

*Since 1931, Transforming Lives on the Road to Independence*



**Our visually impaired early learners will have an opportunity to participate in our new Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ Kindergarten this coming fall semester. We express our appreciation to Miami-Dade County Public Schools and our entire donor community that has made this possible.**



*Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ 2018 Pre-Kindergarten graduation*



## Mission Statement

To provide vision rehabilitation, eye health services and education that promote independence, to collaborate with and train professionals, and to conduct research in related fields.

## New Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family **PLAYGROUND** at Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™



*The Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family with CEO Jacko*

Community leaders, parents, and children gathered at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired on December 17th for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of its new Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family Playground.

After a generous \$1 million gift which will also add a kindergarten, the playground will provide a creative and safe outdoor environment for our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ where enrollment has quadrupled from 15 students to 60 in the last three years.

Our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ currently provides the community with a first-of-its-kind inclusion pre-kindergarten program. Blind and visually impaired children from communities throughout Miami-Dade attend alongside sighted classmates from our surrounding neighborhood. Miami Lighthouse has introduced this unique initiative in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Early Learning Coalition and our philanthropic community.

Our innovative program serves as the national model and has been validated by the first-year results of the University of Miami's four-year longitudinal study which was funded by the Children's Trust.

A highlight of the program was a song performance by our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children's pre-school students. Each preschooler received a Braille story book as a holiday gift donated by the Saul and Theresa Esman Foundation.



*Pre-Kindergarten students perform at the ribbon cutting for our Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family Foundation Playground.*

## Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

Kicking off our 90th Anniversary with a multi-year celebration, I am excited to have been elected as Chairman of the Board for this innovative organization that every day is changing the lives of the blind and visually impaired in our community. My name is George Foyo and as an executive I have a background in broadcasting, telecommunications, banking, and health care. I have had the privilege of sitting on multiple nonprofit boards and am delighted to be in a leadership position as this organization continues to experience rapid and meaningful growth.


There is so much to be proud of at our Miami Lighthouse and I want to be the first to express my gratitude to Louis Nostro, Chairman of the Board for the last two years, and Virginia A. Jacko, President and CEO, for their significant contributions to our organization. Under their leadership and in collaboration with the exceptional staff at Miami Lighthouse, the organization has grown steadily, been operated efficiently, and has received substantial donor contributions.

As I begin my tenure as Chairman, it is my intention to concentrate on the following objectives:

- Positioning our Miami Lighthouse as a recognized leader in the field and expanding our reputation on a regional and national level.
- Maximizing our support and services for the growing number of people in need.
- Assuring that programs for children and adults continue to be robust, meaningful and effective.
- Expanding our donor base in order to respond to the increase in program participants and expansion of program offerings
- Continue to collaborate with our partner organizations in the community and beyond.

I look forward to working with all of you. On behalf of all of our program participants, we thank you for your help in sustaining our incredibly important effort. We appreciate the donor support of the past, present, and future.

Regards,



George W. Foyo  
*Chairman, Board of Directors*



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## Board and Employee Happenings

Board Chair **George Foyo** was named Co-Chairman of the Dean's Council for the Florida International University School of Business. Until 2017, Foyo was Executive Vice President of Baptist Health South Florida, the premier healthcare provider in our region. He is currently chairman and CEO of LJ International, a consulting company supporting international business opportunities for its customers. Prior to joining Baptist, Foyo was market president of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida and previously served as president and CEO of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.



CEO **Virginia Jacko** was honored by The Plaza Health Network Foundation as one of nine women community leaders at the Ninth Annual Women of Distinction & Caring Luncheon. The event celebrates women in our community who have made significant differences in the lives of others through their leadership and professional work.



**Christian Infante** is the newest member of the Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors. He is the President of SFM Services, a one-stop source for janitorial, landscape and security services. He is a Miami native who holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Florida International University.

**William Rivera** was recently promoted to Director of Technology at our Miami Lighthouse. He has been an integral member of the Miami Lighthouse team since 1995. He holds multiple technology certifications and a B.S. in Computer Science.



**Jorge Hernandez**, Miami Lighthouse's Technology Manager, was named by Governor DeSantis to a position on the Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. He is currently also the President of the Miami-Dade Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida and holds a position on the Board of Directors for the National Federation of the Blind of Florida Affiliate.

Miami Lighthouse bylaws state that "the corporation shall be governed by a Board of Directors of not less than 10 but not more than 36 persons." Our board currently has 24 members, and our honorary board consists of 22. The honorary board is comprised primarily of former board members who have a continuing interest in helping Miami Lighthouse. All board members are volunteers who give generously of their time, talent and treasure. It is because of their dedication and support that we are known as a Center of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation.

