



LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Issue 18 September 2015

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A conversation with "bionic eye" recipient, Carmen Torres

Recently, Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko had the opportunity to talk with Carmen Torres about her experience and progress as the recipient of the first implant in Florida of the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System. The implant surgery was performed at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Carmen talked at length about the many hours she spent learning how to use the innovative system under the guidance of our Chief Program Officer, Carol Brady-Simmons and Occupational & Low Vision Therapist, Raquel Van De Biest.

"It was scary to attempt the surgery, but I was willing to take the risk because I understood the great potential it offered," said Carmen. "I knew I would need to learn how to use my new eye. Working with Carol and Raquel, along with the developer, Second Sight, they literally walked me through the process from the very first day."

"It will be a year in November since the surgery took place. Sometimes I felt like a little kid, with no idea of what I was supposed to do. I had to learn everything from scratch. We became a real team and I'm very proud of what we've accomplished. I keep notes these days to document my progress and hopefully help others who get to have this remarkable opportunity in the future. It's been a very exciting journey!"



As part of vision rehabilitation after the retinal implant surgery, our Certified Low Vision Therapist used many strategies to help Carmen adapt to the Argus II system. In this photo Carmen is learning how to identify 3D shapes through a process of relearning of these objects and to develop a visual memory. This process involves touching the shape to identify it, touching and looking at the shape and finally just looking at the shape.

As the first Floridian to receive the innovative medical device, there was no "book" on how to teach Torres to use the highly complicated system, so it was up to Brady-Simmons and Van De Biest to literally write it themselves in concert with its developer, Second Sight Medical Products. Van De Biest also accompanied Torres to California to work on software modifications at the developer's laboratories.

2016 is almost here! Our 85th Anniversary is just a few months away



The Miami Lighthouse's 85th Anniversary is just over the horizon and we are already planning for an exciting year-long celebration. Our Miami Lighthouse was actually started in 1931, in a 900 sq. ft. bungalow on the corner of SW 6th St. and SW 8th Ave., still our location after all these years!

Known originally as The Florida Association of Workers for the Blind, it was planned to serve the blind community as a sheltered workshop, providing chair canning, basketry and similar accepted practices. Today, Miami Lighthouse occupies a state-of-the-art 50,000-square-foot facility where people of all ages, who are blind or visually impaired, receive state-of-the-art vision rehabilitation, low vision services, Braille and technology instruction, early intervention for blind babies and much more.

You'll be hearing lots more about our Anniversary Celebration plans in the coming months. Keep tuned!

Eighth Annual Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Reception at Miami Lighthouse, August 26, 2015



Board Directors Angela Whitman, Alan Levitt, O.D. and Owen Freed, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Director Stephen Morris, O.D., Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Physicians Dr. Eduardo Alfonso, BPEI Chair, Dr. Harry Flynn, Board Director Dr. Sander Dubovy and Heiken Advisory Committee Member Dr. Craig McKeown.

On August 26th, more than 50 faculty, residents and fellows from Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI) along with Miami Lighthouse Board Directors gathered for an informative evening at Miami Lighthouse. Dr. Eduardo C. Alfonso, BPEI Chair, welcomed his colleagues. Guests toured the Miami Lighthouse facility, learning about the variety of vision rehabilitation programs we offer, assistive devices and services available in our Low Vision Center, including functional assessments by our low vision consulting optometrist and on-site and in-home services provided by our certified low vision occupational therapist, Raquel Van Der Biest. Raquel described the collaboration between BPEI, whose surgeons performed the first Florida Argus II retinal implant, and Miami Lighthouse, which provided vision rehabilitation for the patient (see article above).

Dr. Harry W. Flynn, Jr., Professor of Ophthalmology at BPEI, was the keynote speaker. He presented a history of BPEI and its longstanding relationship with Miami Lighthouse dating back to Dr. Bascom Palmer's chairmanship of the Miami Lighthouse Board from 1947 to 1952. Chelsea Haina, Case Manager for our Senior Group Health and Activities Program, spoke about how our SGA Program helps blind and visually impaired seniors adjust to vision loss, how arts and crafts help develop tactile skills necessary to learn Braille and other important benefits of the program such as alleviating depression and isolation, nutrition counseling and assistance obtaining social services. We were honored that David Kurtz, grandson of Dr. Bascom Palmer, attended this year's reception. The event was partially underwritten by the James Deering Charitable Trust.

Contributed by Joan Spector

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Visionaries of Tomorrow

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