

**Remarks**  
**Ambassador D. Brent Hardt**  
**Guyana Shines – ShineFest 2012**  
**September 28, 2012, 3:00p.m.**  
**Roraima Duke Lodge, Georgetown**

Permanent Secretary Joslyn Mackenzie, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Mr. Hamilton Green, Mayor of Georgetown (TBC)

Mrs. Patricia Chase-Green, Deputy Mayor (TBC)

Mr. Olato Sam, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education (TBC)

Guyana Shines partners,

Community representatives,

Private Sector representatives,

School representatives,

Members of the media,

[INTRO SLIDE]

Good Afternoon and welcome.

[SHINEFEST SLIDE]

It is really wonderful to have you all here this afternoon to celebrate ShineFest 2012, which represents the culmination of our activities under Guyana Shines since last April. Let's do a little recap of

the work we have done, the people we have encountered, and take a sneak peak at what lies ahead of us with Guyana Shines.

[WHO? SLIDE]

The Guyana Shines team is made up of diplomatic and civic partners, including my diplomatic colleagues from the Canadian, British, and European Union Missions, as well as Youth Challenge Guyana and Conservation International Guyana. We joined together several months ago with a common goal – to contribute to building a cleaner Georgetown and a cleaner, more environmentally pristine Guyana.

[WHY? SLIDE]

The Guyana Shines project seeks to encourage and mobilize Guyanese communities to maintain a clean environment by addressing the litter situation. Keeping neighborhoods clean is important for Guyana and its people, for reasons of health, sanitation, and a

functioning city infrastructure. A beautiful Guyana helps to promote tourism and biodiversity, and has other economic benefits for business communities. But most importantly, a clean environment improves the spirit of community and the quality of life for citizens.

[WHAT? SLIDE]

Guyana Shines is made up of two main parts – Education and Action. We wanted to make sure that students, community residents, and others were aware of the natural beauty around them – and the need to protect and preserve that. But we also wanted to encourage citizens to be a part in making a difference and actually doing something about litter – since they are major stakeholders affected by the way their street, block, neighborhood, or city looks.

[EDUCATION INTRO SLIDE]

Through Guyana Shines, our organizations reached out to 14 schools, many of which are represented in the room today. Our goal was to increase awareness of the harmful effects of littering and pollution, in the hopes that students will choose to make more environmentally-friendly decisions. Educating young people can transform the attitudes of an entire generation, as well as how they think about the future. Youths can also encourage their parents and teachers to make more environmentally sound choices.

[EDUCATION LAUNCH SLIDE]

On May 14, 2012, we held our Guyana Shines Educational Launch at St. Margaret's Primary School. We started by focusing on schools and young people because we firmly believe that education is the first and most critical step to shaping a future where all citizens of Guyana take responsibility for protecting their environment and preserving it for future generations. We were happy to see that many of the schools we visited already had active environmental clubs led by young people,

such as Nia Williams from St. Margaret's, who are deeply committed to raising awareness for the environment and doing something about it.

[EDUCATION SLIDE 1]

During our visits to schools in the Georgetown area, we read to children about the harmful effects of garbage.

[EDUCATION SLIDE 2]

We explained how disgusting and unsanitary garbage is, showing pictures of clogged waterways and piles of trash on the ground. We also gave children a sense of the severity of the pollution problem on a global scale, beyond Guyana's borders. We told them that this is a problem that many countries have to deal with – and one that affects us transnationally. Many students were shocked to learn of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is an enormous floating pile of trash in the North Pacific Ocean, trapped by the currents in a swirling vortex of

garbage. We highlighted the importance of volunteer work in the community.

[EDUCATION SLIDE 3]

We also showed the students pictures of animals which have been negatively affected by litter, many of which can be found in and around Guyana. We shared with them pictures of birds, manatees, and turtles which have consumed garbage accidentally or gotten fatally entrapped by plastic.

[EDUCATION SLIDE 4]

Our Guyana Shines team quizzed students about the different lengths of time that it takes for different kinds of trash to decompose, including bananas, plastics, and tin. Many were surprised at how long styrofoam takes to break down. We are very pleased to see that the Government of Guyana has taken steps to reduce the use of styrofoam

products and support companies like Caribbean Containers, represented in the audience today, who seek to produce more environmentally-friendly alternatives to styrofoam.

Last of all, we left children with our Guyana Shines slogan – “Dump it in the Bin – Everybody Can Chip In” as well as a beautiful Earth Day Poster to remind them of our visit.

[ACTION INTRO SLIDE]

The key message of Guyana Shines is that of cleaning up the city of Georgetown and the entire Guyana, so that every Guyanese citizen can enjoy a high quality life. The best means to achieve this, beyond education, is to foster greater community involvement and civic pride. Our organizations supported hands-on cleanup projects within the two communities in Georgetown. Community action of this nature ensures that initiatives like these are sustainable and can progress from strength

to strength each year to involve more communities across the regions of Guyana.

[ACTION MAP SLIDE]

Guyana Shines identified Lodge and Tucville as the two communities where we would first focus our efforts.

