

EYE on SIGHT

CCB EYECARE CARIBBEAN NEWSLETTER



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A Quarterly Newsletter

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Surviving - Against All Odds (Juliette's Tale)

The day was similar to any other for Juliette. Little did she know that in a moment her life would be changed in an instant. - Cover Story



From the Desk of ...

In this our first issue - CEO Arvel Grant shares his vision for the year ahead

Page 2



2010
Highlights

Page 3

Making strides in Guyana..



Page 2

Living without sight but not daunted

"What I really feel cause the blindness is that I was supposed to use drops in the eyes. Most times when I went to the hospital I didn't get them" said Alfred Roger

Page 3



Mark your Calendar



Page 6

Surviving - Against All Odds (Juliette's Tale)

The day was similar to any other for twenty six (26) year old Juliette Mauricette, as she made her way to work on the morning of Friday June 12, 2009. Little did she know that in a moment her life as she knew it for over twenty years would be changed in an instant.

Juliette, a mother of three was in a jovial mood and looked forward to the days



Juliette Mauricette and her son

activities at her working place - a restaurant located in Rodney Bay, St Lucia. She also had a new outlook on life, having recently separated from what was reported to be abusive relationship with her boyfriend and father of her children, Matha Joseph.

On this day, Juliette got off the bus and walked by KFC in the Rodney Bay Mall, she was caught off-guard as Joseph jumped out of nowhere with a cutlass which he used to chop her all over her body with severe blows to her eyes, nose, ears and hands.

In ICU

Following the attack, Juliette was taken to Victoria Hospital by ambulance where she was treated and admitted to the Intensive Care Unit for one month.

The news of the gruesome attack sent shock waves across the island. In December 2010, we visited Juliette at her home in the village of Canaries located on St Lucia's West Coast. Along with Anthony Avril, from the St Lucia Blind Welfare Association, (SLBWA) Juliette invited us in and shared her story.

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO....



This year 2011, marks the 100th anniversary of the

Caribbean-wide initiative of the late JAMES AUGUSTUS ALVES, to establish formal work with and for persons who are blind. Mr. Alves was born in Berbice, Guyana in 1883.

In 1911, he travelled across the English-speaking Caribbean, seeking to convince political, business and civic leaders of the need to establish programmes of services for the blind.

Eventually, he decided to focus on Trinidad. In a feat showing initiative and determination, the indefatigable James Alves travelled across the island by horse-drawn carts and train, collecting data about persons who were blind. At the end of the survey, he found five hundred and thirty-three persons; (533), two hundred and forty-six males (246) and two hundred and eighty-seven females (287); and, including eleven (11) children.

APPROACHES COLONIAL SECRETARY



Armed with the results of the survey, and with letters of support from the Royal Normal College and Academy of

Music for the Blind and Lady Frances Campbell (an advocate of training for the blind in the U.K.), Mr. Alves approached the authorities, in Trinidad. (page 7)

"It happened when my ex-boyfriend attacked me with a cutlass, and from the day he attacked me the cutlass took my eyes.... I didn't see anything again. I remember when I went to ICU and they put the eye pads on my eyes and when they took them off I could not see. I remember when the Doctor didn't break the news to me, he only said he was going to transfer me to the Blind Welfare Association. I said me? It was a lot. I can remember when someone from the Blind Welfare Association



came to visit me in the Hospital that afternoon, I didn't want to have anything to do with her"

Released from Hospital

But shortly after being released from the Hospital, Juliette visited the St Lucia Blind Welfare Association.

"When I got to the Blind Welfare I did feel different, I got encouragement from the staff, they told me that it's okay, its not to the end of the world, I still have my life. I live with it everyday, it is still frustrating but I don't make it a big issue. It's not as frustrating as when it just happened"

With encouragement from members of the Association, she then began to take baby steps towards adjusting to blindness. However there was a setback as Juliette found out that she was pregnant once again. "I am not working right now, I was taking training at the Blind Welfare, but I am now pregnant, it makes me tired, frustrated, I always want to lie down, but after the baby I will start taking my Computer Classes seriously"

Seated on her bed and in an advanced



her hands.

"I have very little use of my right hand. I lost my thumb. My left hand - is of no use, I

cannot open or close it. It is very painful, if somebody tries to touch it, I feel a shock pain. There are many things I can't do on my own, that's when I start to remember when I had my sight. (Then) I didn't have to depend on anyone, I could come and go as I wanted to" she lamented.

Juliette then removed her sunglasses for a closer to reveal her eyes.

