

ISSUE 7 • FEBRUARY 2026

NEWSLETTER

Official Newsletter of ChangeAbility
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A new year of possibilities!

CINDY WIGGETT-BARNARD, CEO

Thank you for reading our seventh newsletter, the first one for 2026! We love sharing our news with you as we welcome a new year of possibilities.

We envision a world where people see the potential and abilities in others, and where they embrace it in themselves. Our name, ChangeAbility, reflects why we do what we do. We do it because we love people and we dream of a world where all people are recognised for their abilities. We believe our programmes can change communities by improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you for reading!



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Success Story

VICTOR PAUL, KLAPMUTS

Victor Paul turned 69 just two days before we sat down to speak with him. A lifelong resident of Klapmuts, Victor is a father of three, two daughters in their forties and a 34-year-old son who lives with him. He sadly lost his wife three years ago. A former quality controller, he took early retirement due to ongoing knee problems, yet former colleagues still phone him for advice...a testament to the knowledge and respect he carries.

In October last year, Victor's life changed suddenly. While standing at his gate, his legs gave way beneath him. With no strength in his legs or hands, he had to call for help from passers-by, who assisted him into his home before he was rushed to a doctor. Despite extensive pain and previous knee replacements, he was discharged without a clear diagnosis. To this day, he experiences numbness and pins and needles in two fingers on each hand, as well as numbness in his legs.



For nearly three months, Victor was largely immobile and confined to a chair. He temporarily borrowed a wheelchair from his pastor's family after being discharged without any assistive devices. The sudden dependence on others was deeply frustrating. "I want to walk," he says firmly. Although some advised him to rely fully on a wheelchair, he feared it would make him "lazy". He did not want to feel defeated.

Our Klapmuts peer supporter, Francois Etson (pictured on the right), heard about Victor's collapse through Victor's daughter. The two men have known each other for years through the local rugby club and community events. Francois immediately visited Victor at home. Victor recalls joking with him: "You yourself are disabled and now you are running around to help another disabled person." They both laughed, but Francois was serious about ensuring Victor received proper support.

"You yourself are disabled and now you are running around to help another disabled person."

**VICTOR PAUL (LEFT)
TO OUR PEER SUPPORTER,
FRANCOIS ETSON (BELOW)**





Success Story

VICTOR PAUL, KLAPMUTS

Francois assisted Victor in connecting with the allied health team at Stellenbosch Hospital. Physiotherapists assessed his needs at the local clinic, completed wheelchair measurements and submitted the necessary applications. In January, Victor received a walking frame and he is currently on the waiting list for a wheelchair. The wheelchair will assist with longer distances in the community, as walking extended distances with the frame remains slow and painful. "You have to accept that it takes time," Victor says.

Today, there is steady improvement. With his walker, Victor is able to move around his home independently. He sweeps and mops his floors himself and insists on caring for his own space. Although he continues to visit Paarl and Tygerberg hospitals for tests, with explanations ranging from worsening arthritis to nerve blockages and the possibility of another knee replacement, he remains determined. He elevates his arms to manage the pain in his fingers and has adapted how he washes and dresses. "I want to go forward, not back," he says with conviction.



Victor speaks highly of Francois, who remains in regular phone contact. He has already referred others at the clinic to Francois, including a man with a broken wheelchair. "Information is something you must share," Victor says. "You have to tell others there is hope out there." As a pastor himself, he believes in inspiring others through hope, hard work and trust. "You have to love what you do. Then you will do it well and continue to do it better."

Reflecting on his journey, Victor says ChangeAbility's peer support "gave my life a new colour." The support made his life more comfortable and reminded him not to give up. He ended our conversation with encouragement for our team: "Sometimes it can feel as if your work doesn't make a difference, but it has great worth." His words echo the heart of peer support: community, dignity and hope in action.

"I Want to Go Forward, Not Back"

VICTOR PAUL



Volunteer Spotlight

RENSKE MINNAAR, REPOSITIONING LEADER

Renske Minnaar recently retired as CEO of Bergzicht Training, yet retirement has not slowed her pace or her commitment to Stellenbosch. While she stepped down from full-time leadership, she remains actively involved as Patron of Bergzicht. Beyond that, she continues to serve as a mentor with a national foundation, a committee member on her ward council and a board member of the Stellenbosch Special Rates Area. Community involvement is not a new chapter for Renske. It is the thread that has shaped her entire professional journey and continues to motivate her today.

Her involvement with ChangeAbility is deeply personal. In 2023 her nephew and godson was shot during a botched robbery which left him living with paraplegia. When she was approached in early 2024 by ChangeAbility's Treasurer, Jacolene Quinn, to assist with the organisation's repositioning strategy she chose to step forward in his honour. Supporting an organisation that works directly with people with disabilities in local communities became more than strategic work. It became part of her own family story and her desire to see inclusive communities strengthened.



