



Disability Matters



"UCT follows an inclusive education approach which means that as a workplace and a learning institution – the university progressively realises the human rights of staff and students with disabilities through accessible education, infrastructure, and language" – *Dr Sianne Alves, Director, Office for Inclusivity & Change (OIC)*

Do you know what defines a disability?

Do you know that some disabilities are invisible?

Do you know what services are available at UCT for persons with disabilities and how to access these services?

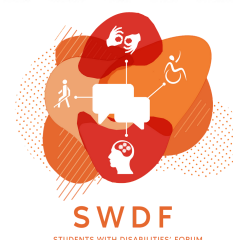
Disability Matters is here to shed some light on all the questions you've had about disabilities!

Get in touch with us:
dmonlinemagazine@gmail.com

EDUCATE!

ADVOCATE!

CELEBRATE!



DM
Magazine



TABLE OF CONTENT

Disability Matters

GET CLUED UP

Editor's Note	<i>Lesego Modutle</i>	03
Meet the team		04
Students with Disabilities Forum	SWDF	05
Disability Service		06



EDUCATE | ADVOCATE | CELEBRATE

Sports: Goal Ball		14
The significance of lifts on the UCT campuses		15
Disability in Action	Celebrating achievers	16



What is a Disability		07
Autism	Invisible Disability	08



Visit

WWW.UCT.OIC.AC.ZA

to download this current issue to
your phone or pc



Lesego Modutle

Editor-in-Chief

Autism



Editor's Note

I am ecstatic to bring you the first edition of Disability Matters online magazine!

We aim to educate you on matters related to various disabilities, putting a microscope on a different disability in each edition of the Disability Matters online magazine. We advocate with and for persons with disabilities; and celebrate wins within the disability scope.

Our readers are important to us, so if you wish to submit a comment, please email us on dmonlinemagazine@gmail.com

Happy reading!

In this issue

We learn more about the autism spectrum as well as a specific sport designed for Blind persons, but can be played by sighted people as well!



Disability Matters

MEET THE TEAM

WITHIN THE DM

Our team is comprised of UCT students with either visible or invisible disabilities, who advocate for the agency of all students with disabilities so that their voices can be heard.

Occupations:

Niamh – Senior Editor

Mary – Editor

Maropene – Writer

Miracle – Writer

Deborah "Debbie" – Writer

Andrew – Content creator

Alex "Lexxi" – Content creator



Niamh Ahern



Mary Martin



Maropene Mabusela



Miracle May



Deborah Van der Berg



Andrew Roets



Alex "Lexxi" Pasqualli



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FORUM

Introduction to the
SWDF

By Andrew Roets
& Jered Shorkend

The Students with Disabilities' Forum (SWDF) is the official student governance structure for students with disabilities at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The SWDF is a representative sub-structure of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) underneath the portfolio of the Student Advocacy Co-ordinator, and is almost entirely composed of students with disabilities. The SWDF is meant, among other things, to hold student leaders accountable through informing them about the issues that persons with disabilities face on campus, and provides a link between students with disabilities, the SRC, and UCT as an institution. The SWDF works closely with the OIC Disability Service.

The SWDF has three areas of focus: **educate, advocate, and celebrate**. As a Forum, the SWDF aims to educate UCT (and society at-large) about various disabilities, both visible and invisible, as well as about the various struggles that persons with disabilities experience. Additionally, the SWDF aims to advocate for students with disabilities in an effort to make UCT more inclusive for all persons with disabilities. The SWDF also aims to celebrate students with disabilities as part of an effort to embrace and empower students with disabilities.

Contact Information:

SRC Student Advocacy Co-ordinator: srcadvocacy@uct.ac.za

Co-Chairperson: swdfchair@uct.ac.za

Secretary: swdfsecretary@uct.ac.za

Social Media: [@SWDF_UCT](https://www.instagram.com/SWDF_UCT)

Sub-Divisions (feel free to join them if you want to get more involved):



Educate
Advocate
Celebrate





Office for
Inclusivity
& Change



DISABILITY SERVICE



The University of Cape Town's (UCT) Disability Service(DS) situated in the Office for Inclusivity and Change(OIC), is geared towards removing all physical, policy, information and attitudinal barriers that may prevent students and staff with disabilities from fulfilling their potential. We are dedicated to the creation of a discrimination-free and inclusive environment in which students and staff with disabilities are able to enjoy full, independent and effective participation in all aspects of university life. The Disability Service strives to create an enabling learning and occupational environment for students and staff with disabilities, where their learning experience and career aspirations are equal with their abilities, and where their talents are nurtured and developed. This entails providing innovative support for time-sensitive solutions for students and staff with a wide variety of disabilities and complex medical conditions. To access support and services from the DS, use this link to register: <https://forms.office.com/r/PfWJ44Xtf8>

