



MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY

Our Miami Lighthouse Academy began a new year with proud parents, teachers, and donors. In collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we offer an inclusion setting for pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten, first and second grade classes for visually impaired students. As a certified Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) provider, Miami Lighthouse Academy enrolls students with and without vision impairments in pre-kindergarten promoting an inclusive program resulting in a sense of belonging for all children and families.



Students in our Miami Lighthouse Academy ready to start the new academic year

In support of our mission, children without vision impairments are selected to enhance the learning environment for children with vision impairment. Learning in all classrooms is conducted by Florida-certified early childhood and early elementary school classroom teachers, Florida-certified teachers of the visually impaired, and experienced teaching assistants.

To learn more or schedule a tour of our Miami Lighthouse Academy please contact our Registrar at 786-362-7483 or e-mail our Academy Director, Mara Gonzalez, at MGonzalez@miamilighthouse.org

Congratulations to Our 2024 Miami Lighthouse Academy Graduates!

Second grade, VPK and Pre-K students graduated from our Miami Lighthouse Academy on June 4th. We are pleased to report that all our visually impaired students who completed second grade matriculated to third grade in community schools. In attendance at our graduation ceremony were Dr. Kelli Hunter Sheppard, District Director at Miami-Dade County Public Schools, who is responsible for exceptional learning throughout Miami-Dade County, and Natalie Tappert, M-DCPS ESE/VI Instructional Supervisor. Dr. Hunter presented diplomas to seven second graders and five VPK students who transitioned to their community schools, and four visually impaired Pre-K students who advanced to our kindergarten class.



FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH FOR 95 YEARS AND BEYOND

You can participate in our 95th Anniversary Matching Challenge to sustain programs for the blind and visually impaired by making a donation using the enclosed business reply envelope or by donating online at www.miamilighthouse.org



Orientation and Mobility for Children

Alexander Brown, our Orientation and Mobility Intern from University of Kentucky, provides O&M training to visually impaired youngsters and toddlers using an adaptive cane made of PVC pipe designed by Dr. Robert B. Jacko.



Miami Lighthouse Welcomes Sama, CEO Jacko's New Guide Dog



Sama, like all of Virginia's incredible guide dogs, was bred and trained by Guiding Eyes for the Blind (GEB). Sama, a magnificent black lab with a wonderful calm temperament, hears Virginia say, "let's go," and she is ready for work. At a recent Comcast luncheon to meet the U.S. Commissioner of the FCC, Sama was a perfect guest staying calmly at Virginia's side and ready to go when she heard the command. Virginia thanks the entire GEB team for her gift of mobility. "Sama's ability to guide me through doorways, to find the elevator, to safely get me around obstacles, as well as the love she gives me, come directly from the training by the GEB team, including Puppy Raiser Jane Santy and her husband Tony."

CEO Virginia Jacko and Sama

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A DIVISION OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED, INC.

Miami Lighthouse

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

Miami Lighthouse Lantern Newsletter

Publisher: Virginia A. Jacko
Editors: Sharon Caughill, Heidy Fariñas,
Cameron Sisser
Graphics: Susan Conroy Design

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Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

As we continue to celebrate 95 years of providing nationally acclaimed services to our community's blind and visually impaired, we want to thank our donors who have made it possible for us to serve a greater number of clients each year, improve our facilities, and expand our programs and services. Your generosity enables Miami Lighthouse to transform the lives of more than 26,000 program participants annually from babies to seniors.

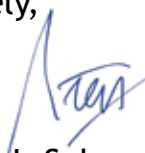
I am pleased to report on three new initiatives that are part of our strategic plan. We received significant seed funding of \$90,000 from the Children's Trust to launch our innovative comprehensive blind soccer program for youth ages one through 22. We thank the Miami-Dade Impact Collaborative for securing new funding to enable us to expand our Academy by adding third grade for blind and visually impaired students in academic year 2024-2025. This growth reflects our ongoing commitment to educational excellence and comprehensive support for our students.

CEO Virginia Jacko has been actively pursuing significant projects to further our mission. Our Cortical Visual Impairment Collaborative Center received Florida's first award to support collaboration with ophthalmologists, neurologists, occupational therapists, data scientists, and educators affiliated with esteemed institutions such as the University of Miami Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, and Nova Southeastern University. These partnerships will enhance our services and expand our reach in the community.

Our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program continues to prevent blindness by providing comprehensive eye health and vision exams and prescription eyeglasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged students in grades Pre-K through 12 throughout Florida. This past school year 18,020 low-income schoolchildren received a dilated exam and 11,991 received prescription glasses.

Completing my first year as Chairman of the Board, I reflect on our history and look forward to our future. Your support will be crucial in helping us continue our goal of "Funding Sustainability and Growth for 95 Years and Beyond." Together, we can ensure that Miami Lighthouse remains a beacon of hope for those we serve.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Solomon, Esq.
Chairman, Board of Directors



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PROGRAMS

Miami Lighthouse Receives Gift to Study Cortical Visual Impairment

Miami Lighthouse is proud to announce receipt of a two-year, \$2 million gift in support of our project “Cortical Visual Impairment Diagnostic Indicators and Educational Best Practices for Affected Children.” Since 2020, Miami Lighthouse has completed over 160 children’s CVI assessments. These assessments are of utmost importance because functional vision in such children can often be expected to improve with appropriate intervention.

