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Out of Sight

July 2026

Organisation News

Dear Friends,

As we embrace the heart of winter here in South Africa, I hope this newsletter finds you keeping warm and staying positive.

We are really looking forward to our upcoming Golf Day on the 1st of September; it's going to be a fantastic event! Four-balls are nearly sold out, so if you'd like to join or secure your spot, please respond as soon as possible.

With tax season opening, it's a great time to remember the valuable tax credits available to persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, or spouses of persons with disabilities. These benefits can make a real difference, be sure to explore what you're eligible for.

In this edition, we also bring you an update on Woolworths moving

their program to MyDifference. It's quick and easy to keep supporting Retina South Africa: simply select us as your chosen charity in the app so every shop helps our vital work.

Thank you for being part of our community. We're excited about all these opportunities ahead and can't wait to share more with you.

Warm regards
Mariza Jurgens
The Editor

Tax Season 2026: Claim What's Yours – Especially if You Have a Visual Impairment

Tax season kicks off on 1 July 2026, with auto-assessments arriving between 1 and 12 July. For many of us living with visual impairment, this is more than just paperwork – it's an opportunity to claim meaningful tax relief.

If you, your spouse, or your child has a moderate to severe visual impairment that limits daily activities, you may qualify for an enhanced medical tax credit. This allows you to claim 33.3% of your qualifying out-of-pocket medical expenses plus a portion of your medical aid contributions that exceed three times the standard medical scheme fees tax credit.

Even if your only expense is medical aid, it's often still worth claiming. The higher threshold for disability cases can unlock extra relief that standard claims miss, putting real money back in your pocket.

Important warning about auto-assessments: If SARS sends you an auto-assessment and you simply accept it, you generally cannot go back later to add disability-related claims. To claim the disability benefit, you need to file or update your ITR12 return yourself – don't just hit accept.

Beyond Medical Bills – What Else Can You Claim?

You're not limited to doctor visits. SARS has a prescribed list of disability-related expenses that qualify if they help with daily living. For visual impairment, these add up fast – and parents of children with visual impairment get the same relief.

Common claimable items include:

- **Assistive technology:** Screen readers, Braille displays, scanners that read text aloud, magnification tools, talking GPS devices, and apps for low vision.
- **Special schooling:** The extra school fees above what the nearest ordinary public school charges, plus costs for a classroom assistant.
- **Driver and transport services:** Hiring a driver for doctor visits, shopping, work, or any daily travel – a big one since many with visual impairment cannot drive.
- **Guide dogs:** The cost of acquiring a trained guide dog, plus its food, vet care, and ongoing maintenance.
- **Support services:** A reader, guide, or personal attendant to help with everyday tasks.

Keep all receipts. The expense must be directly linked to the visual impairment to qualify. With a valid ITR-DD confirming disability, you claim 33.3% of these costs – which can mean real money back even if your only regular expense is medical aid.

What you need to do:

- Get an ITR-DD form completed by a registered medical practitioner – this confirms your disability status and is valid for up to 10 years if permanent. Keep it safe; you only send it if SARS asks.
- Track qualifying expenses and keep your receipts.
- File your return between 13 July and 23 October 2026 via e-filing or SARS MobiApp.

Living with visual impairment comes with extra costs. Make sure SARS gives you the relief you're entitled to. Check your status early, get that ITR-DD sorted, and don't settle for the auto-assessment if you qualify for disability relief.

For the latest details, visit the SARS website or speak to a tax practitioner familiar with disability claims. You've got this – and every rand back helps.



Save Our Sight Campaign – Don't take sight for granted

Sight is something most of us take for granted — until it's gone.

For thousands of South Africans living with retinal conditions, the fear of losing their vision is a daily reality. The Save Our Sight Campaign exists to change that — funding research, supporting affected families, and keeping hope alive across South Africa.

For just R240 a year, your Retina SA membership already enters you into our monthly **R500** draw.

Not a member yet? You can still join the Save Our Sight Campaign for R250 and stand a chance to win R500 every month while making a real difference.

Will you join us?