The work of the Disability Service includes:

- **Disability advocacy and sensitisation**
- **Improving access to inaccessible venues and allocating accessible parking bays according to UCT's Traffic Policy**
- **Providing accessible transport within residences and lecture theatres**
- **Specific mobility orientation for staff and students with disabilities**
- **Providing accessible residence accommodation**
- **Providing lecture and study materials in an accessible format for persons with sensory impairments**
- **Student support, psychological education and assessment for mental health concerns and specific**
 - **Learning disorders**
- **Facilitating extra time applications and/or other accommodations concerning examinations and test-taking**
- **Supporting the development of academics to ensure accessible education**

EDUCATE



What is a disability?

Disability encompasses persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UN, 2006).

Persons with disabilities

“Persons with disabilities” as per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and/or chronic conditions which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”

“Persons with disabilities” includes people who have a long - term or recurring physical or mental, or a combination of both, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may substantially limit their prospects of entry into, or advancement in, employment.

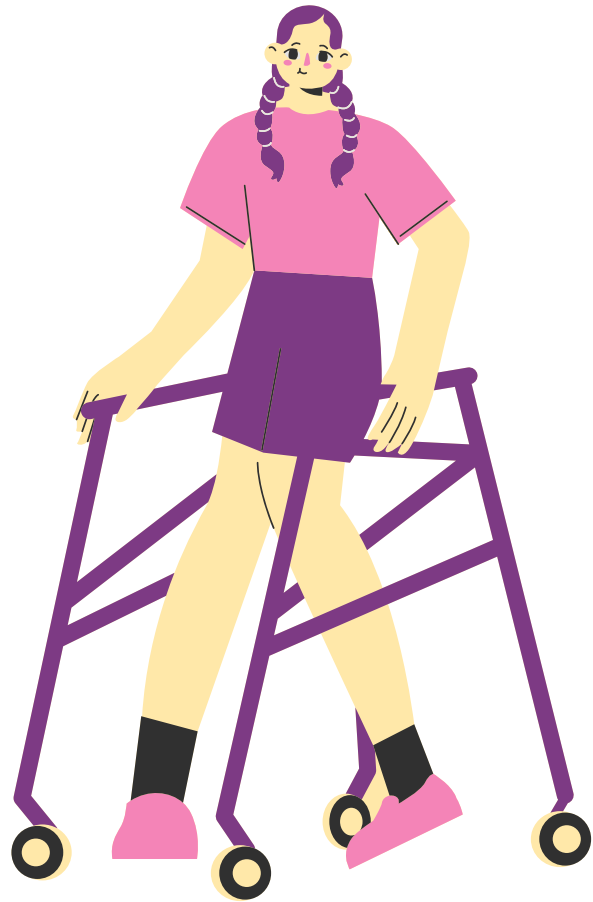
Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation refers to the necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, as well as assistive devices and technology to accommodate unique individual needs of a person with disabilities, who has declared their disability. (UCT Disability Policy, 2021)

Access

If you are a person with a temporary (e.g. using crutches due to an injury which will heal) or a permanent disability, whether it is physical, sensory, cognitive or invisible, contact the Disability Service for assistance with accessing the necessary reasonable accommodations available at UCT.

Email: disabilityservice@uct.ac.za
Call: 021 650 2427



Disability of the Month

Autism



Some disabilities
are
invisible

Autism Speaks: Reclaiming The Narrative

By Andrew Roets

At a recent Autism Panel Discussion hosted by the Students with Disabilities' Forum (SWDF), Student Psychiatry Society, and the OIC Disability Service, Professor Petrus de Vries from The Centre for Autism Research in Africa highlighted the need for society to centre the lived experiences of people on the Autism Spectrum. Indeed, Professor de Vries is right; society has far too often left out the voices of people on the Autism Spectrum in conversations about the Autism Spectrum. Rather than centering autistic voices, society and so-called “autism awareness organisations” like the infamous Autism Speaks have continued to perpetuate the idea that Autistic people are “the Other” who exist because of pseudoscientific claims about vaccines, are in need of a cure, or lack a fundamental part of themselves as signified by a puzzle piece.

A few years ago, I would have been ashamed to make the following statement publicly: “My name is Andrew Roets and I am on the Autism Spectrum.”

I could barely say the word “autism” out loud, and I hated the overwhelming feeling of being different. Whilst I knew I was different my entire life, being identified as someone on the Autism Spectrum at the age of ten only further exasperated this feeling. I sensed from society that my identity was not to be spoken about, as doing so would only further identify me as “the Other.”