Miami Lighthouse serves as the major gift awardee with CEO Virginia Jacko as overall Principal Investigator. This project will significantly contribute to addressing a critical global problem. It will lead to a better understanding and diagnosis of CVI, explore neuroplasticity-based therapies, more effective (re)habilitation and early intervention strategies, and assessment validation.

This two-year project, led by Miami Lighthouse with collaborators from the University of Miami’s Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI), Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Colleges of Medicine and Management, and Nicklaus Children’s Hospital will:

1. Develop an evidence-based, age-appropriate test battery and CVI classification system.
2. Identify CVI biomarkers for more accurate diagnosis and evaluation of assessments.

We and our collaborators are making headway related to research protocols for the medical diagnosis of CVI, infant CVI screening protocols in NICU and PICU settings, and assessment and rehabilitation practices. The results will be shared with medical, research and educational communities, members of VisionServe Alliance, and our colleagues in Israel at our sister school, Eliya.

Forbes published an article entitled: “Miami Lighthouse Opens Florida’s First CVI Center To Address Pediatric Visual Impairment,” which is accessible on our website:

www.miamilighthouse.org under the news and events tab “In the News,” 2021, *Forbes* December 29, 2021.

Miami Lighthouse Blind Babies Program Recognized by The Children’s Trust

During the semiannual meeting of The Children Trust (TCT) in May, our Blind Babies Program was recognized for its outstanding achievements and for meeting the needs of parents. This prestigious recognition showcased Miami Lighthouse as a leader in high-quality service delivery.



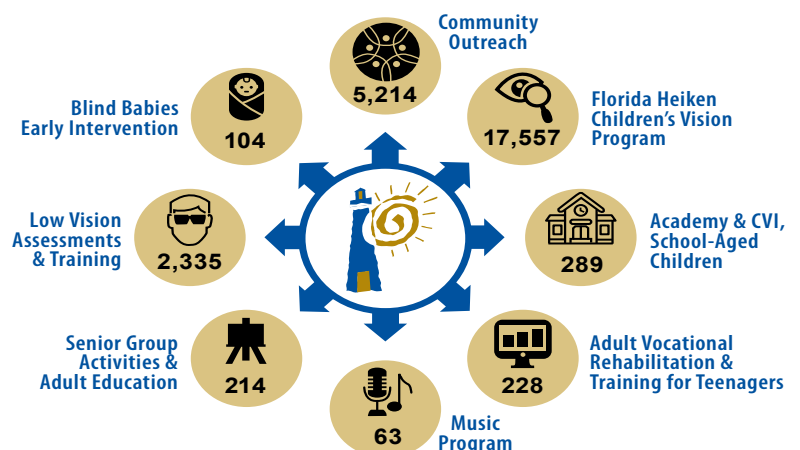
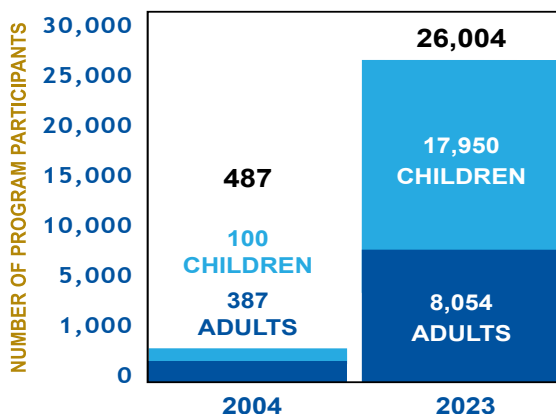
TCT Supervisor Shameka Jenkins and Jehiel Guzman, Miami Lighthouse Manager of Children’s Programs



MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE SERVES 26,004 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ANNUALLY

HISTORY OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

53 Times More Participants
between 2004 and 2023



Miami Film Festival Entry Featured Miami Lighthouse Students

We are thrilled to share that *Stories from The Lighthouse*, a documentary featuring three inspiring Miami Lighthouse students, was screened at the Miami Film Festival in April. This captivating documentary follows the journeys of these young individuals as they navigate the challenges on the road to adulthood while living with visual impairments. Demonstrating their resilience, grit, and humor, the film offers a profound insight into the obstacles faced by the blind and visually impaired. *Stories from The Lighthouse* was directed by Deborah Dickson, a three-time Academy Award nominee documentary filmmaker.



Our invitation to the Miami Film Festival featured our young students.

Comprehensive Blind Soccer Program

Eighty-five children and teens ages one to twenty-two will have the opportunity to learn the concepts required to play the team sport of blind soccer thanks to an Innovation Grant from the Children's Trust. Early learners will learn "echo localization" with soccer balls that have ball bearings inside so students, despite their vision disability, can locate the soccer ball. Teams will play with modifications like a smaller soccer field/pitch with sound echoing large boards and the noise-rattling ball, which is vital for blind soccer players to have ear/foot coordination. Our pilot project represents the first time that a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning blind soccer will be developed for children starting at age one.

Miami Lighthouse is also thrilled to announce that Thomas Abraham, a dedicated supporter, benefactor, and the first sports ambassador to the United States Olympic and Paralympic Blind Soccer Team, competed this August in the prestigious Paris Marathon Pour Tous 2024. As part of his efforts, Thomas aims to raise crucial funds for our Comprehensive Blind Soccer Program. This support will assist with essential equipment and certifications, including blind soccer balls, blinders, shoes, and soccer panels. To make a donation visit [BLINDERSUSA - Etsy](#).

