



The Torch



Edition #33

Reflecting on a Remarkable Year: Wishing You a Safe and Restful Festive Season

As we approach the end of 2023, it's time to reflect on the moments that shaped the year and express our heartfelt wishes for a safe and restful festive season to all. The journey has been filled



Gareth Morgan

with both highs and lows, but as we navigate through the memories, the general sentiment is one of passion and benevolence.

The Long Cane Rally held in Worcester was a resounding success, bringing together friends and supporters for a day of camaraderie and shared passion. The 2023 rally not only met but exceeded expectations, leaving participants eager for more. We are thrilled to announce that plans for the 2024 version are already underway, promising an even more exciting and memorable event.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the staff and directors who have worked tirelessly throughout the year. Their commitment and hard work have been the driving force behind the organization's success, the team has demonstrated exceptional dedication, navigating both triumphs and challenges with resilience and grace.

As we close the chapter on 2023, we want to express our gratitude to everyone involved—beneficiaries, staff, directors, and supporters. Your contributions have made a positive impact, allowing us to manage our resources effectively and provide for the well-being of our beneficiaries.

Looking ahead to 2024, we carry the lessons learned and the spirit of resilience forward. As the year comes to a close, we wish everyone a joyous festive season, filled with love, laughter, and moments of reflection. May the new year bring prosperity, good health, and continued success to all.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and here's to a bright and promising 2024!

Kindest of regards

Gareth Morgan

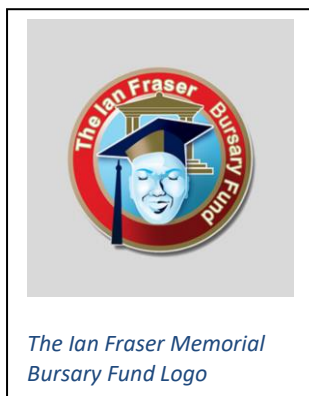
Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders

The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund's visionary Partnership with

The Centre for Coaching, situated at the UCT Graduate School of Business

In a world where education is the key to unlocking one's full potential, bursaries are the guiding light that brighten the path to success for many students. The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Trust, recognizing the transformative power of education, has taken this concept a step further. Through a groundbreaking partnership with The Centre for Coaching, a Centre of excellence situated at The UCT Graduate School of Business in Cape Town, not only financial assistance but also invaluable coaching support is being offered to the Trust's bursary recipients. What makes this collaboration even more remarkable is its focus on students with visual impairments, a group that faces unique challenges in their pursuit of higher education.

The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund: A Beacon of Hope



The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Trust has long been committed to making higher education accessible to deserving South African students. Founded in memory of Ian Fraser, a visionary leader who believed in the power of education, the trust has provided financial assistance to countless individuals over the years. However, they realized that financial support alone is not always sufficient for students to thrive academically and personally. This realization led to a novel partnership with The Centre for Coaching, situated at The UCT Graduate School of Business, enriching the lives of bursary recipients in ways that extend far beyond monetary aid.

Coaching for Success: A Unique Approach

Coaching is a powerful tool for personal and professional development, offering individuals the opportunity to set and achieve their goals, navigate challenges, and harness their full potential. The partnership between the Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Trust and The Centre for Coaching has brought this transformative process to the forefront of their bursary program. Bursary recipients are now paired with skilled professional integral coaches who provide guidance, support, and development throughout their educational journey.

A Focus on Visual Impairments: Overcoming Unique Challenges

What sets this partnership apart is its focus on students with visual impairments. The coaches, in collaboration with the admin staff at Ian Fraser, have worked to understand and address the unique challenges faced by these students. From navigating academic requirements to accessing digital resources, the coaches have been instrumental in finding innovative solutions to ensure that students with visual impairments have equal access to education.

A Win – Win: Positive Outcomes for All

The impact of this partnership has been overwhelmingly positive. For bursary recipients, the coaching experience has proven invaluable. It has not only helped them excel academically but has also boosted their confidence, independence, and resilience. The personal growth and development these students have experienced are a testament to the power of coaching.

