

EYE on SIGHT

CCB EYECARE CARIBBEAN NEWSLETTER



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Second Quarter - July 2011

A Son's heartache

"We know we all have to die, but I never had the slightest dream that I would have lost my mother and to think that it is out of carelessness" (pg. 1.)



From the Desk of the CEO

During the quarter, we are also finding our selves heavily pre-occupied with the on-going negotiations between the University Of Guyana and the Government of Guyana... (pg. 4)

From Pointe-a-Pierre to the House of Lords

"I came to Britain in 1960 and experienced a huge culture shock because I expected everyone to treat me kindly and with respect..."



(pg. 4)

The Best is yet to come

"As with any boarding institution we had to accept that there would be bad times alongside the good times. ..." (pg. 3)



A SON'S HEARTACHE - THE TRAGIC DEATH OF ESMERALDA EVANS

The Christmas Holidays had just ended and for 60-year-old Esmeralda Evans, it was time to return to her job as the Supervisor at Superior Craft and More.

Esmeralda was blind, but this was never seen as a handicap. She lost her sight early in her childhood due to a freak accident at her home in the small community of Flower Hill in the western Parish of St James.

But Esmeralda was always active and throughout her life entrenched herself in the community of persons who are blind.

On the morning of January 3rd, 2011, she looked forward to the day's activities at work and seeing her colleagues for the first time since the Christmas break.

In this new year – her routine remained the same, her son, Dale Miller (33) escorted her to Superior Craft and More, located on the compound of the Jamaica Society for the Blind in Kingston, Jamaica's capital. The day at work went by quickly.



"We just got back from Christmas Holidays; we had closed on the 24th of December; on the Monday January 3rd, we were laughing as we shared our experiences; we had such a good time on the first day back at work," recalled a co-worker, Camile Weldham,

In the afternoon, like clock-work, Dale left his job as a Telephone Operator with the Ministry of Local Government and went to meet his mother to escort her home.

"I did the same as usual; I went and picked her up at 5:30 on that fateful evening. I said to her, Mommy you can't say I'm not early this time. We left, crossed the road and we chatted casually and then we were at the Bus Stop; we continued our conversation...then tragedy struck."

The car, a Toyota Avalon, mounted the sidewalk and slammed into the Bus Stop.

"Based on the angle that the car hit, it slammed into a man at the Bus Stop, my Mom's friend, my Mom and myself. I was hit off the sidewalk into the middle of the road. When I got up, of course in a lot of pain, I saw persons scattered all over. By then, a big crowd had gathered and, of course, I was very concerned. I heard a by-stander saying there were persons underneath the car. I became even more jittery because I did not see my Mom. Eventually I went up to the car that was jammed into the Bus Stop; I stooped down and I saw my Mom pinned underneath the car," cried Dale as he relived the incident.

"The car was jammed into the Bus Stop, I pushed my head under the car and cried Mommy. I did that three times; no sound; I held onto her hand and shook it; there was no response. I got up so frightened and cried out Lord of Mercy, they've killed my mother. I couldn't be calm because she was dead. I became hysterical and eventually I was taken away."

News of the tragedy flooded the airwaves. There were reports that hours later the bodies of Esmeralda and her friend, Joanna Scarlett, remained pinned under the vehicle. Dale along with other accident victims was rushed to the Hospital at the University of the West Indies.

Dale was treated for cuts and bruises and quickly released.

A week later, on January 10th, the Police reported that Ann-Marie Williams, 33, a Bank Supervisor was charged with two counts of manslaughter and one count of dangerous driving,

Williams, who was also injured, was admitted to Hospital for a few days, and as a result she missed her first court hearing. She was granted bail amounting to J\$750,000 (US\$8,823.00).

To date, the case is still outstanding.

The tragedy led to howls of outrage.

At the time of the incident Conrad Harris was the acting Executive Director of the Jamaica Society for the Blind. He said the indiscipline on the road is a challenge not only for the visually impaired, but also, for those who are sighted.

