



LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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Our Miami Lighthouse Academy Gets the Spotlight. “*Diversity and Inclusion Prepare Everyone for the Real World*”

August was “back to school time” at our Miami Lighthouse Academy. Readers of *Exceptional Parents* magazine were fascinated by an article written by our CEO Virginia Jacko titled “[Why An Inclusive Classroom Is An Exceptional Classroom](#)”. The article talks about the importance of enrolling a visually impaired child in an inclusive environment for higher academic achievement, increased self-esteem, and more social interactions within the classroom. Not to mention it fosters a better understanding of diverse abilities.

“Seven years ago, we opened the Miami Lighthouse Academy, an inclusive learning environment for early learners ages one through four, with and without vision impairments, to ensure that children thrive together and form lasting connections and friendships,” writes CEO Jacko. “A study from the University of Miami indicates that our classes are above national averages in the areas of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support for both our toddlers and Pre-K programs. When our visually impaired students graduate from our second grade, they more easily adapt to mainstream public schools.”

To read more of this article, [click here](#).



Visually impaired students from our Miami Lighthouse Academy learn about crabs and turtles using toys and an educational book

Back-to-School Eye Screenings, Eye Exams and Prescription Glasses provided to Keys Gate Charter

Addressing the nationwide challenge of eye health equity, our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program's partnership with Sight For Kids, Johnson & Johnson Vision and Lions Clubs International Foundation aims to support quality, comprehensive eye-health services and treatment for students in low-income and underserved communities across Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties.

Sight For Kids' goal is to engage Lions Club volunteers, in collaboration with our Heiken Program, to provide vision screenings to children across South Florida. Keys Gate Charter High School in Homestead was the recent onsite visit where over 4,000 students were screened as a result of this collaboration. Students who failed their vision screening received a comprehensive eye exam with dilation from our Heiken Program optometrists. Additionally, the Johnson & Johnson Vision Sight For Kids program provided a back-to-school supplies give-away and celebration assembly program for all Keys Gate Charter students.



Keys Gate Charter School Students and Principals in front of our Heiken Program mobile eye care unit.

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Reception and Dinner at Miami Lighthouse

Thursday evening, August 31st, Dr. Eduardo Alfonso, Professor and Chairman at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, and our CEO Virginia Jacko welcomed Bascom Palmer faculty, fellows, and residents to our annual Miami Lighthouse collaborative dinner, which reinforces the longstanding, strong relationship between the two institutions.

Guests enjoyed a buffet dinner sponsored by Doce Provisions and a video presentation of Miami Lighthouse programs. Oseas De Leon, Senior Technology Specialist and former client of Miami Lighthouse spoke about his experiences growing up as a blind child. Mr. De Leon explained how the skills he gained at Miami Lighthouse gave him the confidence to pursue being a player on the USA Paralympic Soccer team and to bring blind soccer to Miami Lighthouse, endeavors he hopes to accomplish.

As early as 1943, Dr. Bascom Palmer, University of Miami Trustee and President of Miami Lighthouse's Board of Directors from 1947 to 1952, discussed the establishment of an eye clinic to serve the local community. Dr. Bascom Palmer made it his life's work to raise funds and support for the eye hospital in cooperation with Miami Lighthouse. Six years later, Miami Lighthouse contributed substantial funds toward the building of the Bascom Palmer Eye

Institute. A strong collaboration between the two institutions continues to this day, as both entities transform lives through vision-related services and research.



Miami Lighthouse Board Director Stacey Jones, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Chairman Dr. Eduardo Alfonso, Miami Lighthouse President and CEO Virginia Jacko and Board Director George Foyo.



Dr. Delia DeBuc, Dr. Carolina Mercado, Dr. Chris Alabiad, Dr. Maura Abraham, and Dr. Konica Sigla of Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

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In the News:

- [Exceptional Parents Magazine, August, 2023 – "WHY AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM IS AN EXCEPTIONAL CLASSROOM"](#)
- [HealthCentral, August 9, 2023 – "5 Activities You Love \(and How to Keep Doing Them With Wet AMD\)"](#)
- [HealthCentral, August 7, 2023 – "How to Get Through Your Day With DME"](#)
- [News 12 Booklyn, August 4, 2023 – "Soccer coaches from around the country come to Rutgers to learn how to coach the blind"](#)
- [CBS Miami, August 4, 2023 – "South Florida students had a fun, learning experience at the Miami Seaquarium"](#)
- [7 NEWS WSVN, August 3, 2023 – "Miami Lighthouse summer program students experience animal encounter at Miami Seaquarium"](#)
- [Miami Herald, August 2, 2023 – "Serra siblings are cardio trained thanks to dad. Plus Miami Lighthouse for the Blind soccer."](#)

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Contributed by Joan Spector

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