



# The Torch



Edition 26

## A day in the life of Sharon Goosen, Innovation for the blind O&M Practitioner

An Orientation and Mobility Specialist provides guidance and support that can help persons with visual impairments develop the skill of getting to know their immediate surroundings and to, for example, walk safely and efficiently across a busy street or to the closest shopping centre.

Orientation and Mobility is important because it allows the visually impaired person to integrate into society and to live an empowering life of independence. It can be conducted on a one-to-one basis in the visually impaired persons home, workplace or in a community-based setting.



Over the span of one day, my Orientation and Mobility tasks involve the following:

7.00 While passing through the dining room areas of Innovation for the Blinds' homes for persons with visual impairments I observe the eating habits of residents and take notes if it may appear that someone might need reinforcement and skills guidance. I also observe the orientation and mobility

of our visually impaired residents while they walk to and from their home to their workplace on the premises.

7:30 I clock in at the office for administrative tasks and enquiries relating to Orientation and Mobility, Low vision, and Awareness sessions.

8:00 - 12:00 During this time I convey all my energy into Orientation and Mobility Training sessions

13:00 – 13:30 During my Lunch recess I observe how residents move around on the premises

13:30 – 14:00 I focus on Cane repairs, enquiries, and reports

14:00 – 15:00 I coordinate the Visually impaired persons Music and Darts sessions

15:00 – 16:00 My focus is on Low vision and Orientation and Mobility practice

16:00 – 16:30 My day at the office concludes with a check in on administrative tasks

16:30 – 17:00 I continue to observe residents returning from work to their homes. I also make notes and report any potholes or points of danger in the surrounding areas that could hamper the safe and efficient orientation and mobility of our residents.

17:00 – 18:00 I offer orientation and mobility sessions as required by persons living in the training flat

Other tasks that my portfolio involves:

- Interaction with the municipality
- Awareness sessions with staff members
- Outreaches
- Low vision talks
- Low vision assessments
- Ordering of assistive devices
- Co ordinating the sport
- Multidisciplinary meetings
- Selection meetings (new intakes)
- Saturdays – Park run/goalball/blind soccer
- Sundays – Tandem Cycling

## Celebrating St Dunstan's Women

*By Maatje Wessels*

It is a beautiful pink sunset in a remote corner of the Drakensberg. Following a St Dunstan's reunion in Kwa-Zulu Natal, my war-blinded husband and I took time to go and stay with friends who then worked with KZN Wildlife.

To hike the necessary 5km along a mountain path to reach a secluded trout-stocked dam, Don and I used our fishing rods to hike in a truck pulling a trailer style. There is not a breath of wind, and the mountain and reeds are perfectly mirrored on the still surface of the dam. With my first cast, I hook a rainbow trout and with some help, Don lands one of these princely fish too.

As a family-focused person, I am open-minded and willing to learn skills usually associated with men. Give me a hook and line, and I'll tie a fisherman's knot. Coming from the Great Karoo I knew nothing about fishing, Don had to teach me how to put on bait and determine the depth of your line in the water. But you can give me a hunting rifle and three young boys, and I will teach them how to hunt. I am willing to get my hands dirty by showing the boys how to clean fish and how to slaughter a bird and take out the intestines of an animal after hunting.



I am willing to be the sole vehicle driver in the family and the only one that is mobile to shop for clothes, fishing hooks and all the rest. I have been using Pick-and-Pay online shopping for a very long time and they are very efficient, it saves me a lot of time not having to drive to the shops. With two of the boys being teenagers, they are eating increasingly more, and keeping the cupboards full is in itself a challenge.

Regarding hardware shopping I have however given up on figuring out the difference between the different types of bolts and screws – it drives me nuts! For enough times it has led to a

quarrel between me and Don, so I just hand the printed list provided by Don to the nearest salesperson...

I was 27 years of age in the year 2000, when, on top of Table Mountain, Don popped the big question. I knew that it will not be matrimony where husband and wife fulfill the time-honoured gender roles society associates with men and women, but I answered 'yes'.

What prepared me for pulling my weight and being willing to bring my proverbial pound of flesh to the table, was I think my upbringing on a sheep farm in the Great Karoo, between Sutherland and Fraserburgh. Also boarding school throughout my primary- and high school, as well as a year in the army.

As a role model, I had an entrepreneur mum who in the 1980s got permission from the then 'Coloured' Department of education to start a school and boarding house for farm kids on our family farm. This saw many farm labourer children, coming from homes where neither the mother nor father could read, now obtain these basic tools to better themselves in life and many of them have since reached special heights.

Over and above being a full-time teacher on the farm, mum also made and sold fancy clothes, start the first guest house in the Karoo, as well as being the founder of Fraserburgh's School Theatre festival, which is held annually up to this day.

