting.com. R

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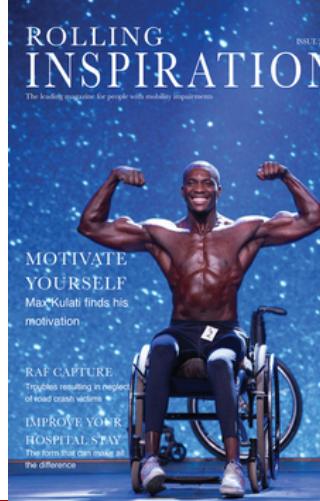
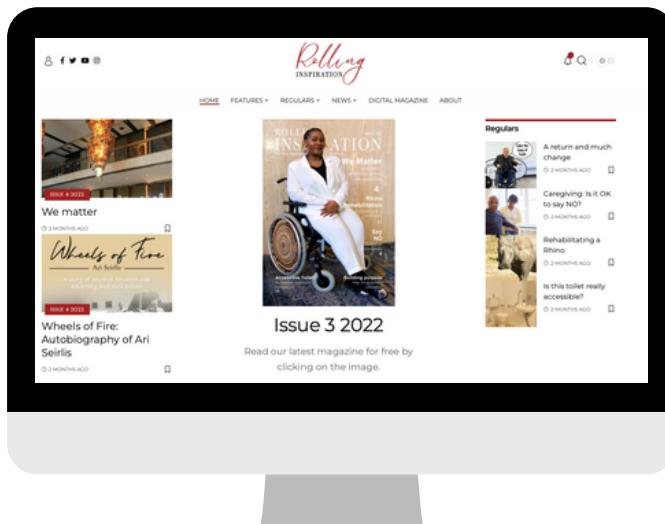
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