However, as my self-confidence has grown, I have come to challenge and deconstruct the othering discourse that society has perpetuated against Autism Spectrum Disorder and the people whose experiences are included in this category. I have openly declared that I am on the Autism Spectrum - I do not need to be cured! I have openly challenged false narratives about the cause of Autism - vaccines do not cause Autism! I have openly spoken about the struggles of being on the Autism Spectrum. My experience need not be represented by a puzzle piece. I have openly deconstructed stereotypes about people on the Autism Spectrum and work to show people that we are not all straight, white men!

To all people on the Autism Spectrum, I want to encourage you, as Autism Awareness Month draws to a close, to reclaim the narrative of Autism Spectrum Disorder throughout the coming year. As my psychiatrist once declared: “Autism is great; you just have to make it work for you!” Certainly, Autism Spectrum Disorder forms part of our unique way of being in the world. It is often a great strength. Consequently, I want to remind you that, despite the struggles you may face in life, your story matters, your experiences matter, and your voice matters. Do not allow yourself to be fobbed off by any other societal messages.



All About Autism

Christy Shrimpton

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex group of neurodevelopmental conditions. Autism affects the way a person communicates and how they experience the world around them.

Autism is a Spectrum

Autism is considered a spectrum as each person has different strengths, abilities and requires different types and levels of support.

The autism spectrum isn't linear from high to low but varies, just as one person might vary from another.

While people with autism share similar characteristics, they are also all different from each other.

Many people with autism are able to live independent lives but others may face additional challenges.

If you have autism, you have autism your whole life.

People with autism may have difficulty with:

- communicating and interacting with other people
- understanding how other people think or feel
- sensory overload - bright lights or loud noises may be overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- unfamiliar situations or social events
- understanding information quickly
- repetitive behaviours

Autism is not an Illness

Having autism does not mean you have an illness or disease. It means your brain works in a different way from other people.

Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a "cure". But some people need support to help them with certain things.

How Does Autism Affect People?

Autism is a hidden or invisible disability - you can't see if someone has autism just by looking at them.

There are some behaviours and ways of communication that someone with autism may use but these aren't universal as every person with autism is different.

The characteristics of autism vary from one person to another, but there are four main areas of difference.

Social interaction - Some people with autism struggle to understand, recognise or remember the social rules that we follow to conform to the social norms of the social setting and therefore find socialising to be tricky, confusing, or tiring.

Social imagination - Some people with autism struggle to understand abstract concepts, which can cause new or unexpected situations to be very overwhelming.

Sensory differences - People with autism process sensory information differently, which impacts how they see, perceive and interact with the world around them. Someone with autism can be 'over' or 'under' sensitive in any of the senses.

Social communication - People with autism sometimes struggle to interpret and process non-verbal, non-literal communication such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, which makes communication quite difficult. Some people with autism might even have little or no speech or delayed language development, and communicate differently as a result.

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE SPORTS

➞ the origin



Developed shortly after World War II, goalball was developed as a rehabilitation tool for veterans returning with visual impairments. 30 years later it was presented on the world stage at the 1976 Paralympic Games in Toronto, Canada.



GOAL BALL

➞ the game



The sport involves three players per team defending their goal (which spans the width of the 9m x 18m court). A player from one team rolls the ball toward the opponents' net while the opposing team uses their bodies to try to prevent the ball from going into their net. These rolls are reversed throughout the game. The team with the most goals wins.

UCT has been involved in the Western Cape Goalball league since 2016, and have become consistent officiating representatives. Our students have served as referees, corner judges and technical table operatives. Additionally, we have had two students serve as coaches to the Western Cape Teams represented at the National Tournament. We now have an opportunity to grow our involvement to include having a fully-fledged team compete in the league. Our team can include players with and without visual impairments, and will be able to compete at League fixtures and can be officials in National Tournaments.

➞ the technique



The ball contains bells so players must listen to the ball rather than relying on sight. All players are blindfolded so that vision is not used at all. This means that up to a provincial level, players need not have a visual impairment to play. It also means that since players rely on their hearing to play, spectators must remain quiet during games. Goal ball is the only indoor game that can be cancelled due to heavy rain. A game is split into 12 minute halves.

We therefore call for your participation in this great sport. Please join us in being part of the ever-expanding league, and help grow the sport in our community and beyond. Whether as a player, official or spectator, your input will be instrumental in growing the game.

To join, please email uctparasports@gmail.com

Content by:
Mary Martin
Debbie Van der Berg
Muya Koloko

ADVOCATE





BARRIER-FREE ACCESS

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFTS ON THE UCT CAMPUSES

By Alex "Lexxi" Pasqualli

Lifts around campus are an important means of access for wheelchair users and students who have mobility impairments.