Elandis Offers Summer Job Shadowing

The outstanding team at Elandis generously shared details to teach our students about the career choices and goals that led them to become part of the exceptional Elandis real estate team. Students had an unforgettable experience learning about real estate law, portfolio management, marketing, property management, property acquisition, accounting, human resources, and what it takes to work at a successful company like Elandis. Spending time at Elandis was memorable for our students who were immensely grateful for the opportunity and eager to explore new job-shadowing experiences next summer.



Miami Lighthouse Pre-Employment Transition students at Elandis

Zoo Miami Welcomes Miami Lighthouse Summer Campers

Summer Camp at Miami Lighthouse includes unique field trips to fascinating places like Zoo Miami. Using their senses of smell, touch, and hearing, the children learned that "It's possible to see without sight™" while exploring Zoo Miami's exhibits. Channel 10 covered their visit, which you can view by visiting our website www.miamilighthouse.org under the news and events tab "In the News" WPLH Local 10, July 19, 2024.

Our Summer Camp Students Enjoyed an Exciting Visit to the US Coast Guard Base



Captain Robert Grant, USCG (Ret.) with Miami Lighthouse Pre-Employment Transition Program students in front of a US Coast Guard Helicopter

Our Pre-Employment Transition Program students got a chance to visit the US Coast Guard Miami base recently thanks to Captain Robert Grant, USCG (Ret.). Captain Grant conceived this exciting adventure 15 years ago so that teenagers could personally experience the critical importance of the U.S. Coast Guard. Students gained insight into the Coast Guard's day-to-day tasks and responsibilities, boarded one of the airplanes used for Search and Rescue operations, and learned about the different equipment used to assist the Coast Guard in providing help to others.

Students Visit U.S Bankruptcy Court

Miami Lighthouse students had a unique educational experience when they visited the United States Bankruptcy Court as guests of Chief Judge Laurel Isicoff and her courtroom staff. The students were present at several hearings held via Zoom. Judge Isicoff explained valuable information about the bankruptcy proceedings and laws in the U.S. She also engaged in a Q&A with students and answered all their questions.

During the visit, which was organized by Miami Lighthouse Board Chair Steven Solomon, the students had the opportunity to tour the different courtroom areas and learn about the roles of each person who works with Judge Isicoff during a court case. We extend our appreciation to Judge Isicoff and her staff for providing our students with this meaningful summer experience.



Chief Judge Laurel Isicoff with our Pre-Employment Transition Program students at the United States Bankruptcy Court

Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

With the Florida Panthers winning The Stanley Cup, our Miami Lighthouse Florida Panthers branded mobile eye care unit was out in full force the day after the big win providing comprehensive eye examinations and prescription glasses, if needed, at no cost to underprivileged Broward County Parks and Recreation summer campers. Broward County Commissioners Robert McKinzie and Lamar Fisher were in attendance at Delevoe Park. "This incredible initiative," stated McKinzie, "led by the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program is a great benefit for our youth. Through their dedicated exams and provision of prescription glasses, they are not only enhancing children's vision but also nurturing their overall health."

Commissioner Fisher said, "I commend Miami Lighthouse's Heiken Program for its exemplary work impacting the lives of young individuals across our state and in particular for our Broward County schoolchildren." In addition to documented academic improvement, our Florida Heiken Children's Vision



Broward County Parks and Recreation summer campers, Broward County Commissioners Robert McKinzie, and Lamar Fisher in front of Miami Lighthouse's Florida Panthers branded mobile eye care unit at Reverend Samuel Delevoe Memorial Park.

Program helps detect underlying medical conditions such as amblyopia, torn retina, glaucoma, and others that if left untreated could cause uncorrectable vision loss for children.


FLORIDA HEIKEN
Children's Vision Program, LLC
FOUNDED 1992
A DIVISION OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR
THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED, INC.

Miami Dolphins Rookie Class Hosts Miami Lighthouse Students and Families

The Miami Dolphins recently gave our families a completely accessible tour of their training facility at the Baptist Health Training Complex. The tour was specifically designed to accommodate the special needs of our families so that they could fully enjoy the experience of exploring the facility and interacting with the Miami Dolphins rookie class. Our students, despite their vision impairment, loved interacting with the players, putting on football gear, and having a hands-on experience. Our thanks go to Dolphins Passing Game Coordinator and Quarterbacks Coach Darrell Bevell and his brother Adam Bevell for making this unforgettable experience happen. GO FINS!



Miami Dolphins Rookies with our students

Cars for Charity

More than 50 Miami Lighthouse students enjoyed our 2nd Annual Cars for Charity event as they interacted with an impressive fleet of exotic, high performance vehicles. Michael Weintraub's \$50,000 matching challenge enabled us to raise over \$100,000 that will be used to help support our Miami Lighthouse Academy's learning programs for children with vision impairments. We express our appreciation to the generous donors who participated in the match. The Collection, our Automotive Sponsor, showed off a McLaren and Ferrari, and Miami Homestead Speedway provided a NASCAR race car. This highly anticipated event was carefully designed to instill confidence in our students through the power of touch and interaction with the cars.



Miami Lighthouse students with CEO Virginia Jacko in front of Homestead Miami Speedway NASCAR race car.

