



The Torch



Edition #32

Animals throughout history:

In 1928, Buddy, a German Shepherd, becomes the 1st guide dog for a US citizen Morris Frank.

Morris Frank was a blind man from Nashville. His father read him an article by Dorothy Eustis, a woman living in Switzerland who had seen shepherds training dogs to lead blind people get around. Excited by the idea, Frank wrote a letter to Eustis and received a response letter 30 days later inviting him to come see for himself. Frank then took a ship to Europe and trained extensively with a dog that had been bred specifically to lead a blind person. The training was hard, but after weeks with the dog, Frank could get around the nearby Swiss village holding tightly to a harness to which Buddy was strapped.

Morris Frank returned to America. From the day he got off the ship, he was successful. At one point, in front of a group of dumbfounded reporters, Buddy led Frank safely across a busy New York street. "I shall never forget the next three minutes, Ten-ton trucks rocketing past, cabs blowing their horns in our ears, drivers shouting at us. When we finally got to the other side, and I realized what a magnificent job he had done" Frank later wrote.

When Frank returned to Nashville, people were amazed at the sight of the blind man and his dog successfully navigating busy sidewalks and couldn't believe that it was the same blind boy they had so recently taken pity on. What amazed people the most was that Buddy had an ability best known as "intelligent disobedience," which meant that he would obey Morris except when executing that command would result

in harm to his master. If there was a low hanging branch ahead on the sidewalk, for instance, Buddy knew how to navigate around it to the point where Morris wouldn't hurt his head on it.

About this time, Frank, Eustis and several others cofounded The Seeing Eye, an institution set up to train guide dogs and their blind masters. Today, the organization reports that it has, in its 80-year history, trained 14,000 dogs. Buddy is considered the first. In 1978, on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the school, the U.S. issued a commemorative stamp in honor of The Seeing Eye.

Source: Wikipedia



Buddy and Robert Frank

John and Esther Ellerman

John and Esther Ellerman sponsors 24 Orientation and Mobility Officers in South Africa. Here are 2 of their stories on how they have made a difference.

Kidibone Setlhabe - O&M for SAMBT, Mthatha

New to the area, Lindelwa, like the other youngsters, came to hear of the opportunities for young blind people at the arts and craft training centres in Mthatha.

Kidi tells Lindelwa's story of being house bound for five years after losing her sight in her early twenties. Her family was overprotective of (we often find this) and so she remained in her room, depressed and lonely and as she says, 'in denial of my loss of sight.' In the process, Kidi says Lindelwa lost a lot of muscle strength and flexibility.

Lindelwa tells that she even declined independence training once offered, because she was waiting for her sight to be restored.

Having moved to the area, she started gaining confidence, initially staying with some of her new friends from the centre, because she was unable to even do basic things for herself and now recently with Kidi's encouragement, she moved into a room of her own.

Kidi says that since Lindelwa had been so stationary for so many years, her muscles were so stiff when she started training her. "It was clear from the way in which she moved, that she had just been sitting for 5 years". "It was if walking was her gym, it was her therapy, it became her route to independence and also the opportunity to just enjoy fresh air outside." Kidi says Lindelwa can get around on her own with her white cane now, she can get herself to the centre, to the tuck-shop on her own, but that she will need more exercise for her muscles to grow stronger."

"Money," says Kidi, "when Lindelwa got to Mthatha she did not even know how to know the difference between any notes or coins. People around her had to do everything for her, she had no idea how much change anyone brought her when she asked them to buy her something. Now, following Kidi's training, Lindelwa knows how much she has in her purse. She no longer has the worry of distrusting people giving her the correct change. She is quite sure now. She knows what she is handing over to the cashier at the shop. And her disability grant is now sustaining her for the full month because she is in control of her finances."

Lindelwa was amazed when Kidi told her that she could go to college or university. She did not know that a blind person could get a qualification. Lindelwa who lost her sight in the years after writing her matric exams, is now waiting for computers to arrive at the centre. She is one of the young people who hope to start the computer course later this month.

Perhaps most important says Kidi: "Lindelwa now believes she has a future."



Lindelwa on the shop stoep



Sinethemba on a walk

OMASA 2023



Moira Higgerty received a standing ovation for her contribution to O&M recognition and development



Tracy Joubert and Joyce Kegomditswe addressing the crowd

The annual general meeting took place at the SAGD in JHB. Many of the organisations that JEEMT support were in attendance. Various topics were discussed and we are anticipating good news in the near future.

To stay up to date with new developments, visit www.omasaco.za

Our Tech Corner

Garth Long, a beneficiary living in Ireland is one of our tech savvy guys who gives great reviews and feedback on various devices. One of Garth's pet subjects is the all new leasey version 8.

The Leasey by Garth Long

This stunning computer system with so many varied platforms for any level of 'jaws' user is now on 'steroid's. He has just launched version 8 and it is a cracker.



Down the road as we head into some very complex software, some busy websites and a variety of ways of finding our best podcasts and our music you need something designed for us blind folk.

'WhatsApp' for instance, this system is all mapped out for anyone in version 8. On the website you will be able to get a full script on how to use whats app with jaws as well as how to have a zoom meeting.

Please see link for more information. (www.leaseycentral.com)

Roll of Honour corner:

Our congratulations goes to Sergeant Mazibuko Mtwana who received his 30 years of service with the SANDF, medal.



Sgt Mtwana's silver medal



SGT Mtwana with his military uniform

Here is what the Military had to say:

Service medal: Silver-bar.

SGT M MTWANA attended a medal parade on 21 April 2023 held at Ysterplaat air force military base

He was a recipient for 30 years service medal(silver-bar)

This medal is awarded by Chief South African National Defence Force (CSANDF) to members: rendered long excellent and efficient service in SANDF.

We congratulated Zuko for his well-mannered discipline, dedication and uninterrupted service in the organisation.

Birthday Wishes



Angelina Barnado, St Dunstan's Widow recently celebrated a very special birthday. We wish her only the best



Joyce Mtwana wife of St Dunstaner Suko Mtwana celebrated a very special birthday a short while ago



Garth Long, St Dunstaner in the UK, and his twin celebrated a very special birthday



Matteo Wessels recently turned 16 years old. He is the oldest son of Don and Maatje Wessels