"The cutlass took out my eye completely, it was hanging, so I have nothing in my left eye. In my right eye, the eyeball remains but I can see nothing from it"

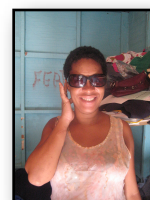
The Road to Recovery

According to Anthony Avril, the road towards recovery will not be a smooth one for Juliette.

"Even to use a computer, she relies on her hands, when you are blind, your fingers become your eyes, we call them the seeing fingers. It's a challenge for her but she is strong" he said

Concerning her ex-boyfriend and father of her children, Matha Joseph, he was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Juliette admits that she is terrified just thinking of the day he will be released



While confessing to bouts of depression and even contemplating suicide, Juliette who is now twenty eight (28) remains hopeful and refuses to be daunted. She looks forward to the future and the birth of her

child.

"Before this happened, I had a good life. There are a few things that I desire right now, such as a comfortable home or even a room for a person who is blind. Probably I would also like to have a job one day. Something that could suit my situation. To be independent in my home and to be independent financially, once again"

But until everything falls in place, I will continue to be strong, I have to be strong" she said.



2010

Highlights

• The Caribbean was affected by one of the most devastating natural disasters when a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on January 12th leaving the capital, Port-au-Prince, the densely populated areas of Petionville, Carrefour, Delmas and other surrounding districts in ruins. The Haitian Society for the Help of the Blind (SHAA), a CCB Member Agency, not only suffered severe damage to its offices, but also lost members, families and friends to the disaster.

CCB and Sightsavers worked with SHAA to provide short-term relief to clients (of SHAA) who are blind or visually impaired and assistance to secure alternative office space, re-establish administrative structure and resume its programmes.

• With the help of Sightsavers, CCB and several of its partners secured funding from the European Commission for a Project, "Promoting Vision 2020 to eliminate avoidable blindness through capacity building". The funding of Euro 4,000,000 or 73.66%, over a period of five years, beginning in 2010, together with co-funding from Sightsavers, will enable CCB to deliver the following: (page 5)

MAKING STRIDES - OPTOMETRY DEGREE LAUNCHED

In a move that has been hailed as a breakthrough in the development of skilled eye health workers in the region, the degree course in Optometry came into being at the University of Guyana in August 2010.

The programme which was the culmination of a long-running campaign by the *Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB)* came about in an effort to help bring the ratio of eye care professionals closer to acceptable international standards.

As a result CCB partnered with the University of Guyana, to launch a 4-year Bachelor of Science Degree in Optometry. Today the course of study includes students from The Commonwealth of Dominica; Guyana; Haiti, Jamaica and St. Lucia.

In addition to the BSc in Optometry the University of Guyana also offers the Certificate in Refraction Techniques, and an Associate Degree in Optometry . (page 6)

LIVING WITHOUT SIGHT BUT NOT DAUNTED

Alfred Rogers was seated on a stool next to a tiny wobbly wooden structure that was laden with an assortment of snacks. A handwritten sign placed just behind the stall read.

"Kindly assist this blind man's stand - Alfred Rogers"

For over 40 years, Alfred was like any other sighted person, active in his community and had a steady job.

But one day in 2001 – Glaucoma, the thief of sight-robbed him of his vision.

It was a hot December afternoon in 2010 when we ventured into the village of Agricola, three miles outside of the capital of Georgetown.

This is the area Alfred calls home. (page 4)

Living without sight but not daunted.....

"In 2001 I was working at a company, while at work we had a morning session which was good, I had lunch and then went to lie down. When I got up my eyes started to get hazy. From then on they send me home. The Doctor told me it was Glaucoma and they started treating me from then on"

The diagnosis came as a shock, after all, like so many others stricken with Glaucoma, there are no symptoms and in an instant your world is enveloped in darkness.

Alfred believes that the lack of the prescribed eyedrops used to treat Glaucoma resulted in the rapid deterioration of his vision.

"What I really feel cause the blindness is that I was supposed to use drops in the eyes. Most times when I went to the hospital for the drops I didn't get them. They would give a prescription for me to get the drops outside. After a time I didn't have any money to buy them and so by missing the drops I eventually got blind"

So he did the next best thing – and prepared for the inevitable.

"So even before I got totally blind, I prepared, I started changing my entire style towards life, I started to adjust, so when I got blind it wasn't all that strange to me. One of the things I started doing was to blindfold myself in the house and start to move around. I was thinking that if I became totally blind I would not be too frustrated"

"I also asked myself if I could live with my new situation and the answer was yes. Once you have life there is always hope"

Today Alfred not only runs his small business, he proudly revealed that he can wash, cook and clean. He is also guardian to his twelve year old (12) niece and eight (8) year old nephew.