"Jamaican motorists tend to disregard the rights of disabled persons. Taxi drivers have made the section of the roadway where the accident occurred dangerous for the visually impaired".

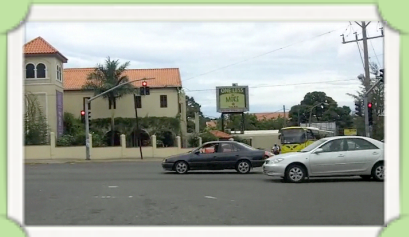
In response, Senior Officers at the nearby Matilda's Corner Police Station expressed surprise at the concerns raised by Harris and promised to increase their vigilance in the area.

Today, Esmeralda Evans is gone. Among the many tributes paid to her, words from Dale perhaps best sums up the essence of her life.

"She was brilliant, she was special. There are not enough words to describe the type of person my Mom was and the type of person she was to me. She was extra-ordinary, the only thing she could not do was see..."

VIDEO LINK

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kl8a-z1Hkb4>



The Best Is Yet to Come



At the age of three, the Salvation Army School for the Blind became Frandino

Fairweather's home away from home and like hundreds of others before him the teachers and other members of staff became family.

They were taught life's basic skills and of course academics.

"Almost immediately I began to feel at home and as I made new friends the bond grew with teachers and other members of staff."

"As with any boarding institution we had to accept that there would be bad times alongside the good times. The good times far outnumbered the bad," said Frandino, the Valedictorian for the Class of 2011. On Friday, July 1, as the graduands were escorted to their seats on the platform they beamed with pride.

"I can't believe this day is finally here" whispered a mother as her daughter was escorted up the aisle. Similar comments could be heard coming from family, friends and well-wishers. The Salvation Army School for the Blind, located on Mannings Hill Road in Kingston, Jamaica was established in 1927 and until 1956 remained as a voluntary and private provision with no Government help or recognition.

The high standards of academic competence and equality with sighted students eventually led to the intervention of the Government.

From the time of enrollment, students are taught to see with eyes of the heart and to always have a positive outlook

on life regardless of their circumstances. Today many students are integrated into high schools with several moving onto tertiary education.

Several past students have made their mark not only in Jamaica but also across the Caribbean and the Diaspora. Arvel Grant, the CEO for the Caribbean Council for the Blind/Eye Care Caribbean is one such person. As Guest Speaker at his alma mater, he challenged the students to constantly strive for the very best.

"As of now you all are really responsible for your own destiny, be sure that you are the best that you can be. Take a hold of the opportunities that have come forth from a good foundation"



School Choir <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OafjWgWUYUs>

While the graduates from the Class of 2011 embark on a new phase of life, those still there look forward to a new school year come September. The staff is faced with the usual challenges, especially in the aftermath of the fire that devastated the kitchens' pantry - help is still needed

The School's Administrator - Captain Edward Lyons has big plans for fund-raising and hopes to raise J\$ 5 million (US\$60 thousand) to repair the damage. It is hoped that the money needed will be raised at a Barbeque and Concert scheduled to be held on the school grounds in November.

But overall the future is bright - in the words of a song delivered by the 2011 graduates - the best is yet to come.

"There is a master plan in store for you if you'll just take it through....for all of the troubles you've been through, the best is yet to come.... today is the first day of the best days of your life."



This stool was presented as a gift to the guest speaker. It was made by students at the School.



Captain Edward Lyons



Kindergarten Class

FROM POINTE-A-PIERRE TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS

On September 23, 1949, the small town of Pointe-A-Pierre in Trinidad and Tobago was graced with presence of Floella Benjamin.

In the early years, her life revolved around her hometown and family in the sun-drenched twin-island Republic.

At the age of ten Floella's life took one of many turns, in that along with her family she emigrated to the United Kingdom. Her family settled in South London – a transition was not at all easy.

"I came to Britain in 1960 and experienced a huge culture shock because I expected everyone to treat me kindly and with respect, but Britain was cold, unwelcoming, violent and bleak. I had to learn to live in two cultures fast if I was going to survive" said Floella

Life as a black schoolgirl was a challenging experience, which she describes in her book 'Coming to England' and its award winning television drama adaptation.

