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DISABILITY TRADE AND LIFESTYLE EXPO & CONFERENCE



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ACSA Disability Trade and Lifestyle Expo and Conference

Space Age Assistive Technology on Show at ACSA Disability 2011

Every day, creative innovation and modern technology is vastly expanding the scope and variety of lifestyle choices and opportunities available for people with disabilities in South Africa.

Some of these life-changing products and services will be showcased at the ACSA Disability Trade and Lifestyle Exhibition which takes place from 6 to 8 October at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Gauteng.

Eye control Technology - Inclusive Solutions

The tragedy of disability is that it is indiscriminate; it can be slight or severe. It could leave a person unable to move freely, unable to move at all, even unable to communicate. Computers have revolutionised communication in an able-bodied world, but how would a person with a disability, especially someone with a severe disability, handle a mouse and keyboard?

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Eye control is the solution; it has the ability to bring the world of computers and the internet to people with severe disabilities. Local supplier Inclusive Solutions will be demonstrating the brand new Tobii Eye Control system at the Disability Expo.

“A user can simply look at the computer screen and the mouse cursor will follow their gaze using only eye movement,” says Lisa Ellis, a director of the company. “The system provides an on-screen keyboard that enables a user to type using their eyes. Special speech generating software then says the message aloud.”

Tobii runs on the Windows operating system, and is compatible with all Windows applications such as Outlook e-mail, Internet Explorer, MS Office, Facebook and more. It also offers customisable graphics for people of all ages and abilities, including symbol based communication options.

“Tobii is so simple and easy to use, so there’s no more struggling and straining with switches,” says Ellis. “Using eye control is comfortable, easy, and most of all, faster. Tobii has transformed the lives of so many people.

“One of my clients was an active and energetic man who was devastated when diagnosed with motor neurone disease. He became totally paralysed, needs a ventilator to breathe and has been unable to speak at all for six years,” Ellis recounts.

His wife and carers, desperate to give him more independent communication, tried many devices, but nothing worked well for him. A year ago they discovered the Tobii C12 Eye Tracker, which enabled him to control a computer using only his eyes. He simply looks at the computer screen and the cursor follows his gaze movements. When he wants to click, he 'dwells' on an icon or target for about a second, and the click is performed.

“My client can now speak simply by looking at an on-screen keyboard and typing the messages he wants to say. The computer then says the message aloud, using speech generating software,” adds Ellis. “He can also use Tobii to send e-mails and SMS messages to his family and friends. He can browse the internet, listen to music, look at photographs and has a significantly improved quality of life.”

Tobii can also benefit people paralysed with neck injuries, with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, rhett syndrome, etc.

New Accessible Facilities in SANParks

During the last year, South African National Parks (SANParks) has added three new units at two different camps to its portfolio of accessible accommodation for mobility impaired visitors, both near the southern tip of Africa in Agulhas National Park.

“People with disabilities now have even more exciting holiday destinations to choose from,” says Chris Patton, Project Manager in SANParks’ Business Development Unit. “Accessible accommodation has been added to the Agulhas National Park, with a 4-bed and 2-bed cottage at the Agulhas Rest Camp on the coast and a 2-bed cottage at Renosterkoppies Rest Camp a little inland. The park also has a new accessible seaside boardwalk leading to the ‘official’ meeting point of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The park’s coastline offers whale and dolphin watching and several well-known shipwrecks.”

The Kruger National Park’s largest rest camp Skukuza has a new conference centre equipped with wheelchair parking, ramps and accessible ablutions, to compliment 12 existing accessible accommodation units in the camp. A proposed conference hotel will offer additional accessible rooms.

The Mapungubwe Interpretative Centre in Mapungubwe National Park won the World Building of the Year award at the World Architecture Festival held in Barcelona in 2009. It's due to open to the public in October 2011. The building can accommodate mobility impaired guests with ramped routes and accessible ablutions.

Mapungubwe is South Africa's oldest organised human trade settlement and the location where the Golden Rhino, the symbol of Limpopo Province, was unearthed. The park has several other exciting accessible attractions such as a tree-top boardwalk through the Limpopo Riverine Forest and the 3 country confluence with a walkway with a smooth paved surface and 4 lookout decks.

Patton, himself a wheelchair user, welcomes the opportunities provided by the show for SANParks to interact with the public. "ACSA Disability 2011 is where the public can learn more about accessible tourism and where to find accessible facilities in our National Parks. It also enables people with disabilities to engage with SANParks on where they feel our facilities can be further improved."

Other Exhibitors

Numerous associations, organisations and companies offering products and services to people with disabilities will be exhibiting at the show. These include: Autism South Africa, Down Syndrome South Africa, National Association for Persons with Cerebral Palsy, the QuadPara Association, SA Federation for Mental Health, SA National Council for the Blind and the SA South African Orthotic & Prosthetic Association.

About the ACSA Disability Trade and Lifestyle Expo

The ACSA Disability Trade and Lifestyle Expo and Conference is the only event of its kind showcasing products and services for all types of disabilities. The show

is aimed at people with disabilities, their caregivers, family members, as well as the employers. The show attracts both a trade and consumer audience.

Admission into the expo and sporting events is free and parking is also free for visitors who present the free ticket (available from bettemc@fairconsultants.com). For the full events programme, visit www.fairconsultants.com

For more information on exhibiting at or visiting the show, contact: Bette McNaughton, Event Director. Tel: (+27) 11 784 4279 E-mail: bettemc@fairconsultants.com

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Below please find some photos with captions. Hi-res photos are available on request.



Lisa Ellis, a Director of Inclusive Solutions.



A user, Astrid Lorentzen using the Tobii P10.



SANParks' Chris Patton on the boardwalk to the Southern Tip of Africa.



Chris Patton at the entrance to the 4-bed family cottage at Agulhas Main Camp.



<http://twitter.com/#!/ACSADisability>



<http://acsadisability.wordpress.com>



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/ACSA-Disability-Expo/159922657413995>

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