On the other side of the equation, the coaches themselves have gained immeasurable insights and personal growth. Working with students facing unique challenges has expanded their horizons and deepened their understanding of diversity and inclusion. It has been a two-way street of learning and growth, where coaches have discovered the limitless potential within every individual.

Lighting the way for Future Generations

The partnership between the Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Trust and The Centre for Coaching at The UCT Graduate School of Business is a shining example of how collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to inclusivity can transform lives. By extending their support to students with visual impairments and providing coaching, they are not only investing in the future of these individuals but also in the future of the nation.

As this partnership continues to flourish, it serves as a beacon of hope, lighting the way for future generations of students who dare to dream, overcome obstacles, and strive for excellence. It demonstrates that with the right support, anyone can achieve greatness, regardless of the challenges they may face. The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Trust and The Centre for Coaching are indeed shaping a brighter, more inclusive future for South Africa's students.

AI and the future of technology for people with sight loss

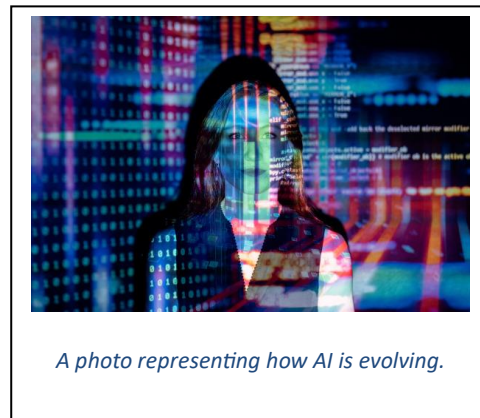
Recently we have read some stories on the developments of Technology and AI when it comes to guiding devices for people with Sight loss.

Some ideas are far-fetched, and some are more realistic, one is a robotic guide dog, and the other idea is an AI-powered suitcase that guides the blind person to their destination.

The headlines went like this:

1. Computer scientists programme robotic Seeing AI dog to guide the visually impaired.
2. AI suitcase tested outdoors to guide the visually impaired.

We will deal with the Guide dog first. Binghamton University of Professor of Computer students have programmed the visually impaired. The its leash. They presented a robot dog led a person confidently and carefully input. The developer came studying guide dog users users do not use the dog for reasons.



development of the robotic New York Associate Science Shiqi Zhang and his a robot guide dog to assist robot responds to tugs on demonstration in which the around a lab hallway, responding to directive up with this idea after and finding that most dog their whole lives for several

Firstly, a Dog has a working life of 8 to 10 years and there is a space of time while waiting for a new dog.

He also mentioned the cost of training a new dog, upwards of €50,000 per dog and training can take around 2 years.

So that was his argument for developing such a device.

This is called quadruped technology.

It is currently a research project in its early stages and has only worked indoors so far.

No mention of the cost of course. "If this is going well, then potentially in a few years we can set up this seeing-eye robot dog at shopping malls and airports.

It's pretty much like how people use shared bicycles on campus," Zhang said.

The developers hope to install the ability to give voice commands and the installation of maps.

(Personally, I do not see us replacing the Guide dog with a Seeing AI robot anytime soon.

At least we do not have to charge our Guide dog and of course, a dog gives us that other great benefit called companionship.)

Moving onto the AI Suitcase article, Chieko Asakawa is developing an AI-powered suitcase that can guide people with vision impairment around. She thought it would be convenient if her suitcase could automatically show her the way and she believed by developing such a product Blind and Vision impaired people would get more freedom and go out more.

The project initially started in the US in 2017 but big companies have joined the project such as IBM Japan, and Shimizu Corp to help test indoor navigation in Airports and other areas.

So, this project looks to have more promise already as there is a semblance of power and money behind it.

Chieko tried an experiment in September with the AI Powered Suitcase where it guided her to the nearest station from her workplace in Tokyo's Koto Ward.

