



## Adapting during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Over nearly a century of serving the blind, Miami Lighthouse gradually evolved from a small agency primarily offering assistance to blind adults in our community to a multifaceted organization with a wide range of vision rehabilitation and educational programs. During the 2020 coronavirus crisis, thanks to our innovative leadership in distance learning, our team rapidly adapted by modifying traditional approaches and implementing creative techniques to ensure that we continue to provide hope, confidence and independence to our program participants. Our programs remain open to serve the blind and visually impaired of all ages from babies and school-age children to adults and seniors, and we are prepared to have a hybrid model this fall with both on-campus and remote learning. In this newsletter you will see photos of program participants engaged in both on-campus and remote activities.

Since March 13 we have served nearly 800 participants remotely. We have provided pivotal programming to 499 adults and 286 children (ages birth to 22), including 150 new program enrollees, and have found employment for three program enrollees, for example, one employed by Amazon. Participants in our programs have reported the following outcomes:



*Photo courtesy of David Stiefel, Great Communicators*

*Eric, Solimar and Abdiel have all been students in our Lighthouse Learning Center programs, and their family was one of many that received donated food.*

- 100% of adult program enrollees surveyed reported they were feeling in greater control of their lives because of our programming.
- 97% of seniors surveyed felt more independent because of the Miami Lighthouse Senior Group Health and Activities Program.
- 93% of teens surveyed agreed or strongly agreed the Miami Lighthouse Music Program was making them better musicians.

Donations to our Family Security Fund matched by Ali Mandsaurwala, in honor of his daughter Naaya, helped provide meals and other essentials to our families of blind children during the pandemic. A gift to the Family Security Fund by Miami's Delta Gamma Alumnae Chapter helped make it possible for Miami Lighthouse, in partnership with Perricone's Marketplace and Sullivan Street Bakery, to distribute food to our families. Your contribution to the new Dr. Herman Centner Matching Challenge for Family Security will help us continue assistance to our families. To learn more about our Family Security Fund see pages 2 and 4.

## 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.

## Thank You to Our Supporters



We thank our generous donor community and dedicated staff who enabled us to act quickly to facilitate the transition to virtual learning and to support in-home instruction by providing our program enrollees with the devices and supplies needed to continue program participation and support well-being. In addition, Miami Lighthouse provided computers and Braille machines to 25 enrollees in our Vocational Rehabilitation Program and art supplies to more than 100 adults in our Senior Group Health and Activities Program.

Curious George learning packets were delivered to 40 Pre-K students in addition to Curious George stuffed animals provided by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman.

Olivia playing with her Curious George toy



Bennett with his learning packet



Steven Perricone, owner of Perricone's Marketplace (middle), Amber Seidle Lazo and family, representing Miami's Delta Gamma Alumnae Chapter (middle left), and Miami Lighthouse Learning Center staff prepare to deliver food to our families.

State Representative Duran helping deliver diapers

Florida State Rep. Nicholas X. Duran, right, and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins assisted with on-campus pick up of diapers donated by FarmShare, and our staff made home deliveries. More than 100 families in our Blind Babies Program received diapers.



Commissioner Eileen Higgins with produce box

More than 150 Unity Grove Corporation food and fresh produce boxes for adults in our Senior Group Health and Activities Program and families in our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children were distributed in partnership with Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, right, and her volunteers. In addition, Miami Lighthouse delivered food to more than 200 program enrollees, parents of blind children and blind seniors. The meal kits and grocery items were donated by Publix and Trader Joe's.



## Miami Lighthouse Receives TD Bank Charitable Foundation Grant to Help Seniors in Isolation during COVID-19

The TD Charitable Foundation recently provided funding through their Connected Communities Initiative for our Senior Group and Health Activities Program (SGA). The funding helps 150 older adults (age 55+) with significant and uncorrectable vision loss to develop their independence, build connections, practice a healthy life style and prevent social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, through arts and crafts, music, exercise and health and nutrition monitoring both in-home and virtually. TD Bank was also instrumental in securing critical Payroll Protection Program funding for Miami Lighthouse.



## Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

When we opened our doors almost a century ago, we were ready and eager to foster confidence, independence, and hope among the members of the blind community. More than 90 years later, we are still providing that same service to the blind and visually impaired, but in ways that our founders could only have imagined at the time—a music center, pre-kindergarten through first grade classes, and mobile eye exams for schoolchildren throughout the State of Florida.

We've also been able to harness new technology that would have been unimaginable in 1930. In addition to providing the basis for teaching employment skills, technology has enabled our instructors to meet the challenges created by the pandemic, providing in-home education services using our Expert Learning distance learning license acquired more than ten years ago. On March 13, we closed our campus due to COVID-19, and recently, we had to close the on-campus component of our summer camps; despite these developments, our students, including adult learners, continue to learn and gain new skills, thanks to our technology and the distance learning skills of our educators.

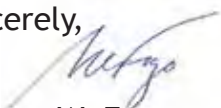
This newsletter focuses on how we have continued to provide our services, despite the costly impact of the pandemic. We have not stopped. We have not even paused. We are expanding because program enrollment continues to grow.

The pandemic has made it very difficult for non-profit organizations to stay afloat as *The New York Times* reported in late July. The non-profits upon which many who are in need rely are themselves suffering; revenues are down 30% to 50% nationally, and many NGOs have had to furlough between 70% to 95% of their workers. We have been luckier than many, blessed with generous donors who continue to help us to serve the visually impaired, especially important in these times.

Due to donor generosity, we will not have to say to the parent of a blind early learner, "We're sorry that we have no room for your child." We have actually added more than 150 program enrollees, helped some of our program enrollees find employment in this challenging job market, and achieved high levels of program participant satisfaction. Although we are out of classroom space and the requirements of social distancing create additional difficulty, imposing a maximum of only ten students per classroom, our ongoing "Light the Way" Campaign will enable us to add more, much-needed classrooms.

We count on your continuing support and ask that you keep in mind that new IRS pandemic guidelines for charitable donations favor contributions made in 2020.

Sincerely,



George W. Foyo, *Chairman, Board of Directors*



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## In Memoriam

Dr. Joel Grossman, Board Director 2012-2017, passed away on July 18, 2020. Dr. Grossman was a psychiatrist and former CEO of the South Florida Utilization Review Board. The Board of Directors express their sympathy to his spouse, Dr. Davina Grossman.

## New Matching Challenge to Help Our Families

In honor of David's father, Mr. and Mrs. David Centner have created the Dr. Herman Centner Matching Challenge for Family Security. It will match dollar for dollar contributions up to \$25,000. Many of our families, 87% of whom reside in zip codes defined as poverty zones, have been financially impacted by the pandemic and are experiencing food or shelter insecurity or dealing with job loss as a result of COVID-19. Gifts made to this fund will be earmarked for families of children in our Lighthouse Learning Center who are struggling to make ends meet during this difficult time. To make a contribution, please go to our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org), click the donate now button and choose the Dr. Herman Centner Matching Challenge for Family Security.



*David and Leila Centner, Founders of Centner Academy, the world's first school dedicated to mindfulness education.*

## Testimonial from A Grateful Parent



Dear Miami Lighthouse Community,

My four-year-old daughter Naaya was born with a rare genetic disorder, CHARGE syndrome, stealing her sight and hearing. As Naaya ventures out into the world, she is often seen and treated as different. Not at the unmatched magic that is Miami Lighthouse. There, she is treated the same as everyone else, never ushered to the back of a line or made to feel less in any way.

Since the moment my wife and I set foot on Miami Lighthouse's Learning Center campus over a year ago, all we've witnessed is progress and continue to be in awe of how everyone is treated with love and equality. They never focused on what Naaya couldn't do.

It reminds me of the spirit of Helen Keller, a world-famous advocate and author. Though blind and deaf, she challenged the stigma that often comes with a disability. As she once said,

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart." My daughter will never know what she does not have. Thanks to Miami Lighthouse, her heart will be full.

To mark Helen Keller's 140th birthday on June 27, I announced I would match all donations up to \$5,000 to help light the way for more families of Miami Lighthouse children affected by COVID-19. I was gratified by how quickly caring Miami Lighthouse donors met my challenge, which has now been completed. The names of those who contributed are listed in the Donors and Grantors section of this newsletter.