In my career, after my year of being shunted around by short-fused corporals (I was selected to attend the South African Army Women's College in George), I obtained my nursing degree at Stellenbosch university. I then worked a stone's throw from our current house, at Helderberg hospital for a year after which I decided to spread my wings. I worked as a registered nurse through an agency nurse all across Greater London for two years. It was a time of hard work, but I also used the opportunity to travel around Europe and Scandinavia. Coming back to South Africa towards the end of 1999, I met Don through mutual friends. I then enrolled at Stellenbosch university to do my Honours degree in Intensive Care nursing. For a year I stayed in Pinelands, and I worked at Vincent Palotti hospital.

With my new degree under my belt and having just gotten married to Don in 2001, I worked in the intensive care for 7 years. I was then promoted to an office job, which meant no more 12-hour shifts in the ICU. I was now the Clinical Risk Manager for Mediclinic Vergelegen hospital in Somerset West for 12 years. During this time, we were blessed with three lovely boys. I also completed a higher diploma in Nursing Management through Stellenbosch at this time. I remember going to bed early, then I studied between midnight and 2 am and went back to sleep again. I did this for about 4 nights per week and I completed my course with a cum laude.

I initiated many quality improvement initiatives at the hospital at the time and I was honoured to be awarded a Discovery Health Quality Improvement award for being one of the top 3 winners in

the 2014 annual awards. With the prize money I received, I did short courses in Lean management at the Business school of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

With God's grace, I then got promoted to a coveted job at Mediclinic's International headquarters in the nearby Stellenbosch. I am now responsible to develop and roll out software applications that improve and standardise processes between the different divisions in Mediclinic, which are in the UAE, Southern Africa, and the UAE. Strictly speaking, my new position required a master's degree, so I enrolled for a MA degree in Health Innovation at UCT. I was awarded this MA degree cum laude in December 2021. In age, I have just gone past the half-century mark, and if all goes well, as I believe it will, I am soon to start with my Ph.D.

Being married to Don is very rewarding, but with his double disability, it is not always a bed of roses. Don cannot do many chores, many of which now fall in my lap, or we have to pay someone to fix technical stuff in and around the house. Through the years St Dunstan's has however played an enormous role to cover costs such as schooling, medical aid, and more. We are very thankful for this.

Don, being a 'house dad', contributes to the household management with his tutoring and sports coaching of the kids. This helps me immensely as I do not have to worry about this at all.

Together we do much, our kids perform well in academics and sports, and we are complimented on their good manners. It is however St Dunstan's that, as the Afrikaans idiom goes, helps draw the wagon through the river crossing. The great blessing and grace from our Almighty God bring it all together.

By Maatje Wessels

## In Memory of Reinette Popplestone

Reinette Popplestone, born du Plessis, was educated at the Pioneer School, Worcester, after which she studied physiotherapy in London, England at the Royal National Institute for the Blind School of Physiotherapy. On returning home after the course, she settled in Cape Town where she practised physiotherapy in one of the larger state hospitals and also met and married Tony. They had two children, a daughter nowadays a successful professional person, and a son who died when he was a mere toddler. Fourteen years ago she and Tony took a severely disabled baby boy into foster care and raised him as their own.

She was the first South African Braille Consultant, engaged by the partnership of the SANCB, the SALB, the SABWO and the Institute for the Blind, Worcester. This was the fore-runner of SABA, the SA Braille Authority.



Subsequently she joined the University of Cape Town, where she headed the Disability Unit and retired from there a year or two ago.

As a volunteer, Reinette proof read braille for the SA Library for the Blind for many years. She was interested in everything related to braille and also served (until the time of her passing) as the Deputy Chairperson of SABA and a very knowledgeable vocal and active member of several of its committees. Internationally, she participated in the activities of the International Council on English Braille.

Reinette was the author of “Hands On”, the only braille teaching manual for any of our 11 official languages in South Africa.

She was a hard-working, gifted person who had flair and a deep love of serving others. She will be sorely missed by literally thousands, not only for what she did, but for who she was.

– Christo de Klerk, ICEB President

Adapted from Source: [ICEB](#)

## Shani Little Graduates

So yesterday (12 July 2022), was my graduation in Cape Town. I obtained my BA in psychological counseling with distinction. I even got a standing ovation, can you believe it? I am very thankful and grateful to the St Dunstan’s organisation and the Ian Fraser bursary trust for providing me with bursaries to help fund my studies.



I am currently busy with my Honours, and hopefully, I can complete it by the end of next year. Then I can send you another photograph.

Please convey my appreciation to your director and those involved in allocating the bursaries. It opened doors to a new education for me, and I hope to register as a wellness counselor and start a practice after completing my studies.

Thank you.

Adapted from an email received from Shani Little

## 10 SA women in tech to watch

Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate the South African women who are making changes in our country. This is especially evident in the tech space, where women are starting non-profit organisations, founding companies and raising their voices in support of women. Here are 10 South African women to watch.