Join here [Save Our Sight Campaign](#)

United in Vision 2026 Conference

*Hope, Science and Solidarity in Fort Worth, Texas
From the CEO's Desk*



Image Sources: Retina International

Earlier this month (June) I had the great privilege of attending — and helping to shape — the United in Vision 2026 conference in Fort Worth, Texas, co-hosted by Retina International and the Foundation Fighting Blindness. As a member of both planning teams, I watched something remarkable take form: a gathering of around 650+ people, drawn from across the United States and every corner of the world, all united by a single conviction — that a future with more sight, more support and more dignity is within our reach.

Science that is moving faster than ever

The research presented in Fort Worth was nothing short of exhilarating. Today the world has one approved gene therapy, Luxturna, which treats an inherited retinal condition linked to the RPE65 gene — a cause of Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA). But the message from researchers was unanimous and electrifying: within the next three to five years, we can realistically expect two to three further treatments to reach patients.

Part of this acceleration has an unexpected source. The systems built to fast-track approvals during the COVID-19 pandemic have carried through to today, with regulators combining trial phases and trimming timelines that once stretched to a decade. What used to take ten years is now happening in a fraction of that time.

This progress is not happening “over there” — it is happening here, too. A trial we were proud to host right here in Pretoria, and in which our own members took part, has since moved forward in a big way. The candidate drug is now known as **tinlarebant**, an oral, once-a-day therapy for Stargardt disease. In its pivotal Phase 3 trial it slowed the progression of the Stargardts, and its developers have just completed their application to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). To know that South African patients helped bring a potential first-ever treatment for Stargardt disease closer to reality is a source of enormous pride.

Bringing mental health into the light

Beyond the laboratories and clinical data, one theme ran like a thread through the whole conference: mental health. It matters for every human-being, but for those of us living with sight loss it can carry an added weight. Research shared by Retina International found that in people living with a visual impairment: 3 in 10 people suffer from depression, and 5 in 10 People suffer from anxiety.

The call from Fort Worth was clear. We must stop tucking this conversation under the rug. We need to speak about it openly, without shame, and hold one another up along the way. This is a

difficult road for many of us — but it is one we never have to walk alone. I believe mental health support must become one of our next great priorities at Retina SA. Help is out there, and you are not alone.

The world in our pockets

I have said it before, and Fort Worth confirmed it once again: although it is never great to lose one's vision, in many ways this is the best time in history to be a person who is blind or has low vision, because of the extraordinary technology now within our reach. We were able to trial tools that are not yet in South Africa — but are not far off, either.

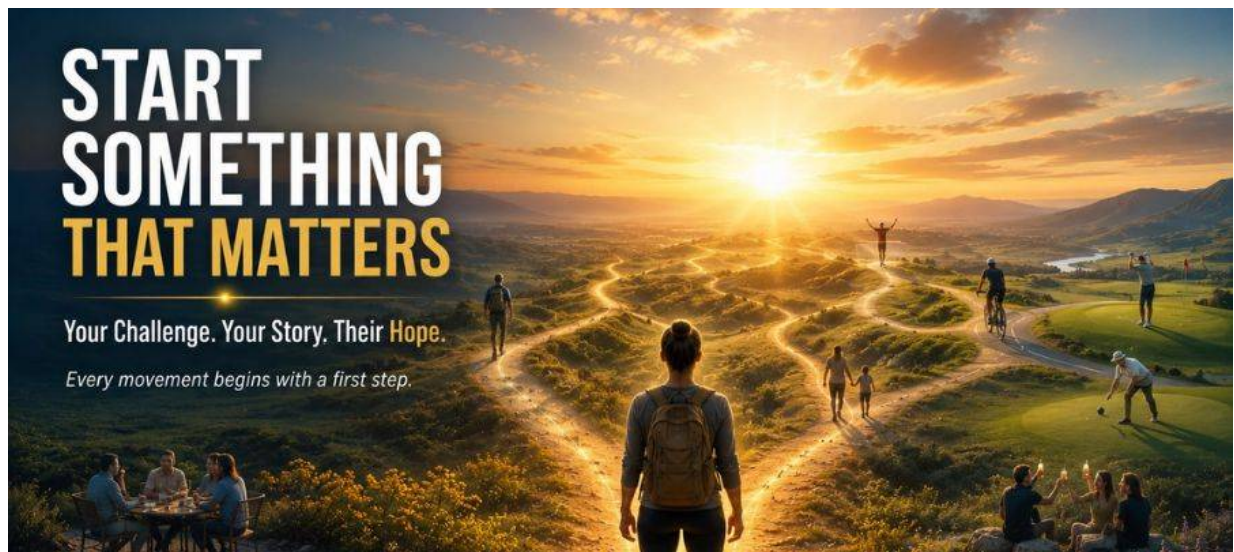
One that captured everyone's imagination was **GoodMaps**, an AI-powered navigation app developed in the United States. Rather than relying on physical beacons installed throughout a building, it uses the camera on your phone — or a pair of connected smart glasses — together with artificial intelligence to guide you confidently through a city centre or public space. It is already being rolled out across the United States and parts of Europe, and Africa is firmly on the development team's map. To think that this kind of independence may soon live in our pockets is genuinely thrilling.