## Friends of Miami Lighthouse

Retired North Miami Beach Mayor Beth Spiegel and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman visited our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ to deliver stuffed animals.



Dr. Kenneth Koslowe, Director of Eliya Association for the Blind and Visually Handicapped Children in Petah Tikva, Israel, recently visited Miami Lighthouse to share ideas about pedagogy and inclusion settings.



### Learning from an Expert in Our Field

Parents of early learners, teaching professionals, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools administrators attended our special forum with guest speaker Dr. Sandra Lewis, who joined us to discuss the impact of visual impairment on learning and how families can support optimum optimum growth. Dr. Lewis is a renowned Professor and the Coordinator of the Visual Disabilities program in the School of Teacher Education at Florida State University. She currently serves as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* and has served on two other editorial boards of journals focused on research and professional practice related to individuals with visual impairments. She is completing a two-year term as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and serves as the Treasurer of the Florida Chapter of AER.



Dr. Lewis and one of our pre-kindergartener students discover “Blackout” by Sergio Lastres.



Dr. Lewis, CEO Jacko, and Dr. Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, MDCPS District Director of Exceptional Student Education

## Florida Panthers Foundation Ensures Low Income Children Have Access to Eye Care Services



*Florida Panthers Foundation new mobile eye unit*

The Florida Panthers Foundation donated \$25,000 to our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, pledging to provide financially disadvantaged school children who fail their vision screenings access to dilated eye exams and glasses when prescribed.

The Foundation's grant will enhance our Heiken program's statewide mobile vision testing and treatment services and will

support the upgrading of one of Miami Lighthouse's four mobile eye care units to increase capacity, upgrade equipment, and decrease the waiting time of children awaiting eye examinations. To promote academic success, our Heiken mobile vision units travel across Florida with licensed optometrists who donate their time and services to examine students from low-income families. The renovated mobile unit will travel around the state wrapped with the Florida Panthers logo and mascot, Stanley C. Panther, to increase its appeal to young students.

"We commend the management of the Florida Panthers for their community spirit and their determination to improve the quality of life for young people throughout Florida," CEO Jacko said. The gift was officially presented on November 24th at the BB&T Center where the Florida Panthers hockey team faced off against the Chicago Blackhawks.

### **Miami Dolphins and Israeli Consulate Bring Lighthouse Students Wearable AI**

Miami Dolphins safety T.J. McDonald visited the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired on November 26th and changed the lives of four program participants thanks to the generosity of Consul General Lior Haiat and the Israeli Consulate in Miami. Emily Bejerano, Diandre Incera, Marnel Jean, and Sebastian Torres, were presented with OrCam Technologies wearable artificial intelligence devices designed to improve the lives of individuals who are legally blind. The camera on the device follows the gaze of the person, can read any text within sight, and can speak 15 languages.

"These OrCam devices help children who are having trouble seeing, it helps them read, helps them recognize faces and it will help level the playing field for them," McDonald explained.

Students were thrilled by the OrCam and have high hopes for the devices influence on their academic and professional futures. Miami Lighthouse Low Vision Optician, John Garcia, provided each student with necessary training to effectively use their new OrCam device. With immense gratitude, Mr. Incera said, "I think it is going to help me pursue my career in law because if there is an assignment or a test that I need to take, I think this OrCam is going to be extremely useful. I thank the Dolphins and everyone involved. I thank them for giving us this life-changing gift."



*Representatives from the Miami Dolphins, Israeli Consulate and OrCam deliver OrCam wearable artificial intelligence devices to our students.*

## Bright Beacons Shine Bright at Junior Orange Bowl Sports Ability Games

On January 12th, the “Bright Beacons” participated in a track and field event at the Junior Orange Bowl Sports Ability Games. The Bright Beacons Children’s Program offers year round programming for visually impaired children aged six to 13.

The Sports Ability Games are a series of athletic events for young adaptive athletes. The event welcomed young athletes that wanted to compete, regardless of his or her prior experience. The Sports Ability Games gave our participants the chance to make new friends, try new activities, and challenge themselves. “It was such a moving day. Watching the children compete with such determination and huge smiles on their faces was very special,” said Isabel Chica, Director of Children’s Programs.

School-aged children’s programming is offered every Saturday, teacher planning days, holidays, and during spring break and summer. The program is designed to support the core curriculum and opportunities for instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for children with visual impairments.



