



LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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Miami Lighthouse Announces Scott J. Richey as 2026 Board Chair

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired proudly welcomes Scott J. Richey as its 2026 Board Chair following the January 2026 Board of Directors Annual Meeting. The transition reflects continued momentum as the organization advances its 95th Anniversary Campaign and prepares for the *95 Years & Beyond Gala*, a black-tie celebration lighting the way toward its centennial year.

Richey brings eight years of board service and more than a decade of personal involvement with Miami Lighthouse. First introduced through volunteer service with Northern Trust and the Rotary Club of Miami, his commitment has grown into a family affair. His wife, Karla Richey, publisher of *Miami Kids Magazine*, serves as Treasurer of Miami Lighthouse Academy LLC.

“This organization has given so much to the community,” Richey shared. “Serving as Board Chair is an honor as Miami Lighthouse continues creating opportunities for people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired.”

“We’re thrilled to welcome Scott as our new Board Chair,” said President & CEO Virginia Jacko. “We are deeply grateful to Steven Solomon for his exceptional leadership and service as Immediate Past Chair, and we look forward to building on the strong foundation he helped establish. Scott’s dedication and leadership come at a perfect moment as we build on our momentum and look to the future.”



Immediate Past Chair, Steven J. Solomon (right) passes the gavel to Board Chair Scott J. Richey (left)

Miami Lighthouse Receives Full AER Accreditation for All Programs

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been awarded full accreditation by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) Accreditation Council, affirming excellence in management and service delivery across all 12 programs.

Accredited programs include Early Intervention, K–12 Services, Orientation and Mobility, Assistive Technology Instruction, Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, Low Vision Clinic, and more. The comprehensive review recognized Miami Lighthouse’s long-standing commitment to quality and innovation in vision rehabilitation.

“This accreditation affirms our unwavering commitment to quality, innovation, and accountability,” said President & CEO Virginia Jacko. “We are proud to meet and exceed the highest national standards while serving individuals from infancy through adulthood. This work would not have been possible without the support of our Board of Directors and the leadership of Board Member Stacey Jones, who represented us throughout the process.”

Miami Lighthouse has remained continuously accredited since 1978, and is internationally recognized as a Center of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation, serving more than 35,000 participants annually.



Senior Group Activities Artist Featured in City of Hialeah Art Exhibit

Three talented Miami Lighthouse artists—Nora Delabat, Grisel Diaz, and Dora Deleo—participants in the Senior Group Activities (SGA) Program, are showcasing their work at the City of Hialeah's Art Exhibit at the Milander Center for Arts and Entertainment.

The exhibit honors the legacy of Cuban poet José Martí and celebrates artistic expression across generations. The artists were guided by Aaron Hill, Supervisor of Fine Arts & Art Education at Miami Lighthouse, whose dedication continues to open creative pathways for participants.

The exhibit opened on January 23 and runs through February 20, 2026, with free admission for the public.

We thank the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florida Division of Blind Services for supporting Miami Lighthouse's art programs.



"Natural Woman" by Nora De La Bat



"Poetry in Motion" by Grisel Diaz



"Queen of Poetry" by Dora Deleon

Waymo Launches Fully Autonomous Ride-Hailing in Miami

Miami Lighthouse joined Waymo on January 22 to celebrate the launch of its fully autonomous ride-hailing service in Miami, marking a significant milestone for accessible transportation. Nearly 10,000 residents have signed up for the service, which will operate across a 60-square-mile area including Brickell, Wynwood, Coral Gables, and the Design District.

President & CEO Virginia Jacko emphasized the transformative impact of the technology. “As a blind CEO who travels with a guide dog, accessible, bias-free transportation is the difference between dependence and opportunity.”

Miami Lighthouse Senior Technology Manager Jorge Hernandez and Technology Instructor Rafael Fernandez participated in a demonstration ride in Little Havana, where Waymo highlighted accessibility features such as custom audio alerts designed specifically for blind riders. The experience underscored how emerging transportation technologies can support greater independence and mobility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.



(L-R) Technology instructors, Jorge Hernandez and Rafael Fernandez experience a demonstration ride with Waymo self-driving car

Tallahassee Lawmakers Urged to Strengthen Vision Care

In January, the External Relations Team for Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and its Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program, traveled to Tallahassee to meet with state legislators to discuss the critical importance of increasing funding for the Heiken Program and its life-changing work throughout the state of Florida.

The Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program provides free, comprehensive eye examinations, including dilation, and free prescription glasses to thousands of children each year, ensuring that vision problems do not stand in the way of learning, development, and success. By bringing care directly to schools, the program offers convenient, no-cost eye exams on campus, removing barriers for families and reaching children who might otherwise go without essential vision care.

These conversations with legislators highlighted the profound impact early vision care has on educational outcomes and quality of life and reinforced the need for sustained and expanded support so even more children across Florida can see, learn, and thrive.



VP Jeanmarie Ferrara, Director of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, Angela Vazquez, and SVP Cameron Sisser visited with a dozen elected officials including Sen. Bryan Avila and Sen. Ana Maria Rodriguez

In the News:

- [NorthEscambia.com, January 6, 2026 – "Hundreds of Escambia Students Receive Gift of Sight Through Non-Profit Vision Program"](#)
- [Miami New Times, January 6, 2026 – "South Beach Jazz Festival Returns to Miami this Weekend"](#)
- [ABC Wear News 3, December 8, 2025 – "Miami-based nonprofit brings free eye exams to Escambia County students"](#)
- [Miami Herald, December 21, 2025 – "North Miami teen faces losing her sight, but she hangs onto her dream"](#)

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Contributed by Joan Spector

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