[ACTION LEADERS SLIDE]

We also identified the leaders of both communities who would take on the responsibility of rallying the community to spread awareness of and involvement in the Guyana Shines project. These community leaders are Lynette Pompey, from Lodge, and Curtis Harte, from Tucville.

[ACTION LAUNCH SLIDE]

On June 4, the Guyana Shines team launched the Community Clean-up in Lodge. We invited community leaders and members, students, members of civil society, government officials, the diplomatic community, and others to help commence the Clean-up initiative in an energetic way.

[ACTION SLIDE 1]

We armed ourselves with green gloves and green, biodegradable garbage bags, and positive spirits.

[ACTION SLIDE 2]

And we came together and cleaned the litter from the streets of these two neighborhoods, together with the leaders, residents, and children. Just to make things a bit more interesting and raise the stakes a bit – we decided to set up the Community Clean-up as a friendly challenge between Lodge and Tucville neighborhoods. After the

official launch of the Guyana Shines Clean-up, we turned over the responsibility to communities to continue the great work.

[THE COMPETITION SLIDE]

Residents had two weeks, from June 4 until June 18, to finish clean-up efforts and to maintain the shine. After that period, our panel of Guyana Shines judges – mostly the heads of our partner organizations – rated the communities based on the following criteria, each of which were weighted at 25 percent, adding up to a total of 100 percent:

1. The look. How did the community look before? And how does it compare to after? We took some before and after photos on which to base the scores.
2. How many members of the community helped to pitch-in?
3. How will the communities continue to promote awareness on the environment and the harmful effects of littering?
4. How will the community keep their own environment clean?

[THE PRIZE SLIDE]

The winner will receive a custom designed Guyana Shines bench, which will be placed in a select location within the community. This way, community residents can relax, bask in the glory of winning Guyana Shines, but most importantly, enjoy the beauty of the litter-free, natural environment around them. The bench has been graciously donated by John Fernandes, Ltd., represented today by Mr. Bernard Fernandes. I would like to take a moment to thank John Fernandes, Ltd. for their support in our Guyana Shines project, and for supporting a clean and beautiful Georgetown. The final results for the winner of Guyana Shines, and the recipient of this beautiful bench, will be announced later this afternoon.

[WINNERS SLIDE]

Only one community will receive the Guyana Shines 2012 grand prize. Of course, in the end, both communities and the country as a

whole will all be winners, because we will all be living in a cleaner, healthier, more sanitary environment.

[SIGNS SLIDE]

And, as an added consolation prize, the Lodge and Tucville communities will receive a large sign as a reminder of their involvement with Guyana Shines. Hopefully these will encourage community residents to continue to take pride in the cleanliness of their streets and yards – and discourage any litter-bugs from throwing trash on the ground.

[EXPERIENCE SLIDE]

Guyana Shines has been an interesting learning experience for our staff and the schools and communities we have worked with. We have encountered all sorts of challenges and obstacles along the way, but it has not affected our resolve toward making Guyana Shine. In the future,

we look forward to improving our model and making a more effective and inclusive one, based on the knowledge we have gained thus far.

[THE FUTURE SLIDE]

Though this chapter of Guyana Shines has concluded, we have already started thinking about what to do next. We have plans to identify additional communities and reach even more schools to educate, spread awareness, and spur action in the name of a beautiful Georgetown. In fact, the most inspiring part of the entire Guyana Shines campaign has been the initiative we have seen from other communities in the Georgetown area who have approached us eager to get involved. East La Penitence, Festival City, and now East Ruimveldt, are all enthusiastic about how we can work together to clean up the Garden City. Following ShineFest 2012, we will be launching into dialogue with them to create a strategy for our cause. We are also very excited to link up with new partners in our battle against litter, including the private sector, the Government of Guyana, and youth leaders.

[THE END SLIDE]

In closing, I would like to reiterate my thanks for the collaboration and leadership of my diplomatic and civil society colleagues and their teams, who have enthusiastically supported the Guyana Shines initiative since we first began discussing our shared desire to help beautify Guyana. We recognized the need for stakeholders to come around a national desire to resolve the littering problem.

The United States has dealt with the issue of littering before and has made great progress thanks to interventions by American businesses, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and concerned individuals. With a combined strategy aimed at waste reduction and recycling; litter prevention; and beautification and community greening projects, the United States was able to respond to the growing problem of litter around the highways and in cities. Several creative public service announcement campaigns touched the hearts of Americans,

encouraging them to change their habits. This was all made possible through a combination of community organizing, public education, and the fostering of public/private partnerships.

Though it is important for individuals to take personal responsibility for their yards, streets, and neighborhoods, this must come hand in hand with the backing of the Guyanese government at the national and local levels. It is time for Guyana's leaders to sit around the table for dialogue and come to terms with the fact that debates and finger-pointing have not achieved anything to improve the look or the reputation of the Garden City. Only by working together with the national and local government and local government, the private sector, community groups, and the international community, and taking responsibility individually and collectively, can this challenge finally be met.

Thank you.