"I was standing next to the wall when some boys came up and spat strange words at me, words that I had never heard before but from their faces I knew that they were not nice. They were words that told me that I was different from them and that they felt my kind shouldn't be in their country. I looked at them, confused and baffled. .. That was the day I realised that in the eyes of some people in this world I was not a person but a colour."

With the unwavering support of her parents and siblings education became the passport to life.

The production company Floella now runs with her husband Keith Taylor was commissioned by the BBC to make a children's drama based on 'Coming to

England'. This won a Royal Television Society Award in 2004.

Floella has produced hundreds of programmes, mostly for the audience she loves best - children.

By far one of the greatest milestones was reached when she took her seat in the House of Lords as a Liberal Democrat Peer in June 2010.

With the official title of Baroness Benjamin of Beckenham in Kent, the TV veteran pledged to devote "much energy to the well being of children and young people" during her time in the House of Lords.

In her maiden speech in the House of Lords she summed up her life's journey so far with these words :

My family motto is, "Who would have thought?", because you never know where life's twists and turns will take you. Mine has taken me on a spiritual journey."



From the desk of the CEO.....

As the 2nd quarter of 2011 draws to a close, we find ourselves spending much of our time focusing on: Preparations for our 44th anniversary regional meetings; the establishment of a full service spectacle laboratory in Antigua, to serve Antigua, Barbuda and much of the Eastern Caribbean. And the continued expansion of training opportunities for persons wishing to start a career as an eye health provider.

Our BGM will be addressed by Lady Floella Benjamin, Baroness of Beckenham. We look forward to the development of a very special relationship between our regional programme and the Baroness.



As part of preparations for the launch of a more accessible eye health service for persons who cannot afford commercial options, we

will be implementing a special 2-day Clinic at the Fiennes Institute in Antigua. The clinic will herald the beginning of our implementation of Vision 2020 (The Right to Sight) in the country

While we will be providing eye health services to the residents of the Fiennes and other institutions in Antigua & Barbuda, free of cost, we intend to implement a nation-wide eye health programme for the poor and near poor.

In order to protect and facilitate ongoing development of a viable private sector in eye health services, we will restrict primary access to the service to:

- Toddlers
- Students
- The disabled
- The retired
- Persons earning up to 66% of the income tax threshold.

We will also invite: Members of Parliament and Ministers of Religion to refer persons whom they think should benefit from the service of Eye Care Caribbean with some complements including:

- Wavers of applicable taxes, duties, service charges etc.
- A building to house:
 - i. A full service spectacle laboratory in Antigua;
 - ii. A comprehensive eye clinic to double as a training facility for Bio-Med Technicians responsible for servicing of equipment and instruments used in providing eye health services.
 - iii. A bonded warehouse to hold spectacle-making materials

iv. Office space to manage those activities and other aspects of our regional programmes.

The 2-day Eye Clinic at the Fiennes Institute will be led by Dr. Genalin Ang, assisted by three 2nd year Optometry students from the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Guyana (UG).



During the quarter, we are also finding ourselves heavily preoccupied with the ongoing negotiations between the University of Guyana and the Government of Guyana, over the UG's proposal to raise student fees.

The matter is of grave interest to us, since the newly started B.Sc in Optometry is one of dozens of programmes affected by the (some times) acrimonious discussions.

We are confident that we will have much more to share with you on all those fronts in the 3rd quarter.

Anuel Grant

EYE ON SIGHT

is produced with the support of the following organisations.

The European Commission

Sightsavers

Eye Care Guyana

The Jamaica Society for the Blind

The St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association

OUR MISSION, OUR PURPOSE, OUR GOAL....

Our purpose is preventing blindness and visual impairment while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored.

Follow us on.....



Please donate to CCB Eye Care Caribbean.

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<http://www.eyecarecaribbean.com/act-now/make-a-donation>