Stronger together

If I had to capture United in Vision 2026 in a single idea, it would be togetherness. People travelled from across the United States and around the globe to come together under one roof — as a community, as a society, and as a movement pushing forward to advocate for services, for treatment, and for the rights of everyone affected by retinal vision loss.

This is the heart of what we believe at Retina South Africa, and it echoes a truth we hold dear: the concept of *Ubuntu*; *I am because we are*. We are, without question, stronger together. It

was my great honour to represent our community on that stage, and an even greater joy to bring this hope home to you.



Start Something That Matters

Your Challenge. Your Story. Their Hope.

What if something you already enjoy doing could help create hope for someone facing vision loss?

Whether it's a walk, an adventure, a golf day, a workplace challenge, a coffee morning or a special celebration, every fundraiser starts with one person deciding to begin.

The question isn't what someone else could do.

The question is:

What could you start?



I'd like to explore an idea

Zanzibar Raffle — We Need Your Help!

Our popular Win a Trip to Zanzibar Raffle is back! Starting in August, we will be looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help sell raffle tickets and make this fundraiser a success.

Here is an added incentive for our Zanzibar Raffle volunteers — for every 10 tickets you sell, you will receive one free entry into the raffle yourself!

The more you sell, the more chances you have to win. It is a **win-win!**

In the meantime, register your interest at PAevents@retinasa.org.za.

Retinal Realities Podcast - Youth Edition Alert with Karla Rossouw

Episode 35 – Living Boldly with Low Vision

We are proud to introduce Karla Rossouw — 24 years old, living with Leber's



Congenital Amaurosis, and absolutely unstoppable.

In this special Youth Edition episode, Karla opens up about navigating school with severe vision loss, building a career in marketing, studying law, staying active.

Her powerful message to young people with low vision:

"Don't let other people's understanding become the understanding that you have of yourself."

Karla has recently been nominated to join the Management Committee of Retina South Africa — and we could not be prouder.

[Watch Episode 35](#)

**Important Update:
Woolworths
MySchool is Now
MyDifference –
Please Reselect
Retina South Africa**



Woolworths has combined its MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet programme with WRewards into one new loyalty programme called MyDifference. The old MySchool cards are being phased out, which means many of our long-time supporters who signed up years ago need to take a quick action in the Woolworths app so we continue

receiving support from your shopping.

The good news is that nothing changes for you as a shopper – you still earn all your WRewards and benefits. The only difference is that you now manage everything through the Woolworths app and need to select your chosen causes again.

You can support up to three organisations, so if you've always backed your school or another cause, you can easily add Retina South Africa alongside them.

Here's exactly how to do it:

- Download or open the Woolworths App on your phone.
- Sign in or create an account.
- Go to the MyDifference or Loyalty section and activate your virtual MyDifference card.
- Tap on "Causes" or "Select A Cause".
- Choose "Choose My Own" and search for Retina South Africa
- Add us as one of your causes - you can add up to three in total.