It uses two different systems for navigation, for indoors it uses a light detection and ranging (LiDAR) system to detect obstacles with laser light. And for outdoors it uses a type of GPS real-time kinematic (RTK) satellite positioning system, and it has a camera on its front and a computer inside to process information.

But the suitcase does have its very own issues.

It has difficulty sometimes navigating from different surfaces such as going from indoor to outdoor and the wheels can get caught in doorways or steps and it can find navigating through crowds challenging.

But at least it does not look too out of place as someone pushing a suitcase is a very normal event as if it was some other form of a device, it could gather unwanted attention.

People with sight loss do care how they look.

The project team aims to put the AI-powered suitcase into practical use at airports, hospitals, and other facilities by March 2027.

In My opinion, the Suitcase looks like a more realistic solution and is socially more acceptable to most people.

It is only a matter of time before more companies get confident in making this kind of mobility aid. They can take navigation ideas from Robot Vacuums which successfully navigate indoors and avoid obstacles but when it comes to guiding a Human around the outside world it adds many more variables. Safety is paramount and AI is relatively new in this space. Do people really trust AI yet, especially with all their hierarchy issues and teething problems.

Even Smart canes have not gathered the attention of the majority of blind or visually impaired people.

So, I believe the trusty Guide dog and White Cane are safe for another while yet, but it is definitely an interesting space to watch?

We can put it in a similar folder to our dreams of using a self-driving car.

Sent by Garth Long

Embrace the festive cheer!

It's the most wonderful time of the year... a time for holiday fun, celebration, and joyous moments with the ones we love – all of which can tend to get a little stressful, demanding, and overwhelming to bear.

Keep your sanity and beat the holiday blues this festive season with a few simple tips to get your cheer on.

1. Stay healthy

The holidays are filled with tempting treats that have us feeling guilt-ridden the day after, but this year, no food should be on the naughty list.

We believe that good food made from fresh, organic produce will have you fitting in all your favourite treats without the guilt. Whether you choose to eat in or out, we've got you covered with menus that include organic produce from lovingly tendered gardens right outside our kitchen door.

2. Be open to new experiences



The Midlands certainly has something for everyone, with a plethora of beautiful places to see and experience. Get out of your comfort zone and say hello to the inner adventurer you've been hiding from.

Start your morning off with a breathtaking hot air balloon flight at sunrise boasting an aerial view of the beautiful, rolling hills of the Midlands. At noon, venture through the crisp mountains on a horseback ride tour; and head off to a thrilling escapade of zip-lines, the perfect way to go explore The Midlands. Explore the many art galleries in the area and end with an incredible dining experience, delve into culinary masterpieces at Skyfall Fine Dining Restaurant – offering you a new taste adventure that will have your taste buds screaming for more.

3. Renew and destress

This year has been stressful but we're here to take your blues away – and all you have to do is just relax. Escape into the tranquility of the Healing Earth Africa Spa at Brahman Hills, a haven of serenity and pure luxury – just what your body needs for a total mind and body reset.

4. Connect with others

The holiday season is the best time to reconnect with family and friends – life tends to stray us away from the ones we love with its pressures and demands of our everyday routine, but this holiday season, make time for the people who really matter.

5. Take a break

A little 'me' time is all we need to enjoy simple pleasures this holiday. Remember that you matter too – a little break away from reality is great for the soul. Whether it's an afternoon nap, reading your favourite book, taking an afternoon scenic stroll - take a moment just for you.

Our magical gardens will be the perfect escape for a picnic. Not only is our garden a pleasure to amble around in but it also an artistic paradise – offering world-class sculptures.

6. Find your harmony

New year, new me...

Finding harmony can be daunting but here are a few ways to do so:

A healthy outlook on life gives us hope to be better and do better, at home and at work. It isn't always easy to stay positive and find your silver lining but always invest in 'you' first. Don't look for excuses of why things are not attainable but rather, find every possible way to reach for the goals you set.