*Bright Beacons participant Ethan with his medallion*



*Students lined up and ready to compete at the Sports Ability Games*



*Racing to the finish line!*

## “Blackout” Art by Sergio Lastres

Miami Lighthouse unveiled a new multi-media piece by Cuban artist Sergio Lastres, entitled “Blackout,” which combines painting with raised elements and braille typography to simultaneously appeal to the visual and touch senses. Mr. Lastres is a volunteer at Miami Lighthouse and was inspired by his interactions with blind and visually impaired program participants and a trip to Israel where he visited institutions for the blind.



*“Blackout” by Sergio Lastres, 2019*

“I designed a touchable mural made to be seen with the fingertips but that is also enjoyable with the eyes for those who can see. Colors substituted by textures, the incorporation of low and high ridges, text in Braille, sand, plaster, metal, plastic, paint, heart and emotions, are the materials that make up this work entitled “Blackout,” Mr. Lastres explained.

## WHAT ARE OUR PROGRA



“The classes I attend at Miami Lighthouse have helped me to become a public speaker. I’ve become much more social and have learned to like meeting new people. Most of all, I’ve come to realize that just because I am visually impaired, I can still do everything that sighted people can do.”

*Diandre Incera, Transition Program*

See article on Page 6 and call 786-362-7479 to learn more about OrCam.

“I’ve been working with the Heiken Program for more than ten years and I can tell you it is phenomenal. I still get emotional when the doctor arrives with the eyeglasses. The look on the kids’ faces when they put them on for the first time just brings tears to my eyes.”

*Angela Mitchell,  
School Counselor at Norwood Elementary in Miami*



“I was attending a Job Readiness Program at Miami Lighthouse when I was offered a wonderful paid internship opportunity with a national company. It never would have happened if it wasn’t for the Lighthouse.”

*Nathalia Ochoa,  
Student at Florida International University*



“It is truly inspiring to see Professional’s with so much passion.”

*Juan Carlos Diaz, District 12 Administrator,  
Division of Blind Services*





## M PARTICIPANTS SAYING?

“The Lighthouse has given me back my independence. It’s my new way of life and I’m very grateful.”

*Van Brinkley, 84 years old*

“I’m a single lady and the program participants have become my family. I’m here five days a week. I started out in the Personal Management Program and then discovered the Arts & Crafts Program. I’m learning to do things I never did before in my life.”

*Johnnie Mae Holmes, 60 years old*

“Being here for the past two years has made me believe I can still look forward to some big things.”

*Deacon Bobby Durden, 73 years old*



“There’s no better place in the world for my little girl to be. She is doing so much better since she started attending. She is much more social around people. She loves school so much; she doesn’t want to come home at the end of the day. For a child with vision problems, this place is crucial to her.”

*Mother of a visually impaired child attending Miami Lighthouse Preschool*

“I’m 16 years old and one of the sighted students in the Miami Lighthouse Music Program. The inclusion model of the music program has literally changed my life. I’ve learned to meet and work with people I would never have had the opportunity to get to know.”

*Christian Belsaduy, Music Program participant*



“My 4-year old twin daughters, one with visual impairments and one without, attend Pre-K at Miami Lighthouse’s Learning Center for Children™. They both love school and look forward to going every day. The teachers are wonderful and I am so grateful that we have such a great school for our girls.”

*June Dulce, mother of Arya and Mykaela*

## Miami Lighthouse Campus Hosts Art Walk and Unveils Mural

On February 20, Miami Lighthouse hosted our first Art Walk and officially unveiled our new four-story mural overlooking Calle Ocho. The event brought together renowned national artists and our community to make our mark on Miami's historic street art scene.

A "Blind Time Drawing" demonstration gave guests the opportunity to experience the art form pioneered by prominent conceptual artist Robert Morris, which involves creating images while blindfolded, without stopping or lifting up your pencil.

At the event, we officially unveiled "Love, Light, Embrace," our new four-story mural by Miami-based twin artists George and William Hustus. Miami Lighthouse invited the twin brothers to leave their distinctive and unique style on our building. "The artwork is a collaboration of imagination and the idea of infinite possibilities for the blind children attending Miami Lighthouse's Pre-K," said George Hustus.

Guests also had the opportunity to discover "Touching our Dream," three pillars of ceramic mosaic pieces displayed in our pavilion, which Carlos and JC Carroll Alves helped create. Also on display was "Sight" an original work by international artist, Romero Britto. "Blackout," by Cuban artist Sergio Lastres, as well as artworks of ceramic, clay, macramé and other media created by Miami Lighthouse art students were also featured.

The goal of the event was to showcase how "It's Possible to See Without Sight.™" Those living with visual impairments face unique challenges that are often overlooked, from writing certain letters of their name with ease and having access to creative outlets to job opportunities and success at school. Creating innovative programming that connects those with and without visual impairments together will raise awareness and build opportunities for success and greater independence.