We thank Lead Philanthropic Sponsor Michael Weintraub and Lead Automotive Sponsor The Collection as well as Grove Bank & Trust, Cary and Ed Ruggiero, Baptist Health South Florida, Homestead Miami Speedway, Luisa and George Foyo, Frank and Martha Voytek, JP Morgan, Juan Fernandez-Barquin, Pete Fernandez, Caterina Sastri, Ryan DiMarzzio, Yolanda and German Valencia, Alexander Mendoza, José A. Abrante Cosio, Dr. Mike McDermott, Walter and Linda Lieber, John and Carol Vidalin, Dr. Ari and Patty Abril, Jonathan Horowitz, Erick Passo, Dr. Barry and Judith Katzen, Jose Cueto, Olga Villaverde, SFM Services, among others, for their support. We are also grateful to Ben's Pizza for providing lunch.

We had some wonderful media coverage: *South Florida Digest* wrote an article "Roaring Engines, Big Dreams: How Miami Lighthouse for the Blind Made Supercars Come Alive for Blind Students" and produced an incredible video. WPLG Channel 10, *Miami New Times*, and *World Red Eye* also reported on this unique event.

Inter Miami CF and Florida Blue Provided Transition Program Teenagers with a Touch Tour and Fútbol Clinic

This specially designed clinic taught the history, basic skills, and rules of soccer, using beeping soccer balls that enable the blind and visually impaired students to locate them by sound and strategically placed speakers used behind the net. The Inter Miami CF coaches were provided sensitivity training beforehand to educate them on how to better interact with the blind. Inter Miami CF HR Department also spoke to our Pre-Employment Transition Program teens about the different job opportunities within the organization, and the students got a hands-on tour of Inter Miami CF's Chase Stadium. The clinic was arranged by Florida Blue, Inter Miami CF and the Inter Miami CF Foundation.



Pride in Our Former Program Participants

Miami Lighthouse Music Program Former Transition Program Student Honored



We are proud to announce that the Advocacy Network on Disability honored Miami Lighthouse's Music Program as their 2024 Winn Family Change Maker. The award quoted our CEO Virginia Jacko who predicted in 2007 that "That the Miami Lighthouse Music Program would expand and highlight inclusion bringing together talented students both with and without visual impairments to write songs, perform musically, and create CDs." Former Miami Lighthouse Pre-Employment Transition Program participant Emily Bejerano was named one of the 2024 Breakfast for Champions award winners. Ms. Bejerano recently received a guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind.

Emily Bejerano and her guide dog Patch

Daniel Solomon: A Mission to Reshape Perceptions of The Blind

Daniel Solomon was brought to Miami Lighthouse when he was a small child diagnosed with ocular albinism. Daniel has never let his vision disability keep him from living a full life. Today he is a student at Brown University after graduating summa cum laude from Palmetto Senior High School, where he was named a Silver Knight. At Brown, Daniel has worked to develop programs to bridge the gap between education and inclusivity for the blind. Since arriving at Brown two years ago he co-founded and serves as president of the student organization "Blind at Brown," which brings together students who are blind, visually impaired, or low vision. Now, Daniel is visualizing a more inclusive, accessible future through public art with a project called "The Blind Urban Subject." To read more about Daniel's "The Blind Urban Subject" visit the Brown University website:

<https://www.brown.edu/news/2024-04-30/solomon>



Daniel Solomon, Brown University Student

Disney Internship Helps Miami Lighthouse Program Participant Discover Independence

We are so proud of Alondra Roldan, a former program participant at Miami Lighthouse. Alondra has just fulfilled a dream and credits the skills she developed at Miami Lighthouse with preparing her for the Disney internship at Hollywood Studios this summer. Alondra was born with a race congenital disorder where she can only see light, colors, and objects from a certain distance. Before starting her Disney internship, Alondra interned in our Senior Groups Activities (SGA) Program where she gained work experience with a stipend from the Florida Division of Blind Services. As an intern in SGA, she helped blind and visually impaired seniors stay active and engaged. To read about Alondra's Disney Internship you can visit our website www.miamilighthouse.org under the news and events tab "In the News," *Miami's Community News*, August 17, 2024.



Alondra and Minnie pose at Disney's Hollywood Studios

Braille Music Student Kaden Jamid Attends Prestigious Concordia Americas Summit

Cameron Sisser, Senior Vice President for External Relations; Kaden Jamid, our Braille music student who now attends the University of Miami; and George Logothetis, Chairman of Libra Group and Co-Chair of Concordia's Leadership Council at September Concordia Annual Summit in New York



SUPPORT FOR OUR PROGRAMS

Miami Lighthouse Receives \$70,000 Grant from the Honda USA Foundation

The \$70,000 grant from Honda USA Foundation will enable Miami Lighthouse to provide Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training and physical therapy services for program participants affected by vision loss. Funds will also be used to purchase accessible equipment for mobility training, physical therapy exercises, and adaptive sports such as blind soccer.

“Through our support, we strive to remove barriers that hinder individuals from experiencing the joy and freedom of mobility,” said Bobbie Trittschuh, Executive Director, Honda USA Foundation. “We are thrilled to support Miami Lighthouse’s mobility and physical activity programming. These opportunities will significantly impact young children, fostering their physical, emotional, and social development from an early age.”

Miami Lighthouse Approved for a \$30,000 Grant by the National Endowment for the Arts

The \$30,000 Grants for Arts Projects recommended award will support the Miami Lighthouse Music Education Program benefitting blind and visually impaired people ages 14 and older.

