



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

WINNER: MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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Virginia A. Jacko

In the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired's mission to serve Florida's visually impaired adults and children, including those with correctable vision problems, Virginia A. Jacko believes success is the ability to provide high-quality, cost-effective services to the uninsured who have no

alternative for eye health care.

This organization does this by bringing the service directly to the patient through mobile eye care provided at schools and senior centers throughout Florida. It maintains eye health information accessible by a network of providers that includes the Florida Optometric Physicians Network, glasses manufacturer OptiLab, and third-party administrators and funders like the Florida Department of Health. All work is done in compliance with HIPAA regulations, Department of Health regulations, licensure regulations for health professionals and state laws pertaining to patient safety says Jacko, President/CEO of Miami Lighthouse and President of the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC.



Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired celebrates Christmas at a party for some of the children it serves.



Founded in 1931 by blind pioneer Dolly Gamble under the guidance of Helen Keller, Miami Lighthouse is Florida's oldest vision rehabilitation agency serving the blind and visually impaired. It is recognized nationally for its best practices. The Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund was established in 1992 under the leadership of optometrists from Miami-Dade County to serve schoolchildren who failed their vision screening and had no way to obtain eye care. Since its inception, 65,000 financially disadvantaged schoolchildren have received, at no cost to their families, comprehensive eye examinations, with about 73 percent requiring prescription eyeglasses. In 2007, the two organizations merged.

As such, it is no surprise that Jacko is a believer in partnerships. She knows that creativity overcomes barriers to accessing and receiving quality care. It is vital to serving uninsured and underprivileged populations. Jacko does this by providing easy access to health care professionals by bringing them to the patients, for example, with mobile eye care units that reach children at schools and health fairs, or adults at senior centers.

"You cannot do this alone. Thus, you need to grow and maintain key collaborations and partnerships and consider integration through mergers and acquisitions when it benefits both parties and, most importantly, the patients," she says. Jacko also believes that "timely, easy-to-use information is golden. You need to utilize patient-centered electronic health information that is accessible to all constituents."