*Love, Light, Embrace, 2019, by George and William Hustus*



*Several artists and event attendees participate in "Blind Time Drawing."*



*Carlos and JC Carroll Alves, artists behind the "Touching our Dream," pillars, and CEO Jacko with ceramic mosaic pieces displayed in our pavilion.*

## Continuing the Tradition of Honoring Our Volunteers

On Valentine's Day we celebrated all of those who have been a friend to our Miami Lighthouse with our annual McCrea Family Volunteer Recognition Luncheon.

Honorees included Karla Richey, founder of *Miami Kids Magazine* and a volunteer at our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™, and Lions Alan Campbell and Martin Murphy.

Recognition was also given to the Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors who serve on a voluntary basis and the District 35-N Lions Clubs. The Lions Clubs have been a long standing supporter of our Miami Lighthouse with their volunteer support tracing back to 1926 when Helen Keller asked Lions to be knights for the blind. Indeed, Lion Campbell and Lion Murphy have been just that by helping us obtain and implement the Lions International Award supporting our free eye care program for underserved schoolchildren. We are grateful to the McCrea family for their continued support.



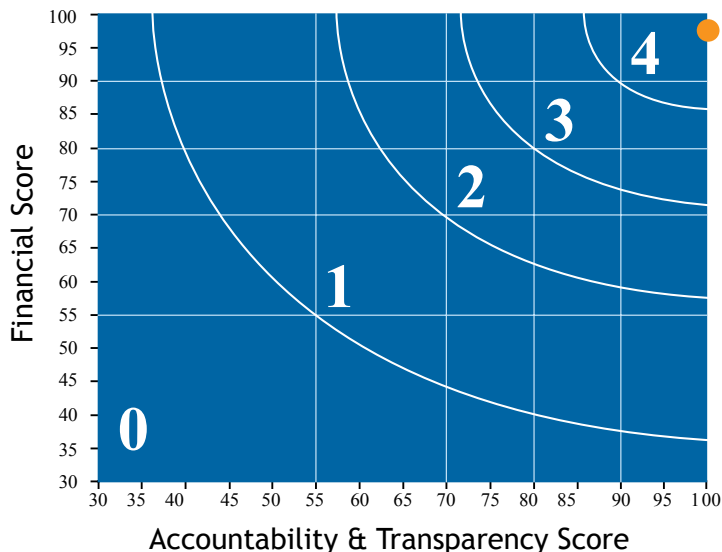
CEO Virginia Jacko with Volunteer of the Year Honoree Karla Richey



Representatives from District 35-N Lions Clubs (left to right): Fred Morris, Jim and Barbara Campbell, CEO Virginia Jacko, District Governor Elbio Gimenez and Rita Gimenez, Alan Campbell and Jorge Iglesias

## CHARITY NAVIGATOR SCORE NOVEMBER 1, 2018

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired is rated nationally in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile of the over 9,000 charities rated by Charity Navigator. In other words, we are among the elite 35 charities in the U.S. that have received 11 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator reflecting our sound fiscal management, responsible use of donor dollars and financial strength. We are currently the only not-for-profit organization in Miami to have attained this coveted status.



	SCORE (out of 100)	RATING
OVERALL	98.14	★★★★
• Financial	97.38	★★★★
• Accountability & Transparency	100	★★★★



Source: Miami Lighthouse listing on Charity Navigator website [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)





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## SAVE THE DATE! MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE EVENTS

**Music Under the Stars**  
Wednesday, May 15, 2019  
Miami Lighthouse

**White Cane Day**  
Tuesday, October 15, 2019  
Miami Lighthouse

**See the Light Luncheon**  
Thursday, October 24, 2019  
Riviera Country Club

**90th Diamond Anniversary Gala**  
Saturday, January 25, 2020  
The Biltmore Hotel

### Miami Lighthouse

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305-856-2288 Fax. 305-285-6967

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

### Miami Lighthouse Lantern Newsletter

Publisher: Virginia A. Jacko  
Editor: Melissa Serna




**LIVING WITH LOW VISION**

**WHAT IS LOW VISION?**  
Low vision is a visual loss not correctable by standard eyeglasses, contact lenses, medicine or surgery.

**MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE CAN HELP. . .**  
An optometrist specializing in low vision and a licensed occupational therapist can help by providing low vision assessments and recommending assistive devices such as low vision aids and equipment.

**To schedule an appointment  
or if you need assistive devices call our  
Vision Solutions Center at 786-362-7479.**  
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[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)