



THE TORCH

Graduates 2025/2026

We are delighted to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our graduates this year. Their success is a testament to the power of determination, resilience, and unwavering commitment to their goals. Despite the challenges they may have faced along the way, they have demonstrated that with perseverance, hard work, and courage, anything is possible.

As an organisation dedicated to supporting blind and visually impaired students in pursuing their educational aspirations, we are deeply honoured to have been part of their journey. Watching these talented individuals reach this milestone reinforces our belief that education remains one of the most powerful pathways to independence and opportunity.



Lilley Berrington (middle) with her Supervisor (L) and her Mom (R)



Rinette Von Mollendorf

To our graduates, we extend our heartfelt congratulations. Your accomplishments inspire us all and serve as a powerful reminder that barriers can be overcome and dreams can be realised. We look forward to seeing the positive impact you will make as you step into the next chapter of your lives as leaders, professionals, and role models.

Lilley obtained her Master's in Human Rehabilitation at the University of Stellenbosch

Maria graduated with a Bachelor of Education at Unisa.

Akademia awarded a Post Graduate Certificate in Education to Rinette Von Mollendorf



Maria Aphane

Inside:

Visual Impairment and Friendship

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How to access free and paid libraries for the Visually Impaired or Blind

Accessing libraries for the visually impaired in South Africa is largely free, primarily facilitated through state-funded institutions and local public libraries.

A Dream 58 Years in the Making

At St Dunstan's, we are continually inspired by the determination, creativity, and resilience of our beneficiaries. One such example is Renier Heyns, who is currently undertaking an exciting vehicle restoration and development project.

Visual Impairment and Friendship

Helen Keller had an intense interest in wide-ranging political, intellectual, and artistic issues. She would regularly attend gatherings with friends which allowed her to explore the things she was fascinated by.

She described these meetings as a “priceless blessing”. She grew a particularly close friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom Helen had publicly supported. Eleanor was also celebrated for her politically active role and advocacy for women’s rights, and their mutual interests were a source of great joy



Some friendships last forever

for Helen. When Helen met with Eleanor, she eagerly explored her face with her hands and read her lips. She wrote afterwards that “nothing could have meant more to me than a real talk with Mrs. Roosevelt.”

Research commissioned by the Thomas Pocklington Trust found that, although many VI people experience loneliness, loneliness and social isolation are, of course, not inevitable consequences of sight loss. Experiences of loneliness are a result of multiple factors including difficulty communicating and interacting in different social settings, self-esteem, and age (with both younger and older people being most susceptible, and at a higher rate than their sighted peers). It concludes that strategies should be more focussed on a few key things. Children should be enabled to develop social skills and be given access to varied opportunities for socialisation, and, more generally, peer support and practical coping strategies should be taught to those who experience loneliness.

Friendship, then, is an obvious and essential remedy to the problem of loneliness. With increasing advocacy and initiatives, the opportunities for VI people to make friends are always growing. But there isn’t a blanket solution when it comes to making friends. Many VI people report having difficulty making friends with sighted people, whilst younger people with visual impairments have more difficulties making friends in general than older people, who tend to be more experienced and skilled at socialising.

Differences in natural levels of social confidence as well as introversion and extroversion mean that different strategies should be employed for and by different groups. What is essential is that VI people are equipped with the social skills and knowledge to engage with people in a way that suits their temperament and personality. Parents of VI children have a big role to play here. It’s a great idea to befriend older VI people who can provide guidance and give your child the confidence to explore and take risks.

Fortunately, with the rise of things such as guided runners, blind football teams, and other specialised activities, VI people are more able now than at any other time in history to participate casually in sports and other activities, and to be inspired by VI role models. Beyond this, there are more and more VI influencers who post lifestyle, gaming, and all sorts of other content online. They are developing a significant following of both VI and sighted people, which can provide enriching online communities to be a part of.

Source: [Low Vision Shop](#)

How to access free and paid libraries for the Visually Impaired or Blind



Many people find their peace while reading in a library

Accessing libraries for the visually impaired in South Africa is largely free, primarily facilitated through state-funded institutions and local public libraries.

Registration requires proof of visual impairment. The following guide details the top resources, how to qualify, and how to access them.

1. South African Library for the Blind (SALB)

The SALB is the premier national resource, offering thousands of Braille titles, audiobooks, and magazines in accessible formats.

- Cost: Completely free.
- How to Access: Membership is available to anyone who is blind, has low vision, or has a print disability. You can register online or visit a local public library that hosts an SALB mini-library (there are dozens spread across municipalities like Cape Town, George, and Ekurhuleni).
- Key Features: Members can access the online digital catalog or receive books via a free postal delivery service. They also provide portable listening devices, such as the solar-powered Envoy Connect, which stores multiple audiobooks.
- Link: Join via the [SALB Library Registration](#) page.

2. Blind SA Bookshare

Blind SA operates a massive digital library specifically for those who are visually impaired.

- Cost: Free.
- How to Access: You must register as a member by proving your visual impairment. Once approved, you can download alternative formats (e.g., audio, highlighted text, large text, or Braille) to your preferred device.
- Key Features: It integrates with multiple screen readers and apps like EasyReader or Voice Dream Reader to provide a seamless reading experience.
- Link: Find information and sign up via [Blind SA Bookshare](#).