“The recommended award will support our cutting-edge Music Education Program and our comprehensive Braille Music Distance Learning Course that offers music instruction for blind and visually impaired students anywhere in the world, empowering participants to develop new skills and pursue their musical dreams,” said President and CEO Virginia Jacko.

“Projects like the Miami Lighthouse Music Education Program exemplify the creativity and care with which communities are telling their stories, creating connection, and responding to challenges and opportunities in their communities—all through the arts,” said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD.

Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program Receives Award from The Ocean Reef Community Foundation

We are proud to announce that our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program was awarded \$10,000 by the Ocean Reef Community Foundation. We want to express our sincere gratitude to the Foundation for this generous award that when leveraged with other funding will help provide 800 comprehensive eye examinations and prescription eyeglasses when needed to low-income children in Homestead, Florida City, and the Upper Florida Keys. Our unique Heiken Program takes mobile optometric units directly to Title 1 schools advancing eye health equity for many children who would not otherwise have the opportunity to have a dilated eye exam.



Susie Misini-Hassett and Linda Owens, ORCF Board of Directors; Angela Vazquez, Director of Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program; William J. Nutt, ORCF Chairman and CEO



An award of \$5,000 from [Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation](#) will support our Healthy Living initiative for older adults with a vision disability.

Bouldering for Blindness Raises Funds for Miami Lighthouse

Sean Murphy, a student at Christopher Columbus High School, conceived of “Bouldering for Blindness” as his service project in honor of his uncle, Michael Harries, who has Usher Syndrome. We thank The Edge Rock for hosting this event and Sean for creating a unique way to raise awareness and funds for Miami Lighthouse.

Climbers ascend rock wall in the dark during “Bouldering for Blindness”



OUR AWARD-WINNING A

The instruction provided by our Florida credentialed art educator and our professional art instructor in our tactile arts program empowers both seniors and schoolchildren to excel artistically. Their achievements are a testament to the artistic environment we are committed to fostering, reinforcing Miami Lighthouse's teaching that "It's Possible to See ART without Sight."

We are proud to announce that four of our Senior Group Health and Activities (SGA) artists' works were chosen to be in "**La Mano Hispana,**" an art exhibition at the Hialeah Milander Center for the Arts. The exhibition ran from September 13th through October 11th. The pieces chosen were Nora DeLabat's "Goddess Azul," Victor Mercado's "Casa of Light," Grisel Diaz's "Guitara Magica," and a collaborative piece entitled "Purple Rain/Lluvia Morada" by Ana Font, Nora DeLabat, Daglis Cabrera, Juana Castenada and Aaron Hill.



Goddess Azul



Casa of Light



Guitara Magica



Purple Rain

We are excited and proud to announce that once again our SGA emerging adult artists have won several top art awards in the **2024 American Printing House for the Blind (APH) Juried InSights International Art Competition**. The competition was fierce. The announcement of the winners on the APH website states: "From stunning landscapes to captivating ceramics, the entries we received were nothing short of extraordinary, making the judging process incredibly tough."

First place in the sculpture division was Victor Brown's "Tower Vision." This unique tall sculpture was hand built solely out of popsicle sticks and glue. "Home Sweet Wood Home" by Victor Mercado won first place in crafts. It is a beautiful, elaborate hand-carved wood depiction of a house surrounded by nature. Placing third in the sculpture category was John Cauley's "Blind Architect," a two-floor mansion filled with mini hand-designed furnishings made of cardboard and intricately constructed, painted, and measured using unique measuring skills John has adapted. "Tulip Energy Lady" a beautiful acrylic painting by Nora DeLabat received honorable mention in the two-dimensional art category.



Tower Vision



Home Sweet Wood Home



Blind Architect



Tulip Energy Lady

ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS

It is a pleasure to announce that **“It’s Possible to See Without Sight™”** - a multi-sensory POP-UP Art exhibition - was held this summer at the Miami-Dade County Main Library in collaboration with the Miami-Dade Public Library System’s Braille and Talking Books Library. Our SGA adult artists, many of whom have won local and international art competitions, worked together to create large mixed media paintings to share with the world. A unique feature of this exhibit was that visitors were able to scan QR codes with their phones to hear a description of the artwork narrated by Miami Lighthouse’s Supervisor of Fine Arts and Art Education Aaron Hill to make this an accessible art experience. We extend a special thanks to Jennifer Shipley from Miami-Dade Library for her support and for creating the QR codes and to Carlos Camacho and the Miami Lighthouse Music Program for recording the descriptions for the QR codes.



The Miami Lighthouse Music Program was invited to celebrate the Americans with Disabilities Act

by performing in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Center where we were honored by the presence of Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. Mayor Levine Cava publicly expressed her special gratitude to Miami Lighthouse, which added to the significance of the event for our music students.



*Mayor Daniella Levine Cava
with our Music Program Students*

Our students delivered fantastic performances supported by our exceptional team of instructors. This collaboration allowed our summer program students to shine brightly and showcased the talent of the musicians and vocalists in our Music Program.

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind is delighted to share the remarkable achievement of our musical group **Styrofoam Cup at the Young Talent Big Dream (YTBD) competition**. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Styrofoam Cup for their outstanding achievement in reaching the finals of YTBD. Cristofer Bedrossian, a gifted student from our music program, successfully made it to the semifinals of this prestigious talent show. Their achievements serve as a testament to the talent, resilience, and spirit of our students who participated in this county-wide competition.