Good health is key – make time to exercise, eat healthier and maintain a work-life balance so you don't get consumed.

Remember, not everything goes as planned, but take every hurdle as a scenic route to your journey ahead - and never give up!

“Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Source: [The Brahman Hills Team](#)

The Cenotaph was moved in time for Remembrance Day 2024

Cape Town’s famous war memorial, the Cenotaph, has been moved to its new and final resting place in time for Remembrance Day celebrations

The Cenotaph, initially erected to honour South Africans who died in battle during World War I, takes pride of place in the Heerengracht, in the heart of the Cape Town CBD.

The striking angel statue, first unveiled on 3 August 1924, had to be moved from Adderley Street to make way for a MyCiTi feeder station. Work on this station has commenced and should be completed by November 2014. This includes building work, gates, signage and passenger information displays.



“The Cenotaph is now located in the middle of the Heerengracht, on the Adderley Street and Heerengracht historic axis – a landmark site with excellent visibility. The new site allows for safe pedestrian access and is acceptable to the military representatives for the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies,” said the City’s Mayoral Committee Member for Transport for Cape Town (TCT), Councillor Brett Herron.

A heritage assessment was commissioned, and the dismantling and reassembly of the Cenotaph took place in accordance with the National Heritage Resources Act. The provincial heritage authority, Heritage Western Cape, authorised the relocation of the Cenotaph.

Every block of the statue was marked, transported to the new location, and carefully repositioned and reconstructed. A new square granite base, similar to the Cenotaph’s historic square base, has been designed and constructed. The Cenotaph soldiers have been repositioned according to the original design.

It is not only a dignified position but also a safer site for the Cenotaph with less threat of vandalism than other proposed sites.

In its original position the Cenotaph was positioned across Adderley Street with the Winged Victory facing Table Mountain. At the inception ceremony it was said: “It was in this vicinity that our gallant

South Africans took their last glance back at the old city and mountain, and heard the cheers of friends as they marched down to the docks to embark on their great adventure.”

This is the reason that the Winged Victory faces Table Mountain in its new position.

The angel is a copy of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, also called the Nike of Samothrace – a second century BC marble sculpture of the Greek goddess Nike, which means Victory.

The Cenotaph was initially erected in honour of the South Africans who died in battle during the First World War, which at the time was the greatest struggle the world had ever known. Later, the soldiers who died in the Second World War, as well as the Korean War, were also added to the remembrance list.

“The Cenotaph honours the soldiers who lost their lives in the line of duty during some of the greatest struggles the world experienced. It is also a symbol of victory and remembrance of those who fought so bravely for our country,” said Councillor Herron.

The City is confident that the new location will make this monument far more accessible to members of the public as well as for ceremonies.

Source: [Cape Town CCID](#)

Birthday Wishes



Pieter Engelbrecht celebrated a very special birthday in November. We wish him many more happy and healthy years to come.

Blind SA launched an isiZulu TTS SAPI voice for Windows

On 26 October Blind SA launched an isiZulu TTS SAPI voice for Windows that will work with any Windows screen reader. It is a high quality voice that was developed for Blind SA by Philip Bennefall from Sweden in collaboration with staff from the Linguistics Department at Wits University. The Voice is called MBali which is an isiZulu name meaning "flower". The voice is provided free of charge to blind persons. If you would like to receive a copy of the voice, send your request to:

support.tts@blindsa.org.za

Blind SA decided to have TTS developed for our local languages and to start with three voices. IsiZulu has now been completed and work has commenced on Setswana which is being developed by Mark Reddy from the USA also in collaboration with the same people at Wits. It is expected to be completed by around April 2024. Blind SA is now looking at funding options to begin development of an Afrikaans voice.

Office Closure



Our offices will be closed from 18 December 2023 and open again on 8 January 2024. We wish everyone a safe and happy festive season and a prosperous 2024.

Special Word of Thanks

We want to extend a special gratitude to [Tape Aids](#) for the blind for the exceptional work done by narrating our newsletter.