As this historically difficult financial climate continues, you can help even more families by going to the Miami Lighthouse website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org), clicking the donate now button and contributing to the new "Dr. Herman Centner Matching Challenge for Family Security."

Ali Mandsaurwala, *Parent Advisory Committee*



## Participate in Our *Light the Way* Matching Challenge to Support Our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™

Mrs. Sash A. Spencer has created the “*Light the Way*” campaign, a one-for-one matching challenge to raise \$9 million for expansion of our Learning Center to accommodate our rapidly growing enrollment of pre-school, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first-grade students.



*Bennett*

A virtual graduation was held via Zoom for pre-kindergarten students who made their own paper graduation caps.

*Luke*

Students in our Summer Training and Recreation Program (STAR) made their own stars using sensory skills to create textured art on canvas.



LIGHTHOUSE  
LEARNING CENTER  
FOR CHILDREN™

MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED



*Luke and Loy*

In partnership with *Miami Kids Magazine*, a how to create home-made “Play Dough” activity was conducted via Instagram Live.



To honor our first Lighthouse Learning Center kindergarten class graduation, teachers and staff participated in Miami Lighthouse vans and their own vehicles in a celebratory caravan to honor our students on this achievement.

## Participate in the \$1 Million Matching Challenge from the Wildflower Foundation



*Thomas is a participant in our Miami Lighthouse Music Program*

This 4-year incentive challenge of \$250,000 per year from the Wildflower Foundation will support blind and visually impaired participants of all ages in our Music and Tactile Arts Programs, and your gift may be matched one for one. Please call CEO Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176 for details.



THE WILDFLOWER  
FOUNDATION, INC.

Senior Group Health and Activities Program Artist Nora



## Music Under The Stars

Our Music Under the Stars virtual fundraiser to help support our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, which provides eye exams and glasses for underserved schoolchildren, had 700 viewers. An original song entitled "There is Hope" was premiered.

If you missed the event and would like to view the video or make a donation to support our Heiken Program, go to [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)



Music Program student John sings "There is Hope"

★ *Music Under The Stars* ★



Since inception, our statewide Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program has performed 150,229 dilated eye exams and provided 113,379 glasses at no cost to disadvantaged schoolchildren from Pre-K through twelfth grade. Even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Florida Heiken was able to provide 10,336 dilated eye exams and 5,976 pairs of glasses to low-income Florida schoolchildren. In alignment with our mission, Miami Lighthouse's Blindness Prevention Program Heiken-licensed optometrists identified and referred 320 students with suspected conditions that could result in permanent vision loss to specialists for further evaluation.

Thanks to generous funding from the Health Foundation of South Florida, a market research survey was completed in June 2020 of 1,500 families whose child received prescription eyeglasses during the 2019-2020 school year from our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program. Nearly 80% of respondents reported that their child had improved in school because of the services provided by our Heiken Program and 96% of the respondents found the program valuable.

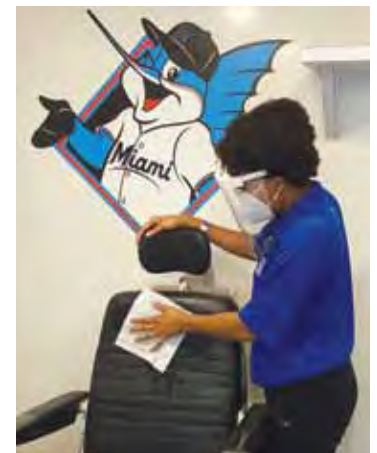
### Providing mobile eye care safely during COVID-19



Taking a temperature outside the Heiken mobile unit



Staff and doctors must wear a mask and eye protection and children must wear masks and maintain social distancing



All touched surfaces and equipment are sanitized between students and the entire interior is disinfected every evening.

## In the News and Social Media



As we continue to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), Miami Lighthouse is proud and honored to announce that we are the winner of one of the top awards in public relations, the 2020 *PRWeek* Award for Best in the Nonprofit Category with our “Seeing 2020 Clearly” campaign.