Styrofoam Cup



Music Students Perform at Miami Kids Magazine Event

The Miami Lighthouse Music Program students delivered an exceptional performance at the *Miami Kids Magazine* Easter event, showcasing their versatility in various music styles. Their renditions of songs like “Hotel California” and “Johnny B. Goode” were outstanding, reflecting their dedication and the high quality education they receive. The event not only highlighted their individual talents but also their ability to work as a cohesive unit embodying the spirit of the Miami Lighthouse Music Program. The success of this performance has filled us with pride and anticipation for the future endeavors of these talented students.

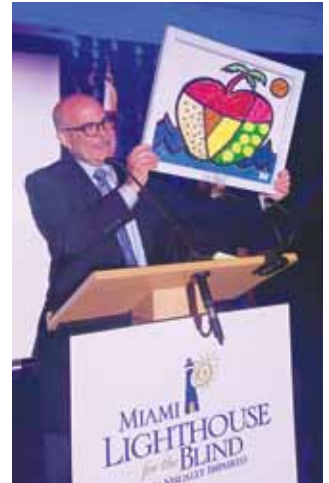
EVENTS

Music Under the Stars Honors Superintendent Dr. Jose L. Dotres

On May 8th, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind honored Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jose L. Dotres in recognition of the collaborative efforts between M-DCPS and Miami Lighthouse. Miami Lighthouse Academy second graders made a beautiful apple using tactile materials including glitter paint, googlie eyes, pom poms, gems, padded craft paper, tempura paint sticks and puffy paint. The symbolic apple was the students' gift to their lead teacher, Superintendent Dotres. Olga Villaverde, host of The Health Channel's Balancing Act, emceed the event.

Our generous sponsors included ABB Optical Group, Publix Super Markets Charities, Rotary Club of Miami, Bizitss, FP&L, Foundation for New Education Initiatives, Grove Bank & Trust, H. Angela Whitman Foundation, TD Bank, MDOPA, BrightStar Care, Choice Waste, Perry Ellis International, Susan Conroy Design, Biz Solutions, *Miami Kids Magazine*, SFM Services Inc., Monster Sound Productions, Affiliated Healthcare Centers, Inc., Knights of Columbus, Miami's Community Newspapers and more. Our restaurant and beverage sponsors included Perricone's Marketplace, Verace Cucina Italiana, P.F. Chang's, Roasters 'N and Toasters, Sports Grill, Flanigan's, M.I. Mobile Chef, Season's 52, El Carajo, Eagle Brands, E11even Vodka and more.

Event sponsors left to right: Martha-Trinidad Kempt and Raul Diaz, Grove Bank & Trust; Christian Infante, SFM Services; Sharon Quarters, Choice Waste; Norby Rudel, Rotary Club of Miami; Esteban Delgado, Bizitss; Dr. Eric Chow, Miami-Dade Optometric Physicians Association; Susie Conroy, Susan Conroy Design



Superintendent Dotres



Miami Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon

Our annual Miami Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon was held on July 23rd in appreciation of our elected officials' support of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, Miami Lighthouse Academy, and our Senior Group Activities Program. Attendees had the opportunity to meet and network with local elected officials, Miami Lighthouse Board Directors, and other community leaders.

Our thanks go to the Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation for continued funding of our programs and a new allocation from the Department of Education for our Miami Lighthouse Academy.

Guests enjoyed a musical performance by our talented Miami Lighthouse Summer Music Program student ensemble and a tour our campus. We thank Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman for sponsoring the luncheon.

Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation check presentation: Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser; Director Deborah Montilla; Director Frank Voytek; Director Ali Mandsaurwala; President and CEO Virginia Jacko; Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez; Representative Juan Porras; Representative Christopher Benjamin; Director Dr. Stephen Morris; and Director Robert Shelley



The 15th Annual Engaging the Low Vision Community through Education, Research, and Service

On April 6th, Miami Lighthouse in collaboration with the Florida International University Nichole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Department offered our annual continuing education seminar for occupational therapists, physical therapists and nurses.

The goal of the seminar is to empower healthcare professionals in attendance with the knowledge they require to meet the needs of the growing number of patients impacted by vision loss. We are grateful to the Deering Trust for funding that enables us to conduct this seminar for which professionals obtain continuing education credits.

All 40 of the participants expressed 100% satisfaction in all categories of the survey conducted at the conclusion of the seminar. In an email to CEO Jacko, Alma R. Abdel-Moty, Dr.OT, MS, OTR/L of FIU, with whom we collaborate on this annual event, said, “I am not one who uses superlatives, but there is no other way to describe this year’s event. It was amazing! When the seminar ended and certificates of participation were provided, attendees did not want to leave even though it was a Saturday afternoon—the best testament that they were engaged!”

Young Professionals of Miami Lighthouse Hosts Networker



On August 22nd, the Young Professionals of Miami Lighthouse (YPOL) hosted a networking event at SAWA Restaurant & Lounge located at Merrick Park in Coral Gables. Guests enjoyed delicious appetizers and drinks provided by SAWA and came together to support our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program. The event raised funds to prevent blindness and provide comprehensive eye health vision exams and prescription eyeglasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged students. We thank all the donors who attended in support of our Heiken Program.