As volunteer repositioning leader, Renske has worked closely with CEO, Cindy Wiggett Barnard, over the past seven months to implement ChangeAbility's repositioned strategy. This has included refining strategic priorities, strengthening governance structures and ensuring that systems support long term sustainability. Drawing on her extensive local network, she helped facilitate the appointment of a new and highly skilled and committed Management Committee able to provide the leadership and guidance required for the next phase of growth.

Her approach to this work is grounded in lived experience. When she joined Bergzicht some 14 years ago, the organisation was facing serious financial challenges. Together, with a capable newly elected Board and a small operational team, she helped transform the now 34 year old organisation into a high quality and financially sustainable operation over a 12 year period. That experience of rebuilding, carefully and deliberately, has shaped how she approaches ChangeAbility's repositioning with patience, clarity and steady oversight.

Volunteer Spotlight

RENSKE MINNAAR, REPOSITIONING LEADER (CONT.)

Renske also brings strong marketing and sales experience from the wine and service industries, which proved invaluable in strengthening the Bergzicht brand in Stellenbosch. She understands that sustainability depends not only on good governance, but also on clear positioning and community visibility. At ChangeAbility she has applied the same thinking, helping to reconfirm the organisation's brand positioning and ensuring that its message speaks clearly to funders, partners and the communities it serves.

Those who work with Renske will know she is rarely without her small notebook and pencil. She prefers to write things down by hand, carefully noting ideas, action points and connections. It is a simple habit, yet it reflects her thoughtful and disciplined leadership style. She listens attentively, asks practical questions and determinendly connects people and opportunities. She speaks warmly of working with a capable CEO and team and believes that the strengthened Management Committee positions the organisation well for the new financial year.



For Renske, the most rewarding aspect of her involvement at ChangeAbility is the confidence that a skilled and values driven team can continue to support disadvantaged communities across Stellenbosch. She believes strongly that effective organisations create ripple effects far beyond their immediate programmes. When governance is sound, strategy is clear and partnerships are strong, impact becomes sustainable rather than short term.

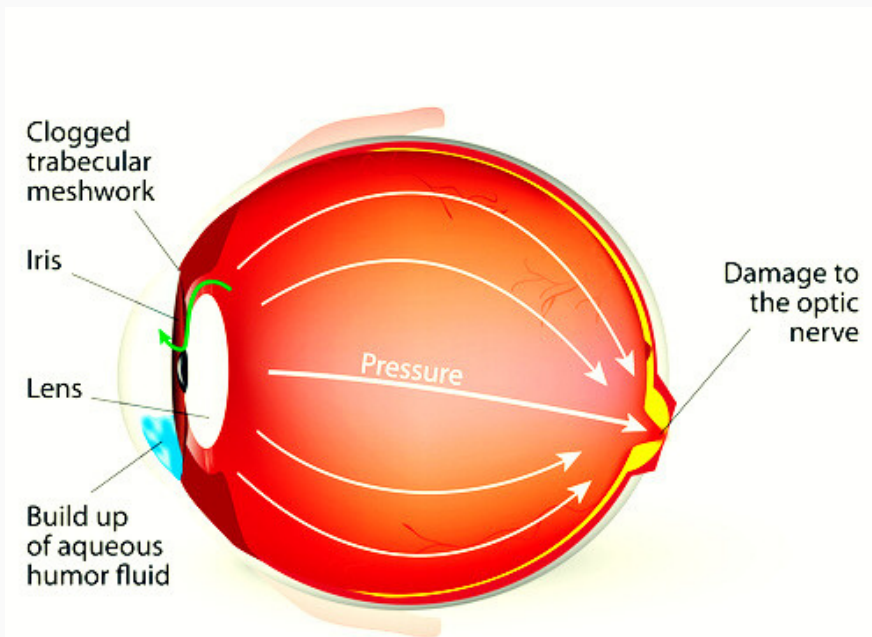
Looking ahead, she sees ChangeAbility's greatest strength in its reconfirmed brand positioning and implemented strategy. With clearer visibility across social media and within local networks, she believes the organisation will become better known, not only to potential funders, but also within the communities it serves. She encourages individuals, businesses and community leaders in Stellenbosch to move beyond awareness toward active partnership by sharing networks, offering expertise, supporting fundraising efforts and investing in inclusive community development. Through collective effort, she believes, ChangeAbility can continue building a more accessible and resilient Stellenbosch for many years to come.

