LVPEI

So that all may see

E-BUZZ ON "ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE"

Information around the world for persons with vision loss

March 2018 (22nd edition)

Greetings from the Institute for Vision Rehabilitation!

It's our pleasure to bring forth yet another edition of E-Buzz to you!

This edition brings you updates and happenings ranging from assistive technology to accessibility, from education to training, from recreation to adventure from the world around us.

Hope you find this useful. Please do share it with your contacts who you think would benefit from it.

- **Woman with vision loss to judge a beauty pageant**

Pageants these days are witnessing phenomenal changes and according to recent reports, a legally blind woman named Ashley Nemeth will be on board as one of the judges at Mrs. Canada Globe pageant judging the contestants based on her ability to recognize inner beauty. Kim Castle, the

national director of Mrs. Canada Globe, is pretty much excited to have Nemeth as one of the six judges. "We want to encourage every woman to enter irrespective of their shape, size, age, colour, ability or disability", says Castle. Nemeth agreed to judge the contestants as she believes that it's a great way to showcase that disability doesn't prohibit you from many things. She remarks further, "I think it's amazing that the Mrs. Canada Globe pageant wants to incorporate somebody who is blind into their judging panel because I truly will have no bias on what the contestants look like."

Source: https://beautypageants.indiatimes.com/others/a-blind-woman-to-judge-a-beauty-pageant/articleshow/62862256.cms

- **Microsoft joins Be My Eyes app to provide tech support to customers with vision loss**

Be My Eyes, a smartphone app for users with vision loss, now offers technical support from Microsoft's Disability Answer Desk in a new feature called specialized help. This new feature is introduced as a result of growing number of technology-related requests from customers. The app will work the same, connecting customers through video, but instead of reaching out to volunteers, customers will work directly with a member of Microsoft's Disability Answer Desk to get support on questions about their Microsoft product or service. Through the new app update, customers in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Ireland, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa and the United States will be able to connect with the Microsoft's Disability Answer Desk.

Source:
https://blogs.msdn.microsoft.com/accessibility/2018/02/21/microsoft-joins-be-my-eyes-app/

- **Meet Divyanshu Ganatra, India's first blind solo paraglider!**

Divyanshu Ganatra was just 19 when Glaucoma claimed his eyesight. Being a nature's boy who reveled in cycling, climbing mountains and trekking, confining himself to the four walls of a room was a situation he was not ready to accept. So he slowly started going for cycling and other activities like climbing and this led to paragliding, initially with an instructor in the year 2004. Finally in 2014, Divyanshu went on to become India's first blind solo paraglider. This led him to start, in the same year, the Adventures Beyond Barriers Foundation (ABBF) which attempts to bridge the gap between the able and the disabled, in collaboration with Firefox Bikes, a leading brand of imported cycles in India.

Source: http://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/society/article/divyanshu-ganatra-paragliding-solo-paraglider-adventures-beyond-barriers-foundation/202601

- **CBSE to allow children with special needs to write board exams with laptops**

Children with special needs appearing for class 10 and 12 board examinations will be able to use computers or laptops to write their exams from this year with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) approving the proposal, according to an official order. However, the candidates will have to submit a certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner or qualified psychological consultant recommending use of a computer facility while also citing the grounds for the recommendation. "The use of computer shall be limited only for typing the answers, viewing the questions in enlarged font size and for listening to the question items.

Concerned candidate shall bring his/her own computer or laptop duly formatted and the Centre Superintendent (CS) shall allow the candidate only after inspection of the computer by a computer teacher", the order said. "The computer /laptop should not have any internet connection in order to maintain the sanctity of the examination. The request for such an arrangement will have to be made in advance by the candidate by sending a communication with required documents to the CS through school", it added.

Source: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cbse-to-allow-children-with-special-needs-to-write-board-exams-with-laptops/article22879467.ece

- **A soon-to-be-launched pregnancy test for women with vision loss**

For would-be mothers with vision loss, the very first question sometimes can be - "How can I take a pregnancy test on my own?" Seriously, how does a woman with vision loss take a pregnancy test in private since all the available products in the market need a sighted person to reveal the results to her? What is needed is an inclusive new design that would put them in control of this area of their lives. And this is how the idea for the pregnancy diagnosis sensor for women with vision loss came about. A team of four biotechnology students at VIT University in Vellore, Tamilnadu is developing this product which uses an upcoming technology called 'molecular imprinting' that detects the level of hCG in the urine sample and emits a signal announcing the test.

Source: https://firstmomsclub.in/a-soon-to-be-launched-pregnancy-test-for-the-blind/

- **New technology called SDF enables persons with vision loss to read PDF on an iPad**

Texas AM Professor of Visualization, Francis Quek has developed a novel technology called STAAR Description Format (SDF) which can convert any PDF document to a version that persons with vision loss can read on an iPad. The users scan the text with their fingers to hear the words, control the pace of their reading, keep their place on the page, refer back to text, highlight important information and take notes, much like the experience enjoyed by those who are sighted.

Source: http://www.theeagle.com/news/local/new-technology-developed-by-a-m-professor-converts-documents-for/article_fa0c65ed-ceac-5596-abf4-3d51b4be1e73.html

- **Women with vision loss in rural India to get training in self-defence**

Women with vision loss are being given judo training to protect themselves from assaults in a groundbreaking new project started by Charity Sightsavers. As they are more vulnerable to abuse and assaults, many of them are too scared to leave their homes alone. The Charity Sightsavers hope the lessons will give them the confidence to return to school, find jobs and become active members of society. The organization is working mainly in Madhya Pradesh, the state which has the highest number of rape cases in India. Several women have already gone on to compete in national championships, won medals and have begun mentoring other women with vision loss in their area.

Source: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-5419455/Blind-women-rural-India-given-JUDO-training.html

- **Oton…. Smart glasses that read text aloud**

A Japanese company is developing a pair of smart glasses called Oton that convert words into voice for those who are dyslexic or otherwise have difficulty reading. Oton are glasses with two tiny cameras and an earphone on either side. Half of the lens is a mirror that reflects the user's eye so that the inner-facing camera can track eye movements and blinks. Users will look at some text and blink to capture a photo of what is in front of them which gets transmitted to a dedicated Raspberry Pi cloud system, analysed for text and then converted into a voice that plays through the ear piece. If the system is unable to read those words, a remote worker would be able to troubleshoot. Some of these ideas sound similar to Google Translate which is already capable of taking a photo and converting it into voice, but to use the app, you still have to take out your phone and swipe over lines of text which feels somewhat more unnatural than blinking at text through your glasses.

Source: https://www.theverge.com/2018/2/22/17039914/oton-glass-dyslexic-visually-impaired-smart-glasses-raspberry-pi-cloud-voice

For any comments, suggestions and queries, please contact:

HelpLine Services

Ph: 040 30612841/30612842

Email: rehabhelpline@lvpei.org