The Torch

Edition 43

Ian Fraser Students 2025

Janey van Deventer is a dedicated honours student in Psychological Counselling at the University of South Africa (Unisa). As a partially sighted individual, Janey faces unique challenges, but her passion for helping others remains unwavering. She chose this course intending to register with the Association for Supportive Counsellors and Holistic Practitioners (ASCHP), as it is a critical step in her journey toward becoming a professional counsellor.

Janey Van Deventer

Upon completion of her studies, Janey aspires to pursue a career in counselling, offering support and guidance to individuals navigating life's difficulties. She believes in the power of counselling to transform lives and is committed to making a meaningful impact in the field.

Beyond her studies, Janey has a deep interest in education, early childhood development, and history. She believes in the power of education to shape the future and is passionate about continuing to grow both professionally and personally. With her determination and focus, Janey is well on her way to making a significant impact in the world of counselling.

Johannes Mogashoa, a first-year Bachelor of Law student at the University of South Africa (Unisa), is passionate about learning the intricacies of human rights, property rights, and estate administration. As a blind individual, Johannes is determined to excel in his studies and pursue a

successful career in law. He chose to study law to significantly impact the legal field, particularly in areas that affect human rights and justice.

Johannes Mogashoa

Upon completing his studies, Johannes aspires to become either a legal advisor or a human rights lawyer. His goal is to serve the community by advocating for justice and supporting individuals in need of legal representation.

One of Johannes's biggest challenges is securing enough assistive devices to study effectively and efficiently. Despite this obstacle, he remains committed to his academic success and career aspirations.

In addition to his legal studies, Johannes has a wide range of interests. He is deeply engaged in issues related to governance and leadership, and enjoys following sports, particularly cricket and soccer. He also finds solace in music, especially jazz, which serves as a source of relaxation and inspiration.

Bonke Mdiza, a Master of Education student specializing in Inclusive Education at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, is committed to advocating for a more inclusive and accessible education system. As a partially sighted individual, Bonke's personal experiences have fuelled a deep passion for ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support they need to succeed in educational settings. This drive has led Bonke to pursue a Master's degree to become a university lecturer in inclusive education.

Bonke Mdiza

After completing his studies, Bonke aspires to share his knowledge and experiences by teaching at a university level, inspiring future educators to prioritize inclusivity in their teaching practices. His passion for education and advocacy motivates him to work toward creating a more equitable environment for all students, regardless of their abilities.

Beyond his academic pursuits, Bonke is passionate about research, personal development, and disability rights advocacy. He enjoys reading, engaging in discussions on educational policies, and exploring ways to improve access to quality education for all students. Bonke's commitment to inclusive education and his vision for a more accessible future make him a dynamic and inspiring individual in the field of education.

Slade Heydenrych is a passionate student currently pursuing a BA in Arts and Media Studies at Eduvos. As a partially sighted individual, Slade has a strong commitment to overcoming challenges and achieving his goals in the world of journalism and radio broadcasting. He chose this course because it aligns perfectly with his career aspirations and interests, providing him with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in these fields.

Slade Hydendrych

After completing his studies, Slade aims to pursue a career in journalism or radio broadcasting, where he hopes to make a significant impact in the media industry. He is driven by a desire to tell stories and share important information, with the goal of connecting people and communities through his work.

Slade's biggest challenge is his partial sight, but he remains determined to overcome any obstacles in order to succeed. Despite this challenge, he continues to pursue his passion for the media industry with resilience and dedication.

Outside of his academic pursuits, Slade enjoys playing golf and listening to music. These hobbies offer him a balance between his studies and personal interests, allowing him to relax and recharge as he works toward his career goals in journalism and broadcasting.

Samantha Daniels is an MPhil student in Disability Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). As a blind individual, Samantha is deeply committed to advancing inclusive education in South Africa. She believes her research will significantly contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding inclusive education practices, particularly in the context of visual impairments. Samantha's goal is to develop guidelines for improving the working conditions of educators with visual impairments and to influence the review and amendment of educational and employment policies. Ultimately, she envisions her work leading to more effective and inclusive educational practices in South Africa.

Samantha Daniels

Samantha aspires to become a curriculum and policy advisor for inclusive education, focusing on advocating for persons with disabilities, after completion of her studies. She is passionate about creating systemic changes that will improve opportunities for people with disabilities, both in education and in the workforce.

Her biggest challenge is sourcing study materials quickly while balancing her time between work, family, and her studies. Despite these challenges, Samantha remains dedicated to her academic and professional goals.

Samantha is passionate about supporting parents of visual impaired children and raising awareness about disability rights and inclusion. She enjoys teaching and, when time permits, participating in nature excursions with family and friends.

Be My Eyes and Meta Announce Accessibility Partnership

Be My Eyes to provide “Call a Volunteer” on Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses, unlocking hands-free accessibility for blind and low vision people for the first time

Be My Eyes, the company that connects people who are blind or have low vision with sighted volunteers and companies, through live video and AI, is thrilled to announce a groundbreaking partnership with Meta to provide its award-winning technology on Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, which blend cutting edge technology with iconic design.

Be My Eys and Meta have a great new partnership

In a market first, the Ray-Ban Meta and Be My Eyes partnership will allow the user to initiate Be My Eyes’ “Call a Volunteer” experience entirely by voice command. Saying “Hey Meta, Call a Volunteer on Be My Eyes” will connect users to a sighted volunteer, who speaks the user’s language, via a one-way video, two-way audio call. Through this integration, the volunteer will see through the lens of the smart glasses in order to provide a real-time description to the user through their open-ear speakers, for everyday tasks such as setting a thermostat, finding the right supermarket aisle, or preparing meals—all while keeping the user's hands free. The Be My Eyes service is completely free for the end user, and already available any time of the day or night.