Miami Lighthouse was recognized for our analysis of all presidential candidates’ websites to assess their accessibility for those who are blind and visually impaired. We determined that none of the candidates’ websites were fully accessible or ADA compliant, but after working with our Miami Lighthouse IT team (most of whom are blind), all but two of the candidates had updated their websites to make them more accessible before the third Democratic presidential debate in September 2019. We share the award with our great communications team from FINN Partners, and we are honored to have been included with the wonderful campaigns of our fellow nominees, Sesame Workshop, SKD-Knickerbocker, March for Our Lives, International Rescue Committee, Truth Initiative, and Ketchum. We want to thank *PRWeek* for supporting us in leading the way in inclusion and accessibility, and we are thankful to have been recognized with an “Oscar of the PR industry”!

Miami Lighthouse offers website auditing by highly qualified, assistive-technology IT specialists to ensure website accessibility for users with disabilities. Let us help you make your website ADA compliant.



Request your free consultation today. We also offer quarterly reviews of websites to ensure website accessibility on a continuous basis. For more information call 305-856-4176 or email us at [adacompliance@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:adacompliance@miamilighthouse.org)



*SGA Program Participant Victor*



*Camila*

A CBS4 Story on June 25, 2020, demonstrated measures taken at the Miami Lighthouse in order to comply with social distancing guidelines. Topics covered were raised tactile silhouettes affixed to walls and stickers on the ground to guide visually impaired program participants on how to maintain a six-foot distance and mandatory mask wearing. Miami Lighthouse also instituted enhanced building cleaning, additional hand sanitizer stations, and temperature checks.



*Christina and Brian*

A feature Story on *Despierta America*, a Univision Spanish TV Station, highlighted the new YouTube video series created by our Senior Group Health and Activities Instructor (SGA) Aaron Hill titled “It’s Possible to Exercise Without Sight.” The videos address the ongoing need for our blind and visually impaired seniors to stay active and demonstrates exercises that can be done at home using household items like pineapples or cans as weights.

# Highlights of Spring and Summer On-Campus and Distance Learning Activities

## On-Campus Summer Camps

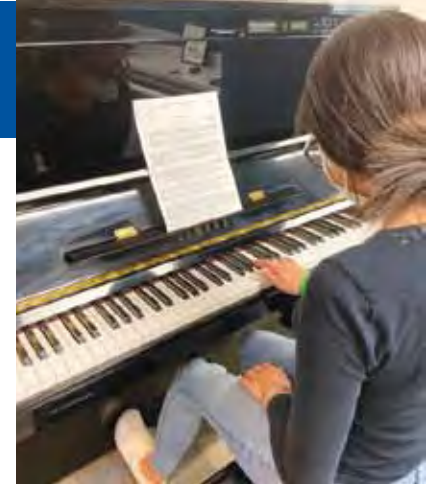


Miami Lighthouse  
Better Chance Music Program

Anthony



Hannah



Summer Training and  
Recreation Program

Yohan



Lauren



## Distance Learning



Student Antonella during remote  
Mother's Play Day Activity

We distributed iPads and Braille machines to those children who did not have access to remote learning.



Music Student Ishtar

For those students who rely on Miami Lighthouse to provide access, instruments and equipment were made available to support at-home virtual instruction for Music Program enrollees.



Student Valentina enjoys Pre-K  
story hour distance learning.



# SAVE THE DATE!

## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE VIRTUAL EVENTS

Details about these virtual events will be posted on Miami Lighthouse's homepage: [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)

**White Cane Day**  
Thursday, October 15, 2020

**See the Light Luncheon**  
Thursday, October 29, 2020



Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Campus  
601 SW 8th Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33130

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Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired

**Our Vision Solutions Center** continues to deliver visual aids and assistive technology to our program enrollees and take orders and ship items to customers from our [LighthouseShop.org](http://LighthouseShop.org) website, including the **OrCam Read**.

The OrCam Read is a handheld assistive technology device that reads from any printed surface or digital screen. It is pen-shaped, with OCR (Optical Character Recognition). The OrCam Read takes a picture of the text and instantaneously reads it aloud.

### Miami Lighthouse

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HOURS: Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

### Miami Lighthouse Lantern Newsletter

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*For the print impaired, the Lantern is available in an alternative format. For more information, call 786-362-7514 or visit our website at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)*

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For vision rehabilitation program information call: 786-362-7479

Visit our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)