3. Local Municipal & Provincial Public Libraries

Many provincial governments (such as the Western Cape and Gauteng) have partnered with the SALB to install "Mini-Libraries for the Blind" in standard public libraries.

- Cost: Free.
- How to Access: Visit your nearest regional public library with your ID and proof of residence to sign up for standard library services. Ask specifically about their dedicated stations for the visually impaired.
- Key Features: These mini-libraries feature specialized workstations equipped with screen-reading software (like JAWS or MAGic), refreshable Braille displays, and enlarged-letter keyboards.

4. International Paid & Premium Options

For a wider selection of international literature, specialized paid or freemium global libraries are accessible from South Africa:

- Bookshare International: While primarily an American service, it is available globally (often with free memberships for qualifying individuals in developing countries) and offers millions of titles.
- Learning Ally: A paid subscription service in the US offering human-narrated audiobooks; it can be utilized in South Africa provided you have the required assistive technology.

What You Need to Register

To access these specialized library services, you generally need to provide:

1. Your South African ID (or valid passport).
2. Proof of residence.
3. Proof of Disability: A medical certificate, an audiologist's report, or a declaration from an eye specialist, optometrist, or organization for the blind confirming your visual impairment or print disability.

Source: [St Dunstans](#), [Blind SA](#), [Teaching Visually Impaired](#)

Beneficiary News

Celebrating a Precious Blessing

We extend our warmest congratulations to our widow beneficiary, Mrs Kawewe, who has recently been blessed with the arrival of her great-granddaughter, Chloe

The birth of a new generation is a special reminder of life's enduring gifts, the strength of family bonds, and the legacy of love that is passed from one generation to the next. Becoming a great-grandparent is a remarkable milestone, bringing immense joy, pride, and the opportunity to witness the continued growth of a family.

We celebrate this wonderful blessing with her and share in her happiness. May this little one bring countless moments of joy, laughter, and treasured memories in the years ahead.

From all of us at St Dunstan's, we wish her and her family every happiness as they embark on this beautiful new chapter.



Mrs Kawewe with her grand-daughter, and great-granddaughter

More Graduation Celebrations



Faustina Bernardo and her Mom, Angelina

Well Done



We are delighted to celebrate the achievement of, Faustina Bernado, daughter of one of our valued widow beneficiaries, Mrs Angelina Bernado, who has successfully completed her training at the Cabin Crew Academy and obtained her CAA Aviation Licence.

This accomplishment is a testament to her dedication, perseverance, and commitment to pursuing her dreams. We are proud to have supported her on this journey and look forward to seeing her soar to new heights in her aviation career. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and wish her every success as she embarks on this exciting new chapter.

“This Ford Capri GT has been my dream car for as long as I can remember, and finally owning one feels incredibly rewarding. Working on this car in my free time keeps me busy and brings me tremendous joy. I am determined to make it absolutely perfect, and I look forward to the day when the project is complete.”

-RENIER HEYNS

A Dream 58 Years in the Making

At St Dunstan's, we are continually inspired by the determination, creativity, and resilience of our beneficiaries. One such example is Renier Heyns, who is currently undertaking an exciting vehicle restoration and development project. For many people, childhood dreams remain just that —dreams. For Renier, however, a lifelong ambition has finally become a reality.

After waiting 58 years, Renier is now the proud owner of a 1970 3L Ford Capri GT, a vehicle he has admired since his younger days. What makes this achievement even more special is that he is personally restoring and improving the car as a retirement project, dedicating his free time to bringing his dream vehicle back to its full glory.



The 1970 3L Ford Capri GT



The 56-year old dashboard

The project keeps him actively engaged, provides a sense of purpose, and brings him immense joy. It is a testament to his determination, passion, and belief that it is never too late to pursue a dream.

Renier is confident that, once completed, the 1970 3L Ford Capri GT will be everything he has imagined it to be.

We are delighted to share his story and wish him many happy hours working on this remarkable labour of love.

Looking Ahead to the 2026 Long Cane Fun Walk

Following the success of previous Long Cane Rallies, excitement is already building for the 2026 event. The Long Cane Fun Walk continues to be a highlight on the calendar, bringing together blind and visually impaired participants, their families,



The Long Cane Rally 2024

We look forward to welcoming familiar faces and new participants as we continue to celebrate freedom of movement, resilience, and the spirit of inclusion that lies at the heart of the Long Cane Fun Walk.

Together we continue to demonstrate that blindness need not limit independence, and that with the right skills and support, freedom of movement is possible for everyone.

The End

Upcoming Events

LONG CANE FUN WALK
Freedom in Motion: The Power of Independence and OM Excellence

24 October 2026
9am
Sea Point

021 531 2028 | @stdunstans | stdunstans.org.za

Orientation and Mobility Practitioners, volunteers, and supporters in a celebration of independence, confidence, and achievement.

This year promises another inspiring day of camaraderie, awareness, and empowerment as participants demonstrate the skills that enable them to navigate their communities with confidence.

The event will once again showcase the importance of Orientation and Mobility training and the life-changing impact it has on the lives of blind and visually impaired South Africans.