This is one of the most preferred ways to move around campus freely and independently. It allows us to have the same access around campus as the rest of the UCT students. An issue arises when non-disabled students begin to hog the lifts, preventing us from getting the opportunity to use them, whilst they have the option to make use of the stairs or to use an alternative route. For us, we may not have the same options. It is important to encourage UCT students to allow wheelchair users and persons with mobility impairments to make use of the lifts first or decide to take the stairs instead, as it grants us the same independence and access as the rest of the student body. Not encouraging all students has resulted in students with mobility impairments to be late for classes and tutorials because of the lifts being hogged by students without disabilities when they could have found an alternative route to classes. This puts a bad impression on wheelchair users because lecturers tend to assume they're unnecessarily late and lack time management. One way to promote this concern is to create posters to encourage all students on campus to be more mindful of others.

This is how to report faulty lifts or issues regarding lifts:

I have interviewed Noluthando Ntismango, the Barrier-Free Access Specialist at the OIC Disability Service, and she has stated this loadshedding has been a big challenge this year regarding the operations of the lifts. Students who use wheelchairs send their schedules and class routines to Noluthando at the beginning of each academic year and she then inspects the buildings/areas where the students would be in order to ensure that they are indeed accessible for wheelchair users and students with mobility difficulties. If, however, their venues for classes are not accessible, she would liaise with the course conveners and the venue department in order to find alternative suitable venues. The blended teaching approach is also encouraged to promote the inclusion of every student.

How can you help?

Should you come across a faulty lift, Please report it immediately to Noluthando at the either directly at the Disability Service which is in the Steve Biko Students' Union Building, or by popping her an email on barrier-free.access@uct.ac.za and she will then contact the Maintenance Department to fix the issue. Please ensure that you provide her with the correct relevant information such as the name of the building, where the faulty lift was identified as well as the lift number.

You can make the difference!



CELEBRATE

Disability Matters





SPOTLIGHT ON TEMPLE GRANDIN

AUTISM, ANIMAL WELFARE, AND ADVOCACY

When thinking of figures worth celebrating in Autism Awareness Month, it would be a great oversight not to shine a light on Temple Grandin and her work as a self-advocate and scientist. Grandin was born in 1947 in Boston, USA. She experienced great difficulties in school, and was assessed by many neurological and educational specialists throughout her childhood following a misdiagnosis of brain damage at the age of 2. She was formally identified as autistic in adulthood, and managed to avoid institutionalisation and the questionable medical ‘treatments’ suggested at the time in spite of the behavioural and educational challenges she faced. This was in no small part due to her mother’s advocacy and support. Grandin was a publicly autistic adult at a time when such figures were few and far between.

Grandin asserts that the way in which she thinks and moves through the world as an autistic person allows her great insight into animals’ cognitive and sensory processes. This stems from her focus on visual thinking and its position as a hallmark of many autistic experiences. She drew from her own subjective experiences of this in her 1995 memoir *Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism*, as well as her most recent publication, *Visual Thinking: The Hidden Gifts of People Who Think in Pictures, Patterns, and Abstractions*. Temple Grandin is an eminent scholar in animal sciences. The hug machine is one of Grandin’s notable inventions. It is a contraption that provides deep pressure stimulation without the need for the unwanted or challenging human contact that such a sensation often requires. She was inspired by the squeeze chutes in which cattle are held during inoculation procedures. The hug machine is an example of a larger theme in her work.

Much of Grandin’s scholarship is concerned with the link between autism and animal behaviour, something which she also posits as being related to visual thinking and autistic sensory processing. This has been expanded upon in *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behaviour*, co-authored by Grandin and Catherine Johnson. She has worked towards the development and adoption of more humane practices within slaughterhouse environments. Her efforts at improving the meat industry and its industrial complexes from the inside are not insignificant. That being said, one could also argue that improving the lives of animals within these systems, something for which she advocates, does little to solve the underlying issue of exploitation that lies at the heart of mass-market meat production. Some of her previous comments on those labelled as having Asperger’s syndrome are also questionable. Grandin’s advocacy, both as it pertains to animal welfare and autism, is complex.

Like most people working in the realm of harm reduction – like all human beings – Grandin is not without flaws.

Still, Temple Grandin, her pioneering work in harm reduction in animal industries, and her autistic scholarship informed by lived experience are worth celebrating, especially considering her openness about her disability from the get-go of her career. Such celebration is pertinent in Autism Awareness Month and beyond.

Thank
you

for reading the DM online magazine!

