

News Release

GRACEKENNEDY GROUP CEO DELIVERS SUCCESSFUL CIN LECTURE IN NEW YORK CITY

Outlines Company's History, Growth and Strategy to Global Growth and Expansion

Kingston, Jamaica, November 2 – On Thursday, October 29, GraceKennedy Group CEO, Don Wehby delivered the 11th Annual CIN Lecture Series at the Schomburg Centre in Harlem, New York, to a receptive audience who showed their appreciation for his presentation through a standing ovation and rousing applause at the end of his lecture. The lecture, entitled “Jamaica to the World, the GraceKennedy Story,” traced the company’s roots, and gave the attendees a taste of what to expect from the company moving forward.

Mr Wehby started his presentation by lauding Brand Jamaica’s value on the world stage in areas including music, sports and international affairs. He opined that Jamaica had not successfully converted its brand strength into growth for the economy. “As a result of our anaemic economic growth, people still doubt whether or not Jamaican firms can enter international markets and compete effectively with firms there. Today, I will share the story of a Jamaican born and locally managed corporate entity that has and is destroying that perceived myth daily,” he said, alluding to GraceKennedy.

Mr Wehby went on to speak to the contribution of the former Chairmen and CEOs of GraceKennedy, starting with founding fathers Dr John Grace and Fred W Kennedy, along with Accountant James Moss Solomon Snr, Carlton Alexander, A Rafael Diaz, and the Hon Douglas Orane, from whom he took over in 2011. Among the key areas he addressed were the company’s foray into manufacturing in the 1950s, GK in the 1970s, the company’s expansion into financial services in the 1990s, and its commitment to nation-building and corporate social responsibility. The work of GraceKennedy’s Foundations in education as a life changing tool for hundreds of young people was mentioned by the Group CEO as a company highlight.

But it was GraceKennedy’s international expansion that was singled out for great detail by Mr Wehby, who described the company’s newest subsidiary, GraceKennedy USA LLC as being ‘perhaps GraceKennedy’s most critical chapter yet’. “Up until this point there has been a huge missing link to our strategy. We were not doing our own marketing and distribution in the United States as this was being done through a third party. It would have been impossible to meet our goals and objectives without the right strategy in place,” he said. He added that GraceKennedy USA LLC will address this, and will be the game changer for the GraceKennedy Group.

He reiterated that while the company continues to grow abroad, its commitment to Jamaica is unwavering. The Group CEO shared pictures and plans of GraceKennedy’s new Headquarters to be built in downtown Kingston, starting in March of 2016. According to Mr Wehby, it was just one example of GraceKennedy’s contribution to the downtown redevelopment project.

The Group CEO shared that GraceKennedy products are now available in Jamaica, the Caribbean, North and Central America, the United Kingdom and wider Europe, Africa and Russia. “We’re excited to see where else the journey takes us,” he said, adding, “I have shared our story from 1922 to present with you today, but know that exciting chapters are ahead.”

Reflecting on the lecture experience, Mr Wehby said, “I am really humbled by the turnout at the lecture, and the feedback I have received since. There are so many Jamaicans who still, after having left here, have a love for and are loyal to the Grace brand. It really moved me. They want to see us succeed, and we know that they will support us as we continue to build. GraceKennedy is blessed to have loyal consumers and customers and we will never take that for granted.”

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