"I didn't live around anyone who was responsible for me. So I had to take care of myself. As a matter of fact the people I live around I am responsible for them. I have my niece and nephew, they rely more on me than I rely on them. So I have to keep active and try everything for myself. Everything depends on me. I have to live with it. If I'm washing, I don't know if I washing clean or not but I just have to deal with it."

The process of rehabilitation is not always easy. While Alfred has managed the routine daily tasks, there is one aspect of adjusting to blindness that is a challenge. That of mastering the use of his cane. With the assistance of Adjustment to Blindness specialist, Nicole Forde from the Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB), Guyana office, Alfred continues to progress.



myself, so Nicole has helped me with that part and how to maneuver. I try to practice, in the yard or around the area, I'm getting accustomed to it but it's hard, it's really hard."

"The difficult part is moving around on the streets by

While fiercely independent in his own surroundings Alfred fears being alone and the possibility of having to relocate from Agricola.

"I don't have the training yet to move in areas that I don't know yet, so it would be difficult if I have to move. Eventually if I get into a new environment I would have to start learning it all over again. I may have to move from here and that would break my heart, it don't know where to go, I don't think I would have the children again and then I would be all alone. When you're blind you can't live on your own. That is the one thing that bothers me when I think about the day when I have to move"

But in spite of the challenges he had a message for those faced with the possibility of losing their sight to Glaucoma.

"The situation is not something easy to live with, you have to understand that because you're not seeing anymore. You have to change your lifestyle. The first thing you have to do is to accept it and if you accept it, prepare to live with it. If you don't accept it there can be problems, you might even feel like ending your own life...but then remember life has to go on, it must go on. Don't ever get frustrated."

Video of Alfred Roger's story



<http://www.youtube.com/embed/EcbeigvmyY>

2010 Highlights (cont'd from pg 3)

I. *To reduce the prevalence of blindness and visual impairment amongst rural and poor populations in the Caribbean.*

II. *Strengthen collaboration and coordination between State and Non-State Actors at regional and national level to support effective implementation of programmes for the provision of inclusive services to support effective implementation of programmes for the provision of inclusive services to persons who are blind or visually impaired.*

The specific objective is to build the capacity of Partners and Vision 2020 Committees in Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and St Lucia.

•In its continuing effort to promote social inclusion, the West Indies



Cricket Council for the Blind (WICCB) successfully organised its 5th Regional Tournament during the

period June 5th to 13th, with participating National Teams : Barbados, Jamaica, the Windward Islands and Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, the Council hosted an International Series between an Australian and the West Indies Teams from June 15th to 19th, 2010. Both Tournaments were held in Barbados.

In the Regional Tournament, Jamaica won both the Challenge Trophy and the League Cup; while in the International Series, both the One Day International (ODI) and the first Game of the T/20 Series were won by the West Indies Team (the second match of the T/20 Series being abandoned due to rain).

• In keeping with its work programme for the implementation of the EC project, a Team from the CCB Secretariat conducted technical visits to Project Partners in Guyana, St. Lucia, Jamaica and Haiti during the year. The visits were geared towards assisting the partners with activities outlined in the project.

•In order to familiarise herself with projects supported by Sightsavers in the Caribbean, Director of International Programme Operations with Sightsavers, Adelaide Addo-Fening, visited Antigua and St. Lucia during the period August 9th to 13th, 2010. The main purpose of the visits to CCB Secretariat (Antigua) and St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association (SLBWA) was to meet members of Staff and develop an understanding of both Organisations, their Membership and Programs.

•In its quest to increase the Corps of Youth Leaders in the Region, the CCB Secretariat hosted a Leadership Development Workshop for Persons with Visual Impairment at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, between July 26th and 29th, 2010. The main Facilitator, Dr. Aubrey Webson (Program Coordinator/Snr. Consultant, Perkins International Development Program), was supported by Arvel Grant (CEO – CCB-Eye Care Caribbean), Senator Kerryann Ifill, and two Guest Speakers drawn from the Public and Private Sectors of Barbados.

At the conclusion of the Workshop, Participants established a Group, “Youth Network for Empowerment, Advocacy and Action”, and have created a Social Media link to facilitate contact and interaction.