YPOL Chair Victor Lopez, Miami Lighthouse Academy Officer Karla Richey, Board Director Scott Richey



Website Accessibility Seminar

At the request of Porpoise Evans, Esq., Miami Lighthouse organized an interactive virtual web accessibility seminar on September 19th. Sixty-five lawyers from across the country participated. The focus was on why it is important to have a website that is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and how to follow the guidelines for each criterion. Participants were advised to consult with their web development team to ensure they have the knowledge to remediate content for accessibility, understand WCAG guidelines, and confirm their websites have the correct widget to enhance website content.

Miami Lighthouse can help you make your website ADA compliant. Request your free consultation today. We offer website auditing by highly qualified visually impaired assistive technology IT specialists to ensure website accessibility for users with disabilities. We also offer quarterly reviews of websites to ensure website accessibility on a continuous basis. Send us an email at ADACompliance@miamilighthouse.org or call 305-856-4176.



Confirming Your Website is Accessible

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Reception and Dinner at Miami Lighthouse

On September 26th, Steven Solomon, Chair of the Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors, and Dr. Eduardo Alfonso, Professor and Chairman at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI), welcomed more than 50 BPEI faculty, fellows, and residents to our annual Miami Lighthouse reception, which offers attendees the opportunity to learn about our crucial vision rehabilitation services.

Caterina Sastri, Miami Lighthouse Board Director and parent of Lorenzo, who has CIV and who is a graduate of our Miami Lighthouse Academy, told the audience how through CVI educational intervention provided by the Miami Lighthouse Lorenzo is reading adaptive text at grade level. Lorenzo's story is a testament to the power of early diagnosis and intervention, two things that are critical when it comes to children with CVI.

Oseas De Leon, Senior Technology Specialist and former client of Miami Lighthouse, spoke about his experiences growing up as a blind child, how he began playing soccer at the age of three, and his excitement about having been selected for the 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team.

CEO Virginia Jacko addressed the topic "There is nothing more that we can do for you" by explaining to the gathering the diverse programs Miami Lighthouse offers for the blind and visually impaired after it has been determined that medical intervention is not possible to correct their vision. She explained how Miami Lighthouse provides hope, confidence, and independence to our program participants through our vision rehabilitation, education, music, and art programs.

Dr. Alfonso spoke about his article, coauthored with Stephen Schwartz, MD, MBA, and CEO Virginia Jacko, entitled "Bascom Headen Palmer, Jr., MD (1889-1954)," which is a history of Dr. Palmer. It includes an account of the founding of BPEI and the role of Miami Lighthouse in providing land and funding for its establishment. The article will appear in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology*. A longstanding and strong relationship between Miami Lighthouse and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute dates to when Dr. Bascom Palmer served as Chairman of the Miami Lighthouse Board of directors from 1947 to 1952. The collaboration between the two institutions continues to this day as both entities transform lives through vision-related services and research.



Dr. Eduardo Alfonso

VISITORS AND TOURS



On August 14th, University of Miami Hope Law student volunteers toured Miami Lighthouse and helped serve lunch to our clients.



Libra Philanthropies Team tours Miami Lighthouse: Nikiforos Bouros, Project Assistant; Mahlet Mesfin, Programs Manager; Gina Crivelli, Director of Programs and Impact; Virginia Jacko, President and CEO; Rosanna Mortoglou, CEO Libra Philanthropies; Chloe Lambrinidou, Programs Manager; Angeline Apostolou, Assistant Director Operations and Special Projects; and Eva Soulia, Assistant Director Communications

Miami Lighthouse Students and Staff Welcome Important Visitors

Students, teachers, and Miami Lighthouse professional staff welcomed two important visitors: Kimberly Richey, Senior Chancellor of the Florida Department of Education, and Robert Doyle, Director of the Division of Blind Services. After touring our campus, Chancellor Richey said “It was such an honor to visit the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind. For 95 years this organization has worked to improve outcomes and opportunities for students and individuals who are blind and visually impaired. We are proud to partner with this great team to serve all blind and visually impaired Floridians!”

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Chancellor Richey and Director Doyle for visiting us to see firsthand the many programs we offer for people of all ages.



Senior Chancellor Kimberly Richey, President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Director of the Division of Blind Services Robert Doyle, and students in our Miami Lighthouse Academy

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Kevin Marino Cabrera visits Miami Lighthouse



Miami-Dade County Commissioner Kevin Marino Cabrera recently visited Miami Lighthouse. After touring our campus he said, “I was honored to tour Miami Lighthouse and see the wonderful work they are doing to empower the blind in our county. Their commitment to excellence in education for the blind and visually impaired is truly remarkable.” We extend our appreciation to Commissioner Cabrera for visiting us to learn about the programs we offer for people of all ages ranging from blind babies to seniors with age-related eye disease.

Angela Vazquez, Director of Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program; Miami-Dade County Commissioner Kevin Marino Cabrera; and Cameron Sisser, Senior Vice President for External Relations in front of our Heiken Mobile Unit

CEO Virginia Jacko with St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Girl Scouts Troop 2005 fifth graders who volunteered at Miami Lighthouse on September 27th. They toured our Miami Lighthouse Academy and served lunch to our adult program participants.



RECOGNITIONS AND STAFF NEWS

CEO Virginia Jacko Recognized by Florida Trend Magazine

This September, Florida’s highly acclaimed business magazine *Florida Trend* named CEO Virginia Jacko one of Florida’s “Icons” in recognition of her transformational leadership, increasing the number of our clients more than 50-fold while growing net assets. As she frequently says “I stand on the shoulders of many, including our committed Board of Directors and our highly qualified professional staff. Most importantly, we could not continue to thrive without the generous contributions from our devoted supporters.”