### **Baratang Miya**

Baratang Miya is a tech social entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of GirlHYPE – Women Who Code. GirlHYPE is a coding academy for women and girls in underserved communities in South Africa. Baratang is passionate about workforce diversity and workplace inclusion of women and youth in the tech and entrepreneurship space. Her goal is to attract, promote and develop women and girls from underrepresented groups in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). She has partnered with organisations like UN Women, Mozilla, TechWomen, SiliconCape and Technovation to develop women’s digital literacy and participation on the web.

### **Dr Adriana Marais**

Dr Adriana Marais is a theoretical physicist, technologist and ‘aspiring extraterrestrial’. She is the founder of Proudly Human, pioneering new frontiers in research and technology for a resilient future on Earth, Mars and beyond. She is also a Director at the Foundation for Space Development. One of their initiatives is Africa2Moon, Africa’s first mission to the Moon, to inspire the youth of developing nations to “Reach for the Stars” through education and science. Adriana is a member of the South African DHET Ministerial Task Team on the 4th Industrial Revolution and an astronaut candidate with the Mars One Project.

### **Dr Mmaki Jantjies**

Dr Mmaki Jantjies is a technology specialist, researcher and advisor. She is an Associate Professor in Information Systems at the University of the Western Cape, and is passionate about driving the development of the next generation of 4th Industrial Revolutionists. Mmaki is a researcher in education technology who loves to develop software for mobile platforms, and runs the Peo ya Phetogo foundation, which enables exposure to critical STEM skills. She is working to ensure the African perspective and voice is heard in emerging technology innovations and skills development.

### **Thembisio Magajana**

Thembisio is the founder and CEO of Social Coding, an organisation that helps rural communities



leverage technology for a better future. An accountant turned tech advocate, Thembiso is recognized for designing and leading strategic coding workshops for rural youth, that have impacted 1800 scholars, across four provinces in South Africa. Thembiso has spent the past five years evangelising an industry-wide shift that seeks to prepare South African Youth for the 4th Industrial Revolution. This has mainly been through coding workshops particularly serving township and rural areas.

### **Sam Wright**

Sam Wright is more commonly known as Tech Girl, because of her popular website [www.techgirl.co.za](http://www.techgirl.co.za). Tech Girl is a South African tech blog for women, and a space for South African women to share their love for gadgets, gaming, tech and esports. Sam and her community of women simplify the tech specs, provide “geek” lifestyle content, offer reviews, tech talk and life hacks on all things tech. Check out her YouTube channel for more.

### **Lindiwe Matlali**

Lindiwe Matlali is a social entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of Africa Teen Geeks, an NGO that offers coding lessons to South African school children and unemployed youth. The organisation also hosts workshops, hackathons and community outreach programmes. The mission of Africa Teen Geeks is that no child be left behind in the tech revolution. It has grown to be one of Africa’s largest computer science NGOs, with a reach of over 48,000 children and more than 1,300 volunteers. Lindiwe was recently appointed to serve as Commissioner for the 4th Industrial Revolution responsible for the development of the 4IR strategy for South Africa by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

### **Zandile Keebine**

Zandile Keebine is the chairperson of GirlCode, an organisation she started in 2014 as a hackathon to get more girls excited about tech. GirlCode is now an NPO that aims to become Africa’s leading digital and innovation hub for young girls and women who want to get into tech. They do this by providing these young girls and women with various opportunities like the annual all-female hackathon, monthly workshops, and direct access to women working in top ICT (Information and Communication Tech) companies.

### **Sewagodimo Matlapeng**

Sewagodimo is a software developer, international speaker and entrepreneur. She is the founder of Indoni Developers, an organisation that provides career support for female software developers. The organisation focuses on mentorship, skills development and opportunity as the three pillars of developing sustainable tech careers for women. She is also the founder of Buza Answers, a Q&A platform for high school learners in South Africa. Sewagodimo uses her YouTube channel, Sunshine in my Code, to encourage and teach more people how to code.

### **Tumi Sineke**

Tumi is the head of the OfferZen Foundation, working to improve diversity and inclusion in tech. The foundation's explicit mission is to help people from underserved communities thrive in their tech careers. Their latest initiative, Project Thrive, saw nearly 100 people enter the tech mentoring programme within the first 6 months. Her goal is to lead and implement programmes at scale that have made a positive impact in people's lives: to share her knowledge with those who have previously been excluded.

### **Emma Dicks**

Emma is the co-founder and director of CodeSpace Academy. She is also the founder of Code4CT, an 18-month programme for high school girls that introduces them to coding, design-focused thinking and the IT industry in general. She pioneers transformative education models that prepare youth for the 21st century workplace. Emma is a dedicated global advocate for a more diverse and inclusive economy and tech industry. As a successful South African social entrepreneur, she has a particular interest in supporting young people in pursuing entrepreneurial activities.

Source: [Xneelo](#)

## Happy Birthday



St Dunstan's would like to wish these three phenomenal women a very happy birthday. Maatje Wessels, Mrs Khiba and Mrs Cebisa all celebrated their very special birthdays recently. We would also like to say congratulation to James van Eck, who celebrated a very special birthday in August.

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