



## 2019 Annual Report to Stakeholders

**Mission Statement:** Through education, training, research and vision enhancement, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides hope, confidence, and independence to people of all ages.

Thanks to you, our donors, grantors and collaborators, Miami Lighthouse continues to fulfill our mission and enhance our programs. Each year, we transform the lives of over 75,000 blind and visually impaired people, from babies to seniors and their families, and we anticipate reaching 90,000 in 2020. We are now enrolling 45 times more participants than in 2004. The impact of our programs is statewide, national, and international.

### PROGRAMS

- In fall semester of 2019, we collaborated with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to open our kindergarten for visually impaired schoolchildren in our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™. The curriculum design includes meeting the individual needs of students in a print/braille rich environment supported by advances in technology.
- In 2019, our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ underwent the Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) process, a national early learning program accreditation recognized as one of Florida's Gold Seal Quality accrediting programs. During our Center's initial accreditation visit, we received perfect scores for every classroom, which we were told had only happened three times in the last eighteen years in the geographic area spanning Palm Beach to the Florida Keys.
- The second-year results of a four-year longitudinal study of our Learning Center inclusion model being conducted by University of Miami research faculty were very positive. Data indicate that both toddler and Pre-k classrooms increased scores and showed strength in the area of emotional supports for students, and our Learning Center scored above the national average in teacher responsiveness to and awareness of students' individual needs and emotional functioning.
- Our summer camps continue to foster academic, Braille and technology literacy, and social skills. This summer we initiated our Learning Center Summer Camp with 22 children ages 1-5; our Summer Training and Recreation Program for ages 5-13 enrolled 48 children; thirty students ages 12-18 participated in our Music Entrepreneurship Summer Camp; and our summer Transition Program enrolled 42 legally blind teens ages 14-22 with almost all participating in a summer internship experience.

- Our distance learning Braille and Technology Program expanded internationally.
- A record number of low-income schoolchildren throughout the State received a comprehensive eye examination and prescription glasses at no cost through our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program. During the 2018-2019 school year approximately 15,000 children received eye care from our Heiken Program.
- A high point of the year for our youth and the talented adult artists and those in our Senior Group Health and Activities Program was our inaugural community Art Walk featuring artworks of ceramic, clay, macramé and other media created by Miami Lighthouse art students.
- Our web auditing service assures that business and government websites are accessible to the blind and visually impaired using assistive technology in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and supports our technology instruction. U.S. Presidential candidates are calling us to help make their websites accessible, and millions of visually impaired voters who otherwise would have been shut out of the internet are gaining access to crucial information. Some of the work we have been doing as thought leaders in the industry has gained national attention from media giants like TIME and Politico.
- We are pleased to announce that in November we received a five-year accreditation from the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). Miami Lighthouse was first accredited in 1978 by the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC). In 2017, NAC accreditation came under the executive management of AER. Accreditation is a value-added process that ensures that consumers (i.e. clients and students) are provided services under quality-based conditions and operations.

## COLLABORATIONS

- Fifty faculty, fellows, interns and residents from Bascom Palmer attended our annual Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Reception that reinforces the strong relationship between the two institutions. Guests toured our facility and learned about the variety of vision rehabilitation programs we offer and about the many assistive devices and services available in our Low Vision Center.
- As part of our Center of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation initiatives, Miami Lighthouse continues to address the shortage of professionals in the low vision rehabilitation field by supervising interns. During 2019 we hosted 11 interns in various disciplines: one Special Education intern from University of Miami; one Orientation and Mobility intern from University of South Carolina; five occupational therapy interns from Florida International University and one from NOVA Southeastern University; one Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant intern from Keiser University; and two Senior Group Health and Activities interns from the Recreational and Sport Management program at Florida International University.

- To empower healthcare professionals with the knowledge they require to meet the needs and the growing number of patients who are impacted by low vision, we held our annual continuing education seminar for occupational therapists, physical therapists, and nurses in collaboration with the Florida International University Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Program. The seminar was attended by more than 40 registrants who received continuing education credits for their participation.
- Our international sister school initiative was strengthened when Dr. Kenneth Koslowe, Director of the ELIYA Association for the Blind and Visually Handicapped Children in Petah Tikva, Israel, visited Miami Lighthouse to share ideas about pedagogy and inclusion settings. Dr. Koslowe's visit was featured in the *Sun Sentinel Jewish Journal*.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF AWARDS SUPPORTING OUR PROGRAMS

- A new four-year grant from the Florida Blue Foundation will provide low vision programs for seniors (55+) in vulnerable, low-income neighborhoods in Allapattah, Brownsville, Liberty City and Overtown. Under the grant we will offer "Living with Low Vision" presentations in each community and use different tools designed to identify eye health needs, potentially impacting 3,200 low-income minority seniors.
- A 2019 grant from the Florida Panther's Foundation enabled us to renovate our oldest Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program mobile eye care unit which will travel around the state wrapped with the Florida Panther's logo and mascot to increase its appeal to young children.
- The Ocean Reef Community Foundation, with leveraged funding from Baptist Health South Florida Community Benefit Services, awarded a generous grant to help our Heiken Program provide 830 comprehensive eye examinations for low-income children in Homestead and the Keys.
- A grant from the Simply Healthcare Foundation enabled Miami Lighthouse to become one of only 17 organizations nationwide to participate in a National Fitness Challenge for teenagers with disabilities. This grant will be used to offer adaptive yoga classes, walking groups, running clinics and other sports and fitness activities that can help to maximize healthy lifestyles.

### ACCOLADES

- Miami Lighthouse received its 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive 4-star rating, the highest rating possible, from the national evaluator Charity Navigator placing us in the top 1% of nonprofits in the nation based on our sound financial management, accountability and transparency.
- GuideStar USA, the information service specializing in reporting on more than 2.5 million U.S. nonprofits, awarded Miami Lighthouse its 2019 Gold Seal of Transparency. This recognition highlights the goals, strategies, capabilities, achievements, and progress indicators that are central to the transformational impact our Miami Lighthouse consistently strives to achieve in the world of the visually impaired.

- An article about our innovative low vision program for seniors entitled "Bringing Low Vision Assessments and Interventions to Underserved Seniors Affected by Age-Related Eye Disease" in the archival, peer reviewed *British Journal of Vision Impairment* is available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0264619619890899>
- Jorge Hernandez, our Manager of Computer Technology Services, was appointed by Governor DeSantis to the prestigious Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind.
- CEO Virginia Jacko received the distinguished international Henry Viscardi Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary leaders in the global disability community who have had a profound impact on shaping attitudes, raising awareness and improving the quality of life of people with disabilities.

### CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

- On January 25, 2020, with Northern Trust as the presenting sponsor, we will celebrate 90 years of service to the blind and visually impaired at the historic Biltmore Hotel.

### MATCHING CHALLENGE OPPORTUNITIES

- “Light the Way” for our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ expansion is a one-for-one matching challenge. This new challenge by Mrs. Sash A. Spencer launching our 90th Anniversary Celebration is for a \$9 million capital campaign to create more instructional space for the growing number of blind and visually impaired students enrolling in our Learning Center programs.
- The three-year, \$250,000 per year, one-for-one matching challenge from The Wildflower Foundation supports Miami Lighthouse’s Music and Tactile Art Programs. Gifts qualifying for the match are those from new donors, lapsed donors, or increased gifts from existing donors.

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