•In an effort to enhance Vision 2020 Services in Antigua and Barbuda, a CCB Secretariat Team made a presentation to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and his Cabinet in September. The meeting focused on the implementation of a collaborative Project for the provision of quality and affordable Eye Health Services, in the twin-island State. Following intensive discussions, Cabinet has agreed to study the proposal and communicate its decision to the Secretariat

•On November 19th, CCB held its first Executive Committee Meeting utilising the Conference Bridge operated by LIME. Hosted by the Secretariat, Executive Members in Guyana, Jamaica, The Bahamas, St. Lucia and Antigua discussed pertinent issues without meeting face-to-face, a viable option given the rising cost of air travel.

•CCB continues to strengthen its partnerships with: Sightsavers, ICEE, PAHO, IAPB, HelpAge International, ORBIS International and CARIOA through the Annual Meeting of International Non-Governmental Organisations Collaborating Group (INGO-CG) held in Jamaica on

December 1st, 2010. One of the outcomes of the Meeting was an undertaking by IAPB to provide some resources to facilitate an Advocacy Workshop and Reception for Stakeholders in Guyana, in tandem with the 2011 Meeting, scheduled for Guyana.



Dr. Gavin Henry of Mandeville Eye Clinic - Jamaica, examines a patient

Making strides (cont'd from pg3)

At the launch of the degree program in Guyana in February 2010, Guyana's Health Minister Leslie Ramsammy said the preservation of sight throughout the Caribbean must be a public health priority.



"It is a matter of fundamental human rights, unfortunately sight preservation, prevention of sight loss, the provision of services to those who live with visual impairments have been neglected challenges on the developmental agenda" he said

According to CCB-Eye Care Caribbean's CEO, Arvel Grant, it is now anticipated that in 2014, fifteen new Optometrists will be graduating.

"The English-speaking Caribbean needs at least six hundred Optometrists to equate Optometric standards currently obtained in Britain and Australia" he said.

In looking toward the future, **CCB-Eye Care Caribbean** plans to enter into similar arrangements with more universities across the Caribbean, to help fill the overwhelming gaps in service in the region's eye health capabilities.



Jamaica Society for the Blind Headquarters

*From the desk of the CEO...
(cont'd from pg 2)*

They were so impressed with his findings that the Colonial Secretary requested the Executive Council (Governing Council) by way of a motion in the Legislature, to give support to a scheme for the education and training of persons who were blind.

Motion approved

In 1913, (the exact date is unknown), the Legislative Council approved a motion for the establishment of a scheme for the instruction of the blind in Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting later took the decision to commence preliminary work for the blind on May 18th, 1914.

(www.eyecarecaribbean.com/ Jamesalves)

Service programmes established

Over the next 50 years, The countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, followed the lead of Trinidad & Tobago, and established service programmes catering to persons who are blind.

In 1967, organizations (serving persons who are blind in the Caribbean) convened, to form the **Caribbean Council For The Blind (CCB)**. Since then CCB (with support from: SightSavers, ORBIS UK, CNIB, HKI and Perkins International, ICEE, PAHO-WHO and CBM) coordinated, funded and (otherwise) facilitated extensive developments in: eye health, inclusive education adjustment to blindness and capacity building, advocacy and fundraising.

One of our most successful feats of advocacy is the inclusion of questions in the regional census, which counts persons who are blind in each community.

Much of our work has been influenced by the World Health Organisations (WHO) Global initiative For The

Elimination of Avoidable Blindness (Now Vision 2020 – The Right To Sight).

Human Resource Development.

Our work over the years has led to the training and placement of Ophthalmologists in: Guyana, Belize and most of the countries in the Eastern Caribbean.

We have also trained nurses and other primary health care workers.

Capacity building, advocacy and fund-raising

This is a most important area of our work. Over the years, support by National Governments, has been supplemented with inputs from Private Individuals; Development Organizations; the Business Sector and Bilateral and Multilateral Organizations.

As the national, regional and global economic realities become more difficult, children and adults who are blind, will find them selves in greatest need of support from all sectors of society.

Eye On Sight, is part of our effort to keep you informed about the realities of the 60,000 persons who are blind in the English-Speaking Caribbean; the more than 180,000 persons who are severely visually impaired; and the more than three million citizens, who need to wear prescription glasses or contact lens, in order to see normally.



L-R Arvel Grant (CEO), Keva Richards (CCB) Nurse Joyce Gooden (Mandeville Eye Clinic-Jamaica)

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.

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www.eyecarecaribbean.com

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"Eye On Sight"

"Eye On Sight" will cover developments, services, updates and plans by the Organisation, its Member Agencies and Partners across the Region.

This newsletter will be available electronically and will be published in April, July, October and January.

We extend our appreciation to our Members and Partners, our Communications Officer and Team for their support in the launch of this initiative.

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