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**WHITE CANE DAY CELEBRATION AT MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE
INCLUDES DISCUSSION OF LEGISLATIVE ISSUES FOR THE BLIND**

MIAMI—October 18, 2007—Hundreds gathered at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired on October 15 to mark White Cane Day, a national event that recognizes the white cane as both a tool and a symbol of blindness. Graduates of Miami Lighthouse vision rehabilitation programs, community leaders, friends and volunteers heard speakers on issues of importance to the blind and visually impaired.

Eric Bridges of the American Council of the Blind provided the audience at the Miami Lighthouse with information regarding accessible currency, i.e., paper money. He asked: “Why is it that the Euro has different size paper bills dependent upon the denomination? Yet, in the U.S. we, the blind, do not have this capability to differentiate our money?” The American Council of the Blind (ACB) filed a lawsuit concerning accessible currency and the judge ruled in ACB’s favor, but the Department of the Treasury has appealed the decision.

“Eric’s presentation helped the Miami blind community understand several national consumer and legislative issues,” said Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko. “There is more to come on this topic. As the legislative advocate in Washington, D.C., for the blind, Eric is following up for the blind consumer on legislation that would differentiate currency.”

Bridges also discussed the upcoming digital television transition in February 2009 and its implications for the blind. For example, blind consumers who have analog TV

capability will lose the ability to listen to TV unless they purchase a new digital to analog converter box. “There are concerns with the overall accessibility of this box,” Bridges said. “Because the federal government indicated to industry developers that accessibility is voluntary, this has created a serious concern for blind consumers.”

In June of this year, Bridges joined the staff of the American Council of the Blind as Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs. Previously, he spent six years working for National Industries for the Blind where he managed their public policy and legislative initiatives. During his tenure at National Industries for the Blind, Bridges was accepted into the Brookings Institution Congressional Fellowship Program. As part of this program, Bridges worked as a legislative assistant for Congressman John Kline (R-Minn.), focusing on issues including immigration policy, gun control, homeland security, and telecommunications. Bridges received a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communications from the University of Iowa.

State Representative Luis Garcia was the Grand Marshall of the White Cane Day Walk. The celebration included performances by the Miami Lighthouse musicians, participants in the only music program of its kind in the nation. Local Burger King franchisee and friend of the Miami Lighthouse Al Cabrera provided lunch. Other speakers included Heidi Johnson-Wright, Director of Miami-Dade County’s Office of Americans with Disabilities Act Coordination.

Each year the Miami Lighthouse helps almost two thousand blind and visually impaired people and their families learn to live safe and independent lives while coping with vision loss. Twenty percent of these clients are children.

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