That's it!

Simply scan your virtual MyDifference card every time you shop at Woolworths or partner stores.

Once selected, a percentage of your purchases will automatically help fund our work supporting people with inherited retinal diseases.

If you haven't received our email or seen the social media posts, please do this as soon as possible so your support keeps flowing to us without interruption. It takes less than two minutes and costs you nothing.

Thank you for standing with us – your continued support truly helps us bring hope and practical help to families living with vision loss.

Swing for Sight Golf Day

Join us for our annual Dis-Chem Foundation & Retina SA Swing for Sight Golf Day on Tuesday 1 September 2026 at the Royal Johannesburg Golf Course!

We still have 4 Balls and Manned Holes available — don't miss your chance to be part of this great day on the green.

Not a golfer? No problem!

Spots are available on the Padel Court, so there is something for everyone.

For bookings and enquiries, contact us at

PAevents@retinasa.org.za

Looking for Work? Join the Retina SA Workseekers Group!

We have created the Retina SA Workseekers WhatsApp Group where we regularly share job vacancies from various companies — a free resource to help our community access employment opportunities.

To join, simply send an email to headoffice@retinasa.org.za and we will add you.

A Gift That Connects - Thank You, Rotary Club Knights of Pendragon

At Retina South Africa, we believe that every act of generosity brings us one step closer to a more inclusive world for people living with inherited retinal conditions.



Pictured from left to right: Andy Stevenson, John Anticevich, Mike de Beer (Rotary Knights of Pendragon), Manny Moodley, Victoria Musimbo, Natley Reddy, Karen Denton

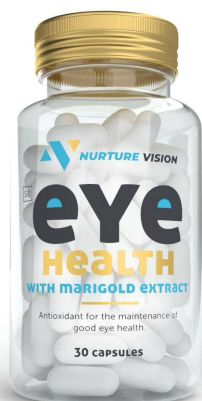
That is why we are deeply grateful to the Rotary Club Knights of Pendragon for their wonderfully thoughtful donation of a laptop to our organisation.

This gift is more than a piece of technology — it is a tool that will help us continue our vital work: supporting patients and families, raising awareness, and driving our mission of *A Cure in Sight for Blindness*.

To the members of the Rotary Club Knights of Pendragon, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your generosity reflects the true spirit of community and service, and it means the world to our team and the people we serve every day.

We are honoured to have you walking alongside us on this journey.

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**Nurture Vision
Triple Carotenoid:
Advanced
Nutritional Support
for Macular and
Retinal Health**

At Nurture Vision, the mission is simple — to empower South Africans to take proactive steps toward lifelong eye health through scientifically formulated, premium-quality supplements.

Nurture Vision is proud to offer South Africa's first eye health supplement featuring the complete trio of macular carotenoids: lutein, zeaxanthin, and meso-zeaxanthin. These three powerful antioxidants are naturally concentrated in the macula — the part of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed, and colour vision. Together, they protect the eyes from oxidative damage, reduce light-induced stress from blue light exposure, and may help slow the progression of conditions such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

While many international products contain lutein and zeaxanthin alone, the Nurture Vision formula is uniquely enhanced with meso-zeaxanthin — a central macular carotenoid that plays a vital role in visual contrast sensitivity and central retinal protection.

We are honoured to partner with Retina South Africa, whose advocacy and awareness efforts resonate strongly with our values.

“Together, we aim to protect and preserve the gift of sight -one supplement at a time.”

The Nurture Vision Team

[Shop Nurture Vision Products](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events Calendar

25 July 2026 - Annual General Meeting - Midrand

1 Sept 2026 - Swing for Sight Golf Day - Royal Johannesburg Golf Club - Gauteng

Retina SA Disclaimer

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Tel: +(27) 114501181 | Share Call: 0860 59 59 59

WhatsApp: +27 820747116

Email: headoffice@retinasa.org.za

www.retinasa.org.za

Our mailing address is:

Retina South Africa
2nd Floor, Sami-G Office Square
80 Greenvale Road
Wilbart, Germiston,
Gauteng, South Africa

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