Educational Content

UNDERSTANDING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is a leading cause of irreversible vision loss worldwide and often develops slowly without early warning signs. During World Glaucoma Week from 8 to 14 March 2026 we highlight the importance of awareness, early detection and ongoing support for people living with this visual impairment. With timely diagnosis and ongoing care many people with glaucoma can preserve useful vision and remain active in their communities.

Cause of Glaucoma



"Finding a cure for glaucoma is considered essential because the optic nerve damage it causes is irreversible."

**COLLEEN SILVEIRA
(VIA GLAUCOMA RESEARCH
FOUNDATION)**



Causes:

Glaucoma is caused by damage to the optic nerve most commonly linked to increased pressure inside the eye. This pressure builds up when fluid in the eye does not drain properly. There are different types of glaucoma including open angle and angle closure glaucoma and in some cases it can be present from birth or develop after eye injury or illness.



Educational Content

UNDERSTANDING GLAUCOMA (CONT.)

Prevention

There is currently no way to prevent glaucoma completely but early detection is the most effective way to limit vision loss. Regular eye examinations are essential especially as glaucoma can progress without noticeable symptoms. Following prescribed treatment such as eye drops laser treatment or surgery can slow or stop further damage.

Risk Factors

People over the age of 40 are at higher risk of developing glaucoma as are those with a family history of the condition. Other risk factors include diabetes high blood pressure previous eye injuries long term use of steroid medication and severe short sightedness. People of African descent are at increased risk of developing primary open angle glaucoma often at a younger age and with more rapid progression.



Living with Glaucoma

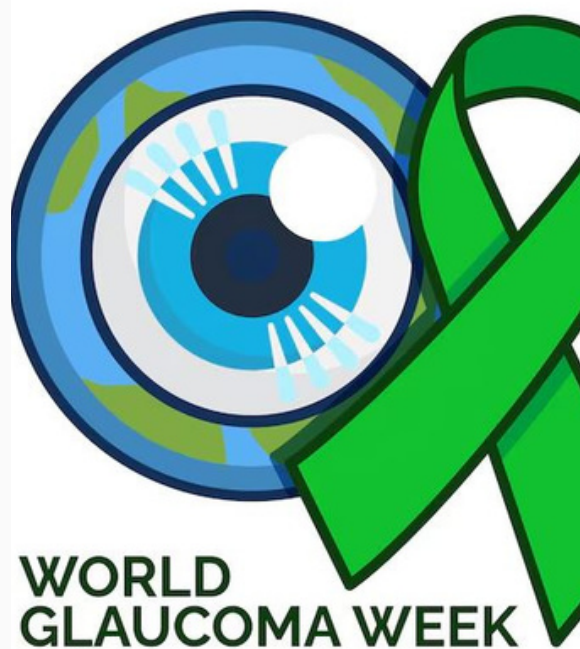
Living with glaucoma can affect daily activities such as reading, driving and navigating unfamiliar environments. With appropriate treatment, assistive devices and reasonable adjustments many people continue to live independent and fulfilling lives. Emotional and social support are also important as adjusting to changes in vision can be challenging.

ChangeAbility Supporting People with Glaucoma

ChangeAbility supports people with visual impairments including those living with glaucoma by promoting inclusion accessibility and participation in community life. Through peer support advocacy and partnerships we work to reduce barriers raise awareness and encourage early engagement with support services. Our approach focuses on empowering individuals and communities to create environments where people with vision loss can thrive.

"I've become an expert on glaucoma. Knowledge gives me a sense of control in an uncontrollable situation."

PATIENT (VIA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH)



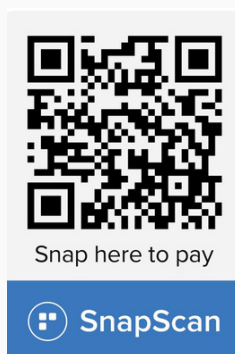


Upcoming Events

13 March	Health Testing	Groendal & Macassar
19 March	Wheelchair seating session	Kayamandi
27 March	Health Testing	Cloetesville & Kayamandi
26 March	Disability Awareness Talk	Kayamandi Library

Supporting Us

☀️ You have the power to help us make a difference! 💪 Support our cause by donating to fund programmes for people in the Cape Winelands. 🍇 Use SnapScan or our direct deposit details below for easy donations. Or visit our GivenGain profile (<https://www.givengain.com/cause/changeability-8713>) for more options. As a tax exempt organisation, we can issue an 18A tax rebate certificate for donations received. Thank you for your support! 🙏 #DonateNow #SupportOurCause ☀️



Direct EFT:
ChangeAbility
FNB Current Account
Nr. 623 561 772 98
Branch no. 200610