



# White Cane Day

and Significance of Life  
Horizon for the Blind

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White Cane Day, as an international awareness raising event, celebrates the importance of the white cane and promotes a safe environment for long cane users. White Cane Day is usually marked on the 15th of October every year around the world.

**History of White Cane Day**  
The White Cane was invented in 1930 by Lion George Bonham in the United States of America, as a walking instrument for the blind to enable them to move freely and independently and detect obstacles in their way. Since the invention of the White Cane, it has become a significant instrument to the blind. It serves as a traffic sign and pleads for safety to the police, motorists and pedestrians, urging them to show to the blind the right way. The white cane also helps the blind have access to all types of public transportation. This device detects obstacles in



the way of the blind and acts as an international symbol of blindness, calling for help wherever and whenever the user finds it difficult to move freely. Through advocacy of the World Blind Union on the rights of the blind, the 15th day of October of every year was set by the United Nations to be observed worldwide by all blind and partially-sighted persons. It demonstrates the significance of the White Cane to the blind in the social and economic aspects of their life. Also, the day is an appropriate opportunity for the blind to stage programs and speak out for their rights, and to petition parliaments and governments to enact and enforce laws for protection as well as the general well-being and welfare of the blind.

### Variety of Canes

People who are blind or vision-impaired might choose to use a white cane as a mobility aid. Different types of canes are available in the world.

- **The symbol cane:** Informs others that the person has vision impairment and may need assistance. It is not a mobility aid or physical support.
- **A white walking stick:** Indicates that a person has vision impairment and provides physical support.
- **The long cane:** Is designed as a mobility device and acts as an obstacle detector, with users sweeping it from side-to-side, one stride in front of them. The aim is to get clues about their environment for quick reaction. This sweeping technique helps locate potential hazards on the ground and allows the person to know when they are approaching a step. The cane also detects tactile paving to indicate that the person has come to a designated crossing point where it is safe to cross the road.

The use of different surfaces underfoot conveys important information to people using a cane, as they navigate the streets in a very different way compared to sighted people. The feel and sound of a cane swept across the pavement is very different to the feel and sound of a cane touching tactile paving and imme-

diately alerts the person that they are approaching a crossing.

### Why is the Long Cane So Important?

A long cane user explains why he uses the long cane and the difference it makes to his life: "I have been using the long cane for just over 6 years now. Before that I used a symbol cane but I have found that the long cane makes people more aware that I really need it to help me get around. I get more help when I'm using it. I live in a very busy part of the town. The training for the use of the cane wasn't too difficult as I already had a good idea about it. It has given me more confidence. I felt vulnerable before using the cane and I use it all the time now. My sight loss has been gradual. It took me a couple of years to come round to the idea of the symbol cane, even though I knew I really needed it. But now I wouldn't go anywhere without the long cane. I am no longer relying on people to take me somewhere. It is very important for everyone to be aware of the white cane and what it means. I think when people see me walking around with my cane, they know why I am using it. I can find the bus stop myself and can get in and out of town independently. I know the route into the town very well and usually know where the bus is, even though I can't see. You feel every turn the bus makes but it takes practice and concentration. One of the main benefits of the white cane is that people know that you may need assistance. Bus drivers notice the cane too and if I'm at the bus stop, drivers will often stop and ask which number bus I am waiting for."