

SPEAKING NOTES FOR
W. BILLY HEAVEN, CEO, THE CHASE FUND
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE
LIONS CLUB'S REGISTER OF BLIND PERSONS IN JAMAICA
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2008

Salutations:

Master of Ceremonies

Hon. Rudyard Spencer, Minister of Health

Ms Virginia Wood, Executive Director, Jamaica Society of the Blind

Ms. Saffrey Brown, General Manager, JN Foundation

Lions Club of Jamaica members

Ladies and gentlemen, friends all...

Let me start out by paying tribute to this noble organization, the Lions Clubs of Jamaica....., a movement which is a part

of a worldwide club highly recognized for its outstanding and selfless charitable work particularly in the area of sight conservation and by extension helping blind persons and the visually impaired to function normally in the society.

In speaking of the visually impaired and the Lions Club it would be remiss of me not to refer to the phenomenal ***Helen Keller***, who in 1925 at an International Convention challenged Lions to become ***“Knights of the blind in the crusade***

against darkness". I guess this was a turning point for the Movement which ignited a band of volunteers around the globe to attend to the needs of the visually impaired.

But 105 years before this challenge was given a famous lady who became blind at age 6 weeks was born. Her name is Francis Jane Crosby – popularly known as Fanny J. Crosby -the famous song writer who wrote thousands of hymns (Over 8000 poems some have not yet

been put to music). She was such a remarkable person and I'll just read this inspirational piece about her.

Fanny J. Crosby

Fanny refused to feel sorry for herself because of her blindness, and she did not let it hinder her from engaging in a full and active lifestyle. She wrote, "I could climb a tree like a squirrel and ride a horse bareback." She actually thanked

God for her blindness, as she felt it contributed to her greater spiritual gifts. Fanny wrote, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me." When only

eight years old she composed the following poem:

Oh, what a happy child I am, although I cannot see!

I am resolved that in this world contented I will be!

How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't!

So weep or sigh because I'm blind, I cannot – nor I won't!

This effort by the Lions Club to help empower the visually impaired to take charge of their lives through the provision of better information which by extension will allow for better planning is truly commendable.

But we know that you have to rely on partnerships and alliances to carry out your endeavours. I make reference to corporate organizations such as fellow donors – Jamaica National Building Society Foundation, Government

Agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the organization which I am proud to lead, the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education Fund (CHASE). We are here today to witness this moment in Jamaica's history – **the *Official Media* Launch of **The Register of the Blind.****

When we were approached by the Lions Club for assistance, we did not hesitate, as we firmly believe that as a country and as a people, we need to protect and ensure that the welfare of those less

fortunate are taken care of. The visually impaired among us is one such grouping and the vision of the Lions Club movement in Jamaica in embarking on this most important project must be commended. This is a new vision for those without sight and today CHASE is pleased to announce its contribution of J\$1.3M towards this project and we encourage others to do likewise.

This project which seeks to create a register of the blind in Jamaica is most

timely and necessary. You and I know that it is impossible to plan effectively without current and relevant data. I have not seen an outline of the database but I hope it will capture more than a demographic map. I hope that there is a window that identifies the skills set of these individuals in order for them to provide service for their one another as well as to have focus group activities in order to empower themselves to deal

with the challenges of competitive living which is sometimes unkind.

In closing, I want to once more pay tribute to the Lions Club movement in Jamaica, for their continued support to the blind and visually impaired in our society; and for their years of unbroken service to the wider Jamaica.

On behalf of the Chase Fund Board of Directors, Management and Staff, we commend you and wish you continued success. You are truly **a beacon**

of light and it is hoped that others will see your good works and follow suit...

In closing I wish to quote from one of Helen Keller's many profound presentations in which she states: *I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse*

***to do something that I can
do.***

I thank you and God bless you
all and Jamaica land we love!