



LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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Have you heard about CVI?

We're proud to tell you about our inter-disciplinary Collaborative Research Project titled "Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Diagnostic Indicators and Educational Best Practices for Affected Children" led by Miami Lighthouse in collaboration with the University of Miami's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Nova Southeastern University Colleges of Medicine & Management, and Nicklaus Children's Hospital. Since 2020, our Academy Teachers of the Visually Impaired have conducted 144 children's assessments, ages ranging from 6 months to 20. Meanwhile, our Occupational therapist has been training OT and PT professionals at Nicklaus Children's Hospital on the protocol for the European NAVeG

assessment tool for babies up to 12 months with suspect CVI. The goal of the project is to develop a standard universal medical diagnosis protocol and validated assessment tools for children with a visual impairment. Principal Investigator Virginia Jacko stated, “This unique research promises to have local, national and international impact.”

Our very first CVI report on this \$2 Million project took place recently at an on-site luncheon with presentations by Dr. Carlos Mendoza, University of Miami's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; Dr. Francois Sainfort, Nova University; Dr. Anuj Jayakar , Nicklaus Children’s Hospital along with our Chief Program Officer Carol Brady Simmons , and our highly credentialed TVI, Mike Berger. Updates along with journal manuscripts will be provided as this project progresses.



Aimee, a student with CVI, started at the Miami Lighthouse Academy in the toddler class. She is currently in first grade and continues to show improvement in her visual and cognitive skills, and her ability to engage with her learning environment is steadily growing.

A tour to remember!

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELCMDM) recently witnessed our Miami Lighthouse Academy Early Learners practicing the inclusive sport of Blind Soccer on our new mini pitch. This exciting new program is supported by an Innovation Grant from The Children’s Trust.

While visiting our VPK classroom, our students presented gifts to their visitors: tiny, hand-painted canvases that they created for the “Celebration of the Hands” art project displayed at the State Capitol in Tallahassee the week of April 13th to celebrate Children’s Week. This unique display of art serves as a daily reminder to legislators and visitors that the future of our children rests in their hands.

Our thanks goes out to Evelio Torres, the President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition, for introducing us to his fantastic board and leadership team.



The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe (ELCMDM) Board and staff receive artwork made by our Miami Lighthouse Academy students

A trip to the Key Biscayne Lighthouse

Our Social Group Activities (SGA) program participants recently enjoyed a field trip to the Key Biscayne Lighthouse. A sense of community is crucial to a happy life at any age— but especially as a senior. At Miami Lighthouse, we are honored to provide the opportunity for our senior participants to create just that: community joy through social activities. Our SGA Program has been fondly referred to as a ‘country club’ by participants, fulfilling that innate need to connect with others, enjoy life, and be a part of something bigger than oneself.

We thank our SGA program supporters, such as the Florida Division of Blind Services and Miami-Dade County, for helping us prove that “it’s possible to see without sight™.”



SGA Program Participant Angie Phang and Supervisor of Fine Arts and Art Education Aaron Hill pose in front of the Key Biscayne Lighthouse

Exploring NASCAR through touch

Our Pre-Employment Transition Services students recently had an exciting field trip at the Homestead-Miami Speedway. The field trip offered our blind and visually impaired teenagers a unique, accessible introduction to the world of NASCAR. Through tactile exploration, students had the chance to feel real NASCAR tires, learning about their size, texture, and the intricate details that go into designing them.

The hands-on experience extended to exploring racing equipment and discovering how tire systems work in a professional racing environment. This immersive visit not only expanded students' career awareness but also emphasized the importance of accessibility in technical fields. For teens with visual impairments, experiences like these are invaluable in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications, helping them understand and engage with the technical environments that might otherwise seem out of reach. We thank the Homestead-Miami Speedway and Honorary Board Director George Foyo for making this experience a reality.



Students from our Pre-Employment Transition Services visited Homestead-Miami Speedway for an accessible and hands-on introduction to the world of NASCAR.

Miami Lighthouse welcomes back Delta Gamma Beta Tau Chapter at University of Miami

Miami Lighthouse was delighted to have new members of the Delta Gamma Beta Tau chapter at the University of Miami visit our campus. The Delta Gamma's Beta Tau chapter, originally installed at UM on February 16, 1946, has had a long history of volunteering at Miami Lighthouse. We look forward to continuing our partnership of promoting the Delta Gamma motto of "Service for Sight."



University of Miami Delta Gamma Beta Tau Chapter members with President and CEO Virginia Jacko

In the News:

- [South Florida Hospital News, March 13, 2025 – "Exciting Updates at Miami Lighthouse: Blind Soccer & Third Grade Expansion"](#)
- [Exceptional Parents Magazine, March 2025 – "Blindness Is Not the Obstacle"](#)
- [WPLG Local 10, March 5, 2025 – "Packing event yields 200 food bags in less than one hour"](#)
- [ABC 25 WPBF News, March 4, 2025 – "'Only chance to get their hands on a pair of glasses': Lake Worth parents like vision program"](#)

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Contributed by Joan Spector

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