Photo Credit: Florida Trend

CEO Virginia Jacko and her guide dog Sama

Miami Lighthouse Honors Lion Alan Campbell



On Sunday, August 25th, Lions for the Blind held their monthly committee meeting at which Miami Lighthouse honored Lion Alan Campbell for his tireless work to support and empower those who are blind and visually impaired, embodying the core values of Lionism. Lion Alan has played pivotal roles for Miami Lighthouse serving as the former Project Manager for the Lions Club International Sight for Kids Project, past President of the Miami Lions Club and Miami Lions Club Foundation and as the last Director of the Lions Home for the Blind. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Lion Alan for his many years of service.

Miami Lighthouse Supervisor of Fine Arts and Art Education Aaron Hill (left) and Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser (right) presented Lion Alan (center) with a special gift, a handcrafted bronze sculpture of a lion created by Miami Lighthouse's Senior Group Activities Program participants. The lion sculpture is a symbol of strength, courage and dedication, qualities that Lion Alan has exemplified throughout his many years of service.

Oseas De Leon selected for the USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team

Our Miami Lighthouse students know Oseas De Leon as our Senior Technology Specialist. These days they are excited on his behalf because he is among the seven players with visual impairments chosen for the USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team and is the only player representing Florida. "We're elated to hear the news about Oseas from the U. S. Association of Blind Athletes," said CEO Virginia Jacko. "His hard work, perseverance and dedication to the sport he loves so much is an inspiring story for other blind and visually impaired athletes." Oseas is also a Paralympic hopeful for the LA28 Paralympic Games.

To read "Miami Lighthouse employee scores spot on 2024 USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team" you can visit our website: www.miamilighthouse.org under the news and events tab "In the News," 7 NEWS WSVN, April 9, 2024.



Oseas De Leon

In Memoriam



Board Director **Peter Harrison** passed away on September 18, 2024. Peter served on our board for nearly 25 years and became Treasurer in 2012. The Harrison family has a long tradition of service to Miami Lighthouse that started when Maurice Harrison, Peter's grandfather, served as chairman of the board from 1961 to 1963. David Harrison, Peter's nephew, joined our board in in 2019 and will assume leadership responsibility as Board Treasurer. We extend our condolences to the Harrison family.

Peter Harrison

Tribute gifts received in Peter's memory as of October 13, 2024:

Dr. and Mrs. Eduardo Alfonso
Mr. and Mrs. William E. Beckham
Ms. Carol Brady-Simmons
and Mr. David L. Simmons
Ms. Margarita de Corral
Ms. Heidy T. Fariñas
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Fernandez
Mr. and Mrs. Gary D. Fox
Mr. and Mrs. George W. Foyo
Jill Granat and D'Asey Houlihan
Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Harrison
Peter, Sarah, Stuart, and Eloise Harrison

Mr. and Mrs. David Harrison
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Harrison
Ms. Anne E. Helliwell
Ms. Virginia A. Jacko
and Robert B. Jacko, Ph.D., P.E.
Stacey W. Jones, PID
and Mrs. Mary M. Jones
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Katz
Mr. and Mrs. Ali Mandsaurwala
Sheila Freed and Mel Miller
Mr. and Mrs. William L. Morrison
Ms. Linda Mueller

Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Nielson
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Nostro
Ms. Mary Ohea
Ms. Eileen Ortega
Mr. Alpay Paz-Yener
Amy, Andrew, Chloe, and Ace Pisano
Mr. Jeffery P. Rabalais
Michael and Donna Rice
Michael A. Silva, Esq.
Mr. Cameron E. Sisser
Mr. and Mrs. Steven J. Solomon
Lisbeth Wilson

SAVE THE DATE!

See the Light Luncheon
Thursday, November 14, 2024
11:30 a.m.
at the Historic Biltmore Hotel

Andrea Bocelli Holiday
Concert and Dinner
Sunday, December 22, 2024
6 p.m.
at Kaseya Center

McCrea Family
Volunteer Luncheon
Friday, February 14, 2025
11:30 a.m.
at Miami Lighthouse



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CURRENT CHARITY NAVIGATOR SCORES

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has received 14 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator.

Attaining a 4-star rating indicates that our organization adheres to sector best practices, exceeds industry standards and executes its mission in a financially efficient way.

CHARITY NAVIGATOR ENCOMPASS BEACONS

June 3, 2024 - Miami Lighthouse is proud to announce that we have successfully completed all four of the new Charity Navigator Encompass Beacons, which provide a comprehensive analysis of our performance across four key domains:

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCE 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of a charity's financial health (financial efficiency, sustainability and trustworthiness) and its commitment to governance practices and policies.

LEADERSHIP AND ADAPTABILITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's leadership capacity, strategic thinking and planning, and ability to innovate or respond to changes in constituent demand/need or other relevant social and economic conditions to achieve the organization's mission.

IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT 98%

This beacon estimates the actual impact a charity has on the lives of those it serves and determines whether it is making good use of donor resources to achieve that impact.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's culture and connectedness to the community it serves.

Source: Miami Lighthouse listing
on Charity Navigator website
www.charitynavigator.org



CONTACT US: General Information: 305-856-2288
Low Vision or Vision Rehabilitation Services: 786-362-7479 • Senior Case Manager: 786-362-7445
Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center: 786-636-6498
Visit our website: www.miamilighthouse.org