The “Call a Volunteer” feature on Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses is the first product offering of a wider, combined development partnership between Be My Eyes and Meta, and will be available soon, initially for users in the US, Canada, UK, Ireland, and Australia.

The combined development work will deliver new levels of accessibility for people who are blind or have low vision, and for the first time, will provide hands-free access to Be My Eyes technology and their global network of 7.7 million volunteers. The development partnership is focused around platform-native integration and ease-of-use, with direct input and unprecedented testing from the blind and low-vision community.

For example, the “Call a Volunteer” integration will allow for easy toggling between glasses and smartphone camera, and back again, providing the user with the flexibility of switching between the world view and the selfie view. This level of functionality is only possible through close development co-operation between the two companies.

The integration of the Be My Eyes platform with Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses is also being designed with simplicity and elegance from the outset, and with a suite of hands-free capabilities, which will provide an unprecedented, powerful description tool for blind people at work, school or home.

“The Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses hands-free form factor makes them uniquely versatile to serve everyone, including the blind and low vision community,” said Freddy Abnousi, VP of Health Technology at Meta. “The Call a Volunteer feature is the first product offering of combined development between Meta and Be My Eyes and we look forward to seeing how it evolves with direct input from this community.”

"Our collaboration with Meta launches an experience that addresses something that our community of blind and low-vision users has been requesting for a long time, namely hands-free access to our services." said Mike Buckley, CEO of Be My Eyes. "The Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses have enabled that, and with our integration we have now opened a gateway to unprecedented levels of accessibility, unlocking new opportunities for those navigating their daily lives. And this is just the beginning."

"At Meta, our approach to inclusive innovation is a guiding principle that shapes how we build and design our products. We're working to build technologies that are truly reflective of the diversity of our nearly 4 billion global users, and our partnership with Be My Eyes is a significant step towards making the world more inclusive and accessible for people who are blind or have low vision,” said Maxine Williams. Chief Diversity Officer at Meta. “We're excited about the potential of this collaboration and look forward to continuing our work in making accessibility a core part of our product development."

Potential use cases for the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses with Be My Eyes are vast. From assisting with grocery shopping, locating a dropped item, reading important documents, or simply getting a visual description of a complex environment such as a busy airport. Whatever the situation, the glasses combined with Be My Eyes services provide an essential tool that now brings new levels of hands-free accessibility to everyday life.

“As an avid user of Be My Eyes since its launch in 2015, I was excited to test out the integration with Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses,” said Chancey Fleet, a tech educator and advocate who is blind. “It's the same core connection between a blind or low-vision user and a sighted volunteer, but, now that it's

hands-free, I can focus on the conversation and what's happening around me, without the distraction of holding and pointing a phone camera. Last week, for example, I used the integration to find my way through a busy airport, from curbside through security to my gate. Sharing my view from the glasses with a volunteer freed my hands up to manage my bags, react to my guide dog's cues, and use my phone to show my boarding pass. This partnership gives Be My Eyes users a powerful new way to actively explore the world".

Source: Be My Eyes

Meet Glide: The World's First Intelligent Guide

Glide is the world's first autonomous, self-guided mobility aid designed for people who are blind or have low vision.

1The Glide Device *Photo Credit: Glide*

Glide To Independence.

Glide is a pioneering AI-powered mobility aid designed to help people who are blind or have low vision navigate with confidence, comfort, and ease.

Our Sensible Wayfinding technology autonomously guides, avoids obstacles, stays on a safe path, and helps you get to your destination.

We believe that freedom of mobility for those who experience vision loss – whether fully blind or vision impaired – is a right; not a luxury. That's why we're on a mission to break down barriers to independent movement for everyone.

Glide's Capabilities:

- Intelligently navigate around obstacles and hazards.
- Locate doors, elevators, stairs, and more.
- Guide you to your destination safely, indoors & outdoors.
- Describe your surroundings with an active scene description.
- Allow for pre-mapped routes and spontaneous walking.

What can Glide do?

Glide simply guides the way

Hold Glide's ergonomic handle in one hand in front of you and walk at your own pace. Glide will simply guide you by steering its wheels.

Avoid obstacles

With obstacle detection for both stationary and moving objects, you can confidently navigate high-traffic areas.

Find doors, elevators, stairs, & more

With its camera and sensors, Glide will detect and direct you to key waypoints and line-of-sight targets and apply its haptic handle and automatic braking system when you arrive.

Have your surroundings described with an active scene description

As you walk, voice feedback keeps you updated on relevant details within your environment.

Pre-mapped and spontaneous walking

Pre-program your most frequent routes or simply start walking without a set destination in mind. Glide will keep you on a path & avoid obstacles.

Powered by Glidance AI

Glidance's Sensible Wayfinding Service is a high intensity computer vision and sense making AI system built by Glidance, which connects all active Glides and powers their ability to understand complex spaces and guide you through them.

It uses real-time data from an array of advanced sensors to map the best routes, identify targets of interest, and avoid obstacles to get you safely to your destination.

Source: Glidance

Beneficiary News

Reimund and PJ Engelbrecht

In a rapid rise, Reimund and PJ Engelbrecht have qualified for the South African Kickboxing Championship in KZN, just months after their qualification for the Gauteng Championship in March.

Aplonia with her sewing machine

Aplonia has showcased her sewing and designing skills on many occasions. She continues to come up with new designs and upskilling herself regularly. It is just fitting that she owns her own sewing machine.

The End