



## Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family **PLAYGROUND** Dedicated

At the December 17<sup>th</sup> ribbon-cutting ceremony for our new Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ play area, we dedicated it as the Charles J. and Olga Nielson Family Playground in recognition of their ongoing commitment to Miami Lighthouse and generous support of our early learning initiatives.

## University of Miami Study Validates Our Learning Center: Outcomes Exceed the National Average

This fall we welcomed 57 new early learners to our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™, which is offered in collaboration with the Early Learning Coalition and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Our pre-kindergarten program is the first fully inclusive model in the U.S. comprised of 50% visually impaired children and 50% with no vision impairment. Two years ago we piloted our new Pre-Kindergarten with just 15 early learners. How did we triple our enrollment? Clearly there was an unmet need, and more importantly we have evidence that our innovative learning program is becoming a national model.



The Children's Trust awarded funds for our Early Childhood Research Demonstration Project including a subcontract to the University of Miami for a four-year longitudinal study of students, parents and teachers participating in our new Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™. We are proud to share with you the University of Miami's Early Learning Research faculty team's impressive first-year study findings on page 2 of this newsletter.

*Pre-K students Jowayne and Milagros examining Elmo, a gift from Commissioner Sally Heyman*



**LIGHTHOUSE  
LEARNING CENTER  
FOR CHILDREN™**

MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED



*The Miami Lighthouse Parent as Teachers (PAT) Home Visitation Program, Early Childhood Research Demonstration Project, Children's Summer Youth Development (STAR) K-5, Youth Enrichment Music 6-12, and Florida Heiken Children's Vision Programs are funded in part by The Children's Trust. The Children's Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County.*

*(continued on Page 2)*

## 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.

## University of Miami Study Validates Our Learning Center: Outcomes Exceed the National Average

Below are the University of Miami's Early Learning Research faculty team's impressive first-year study findings:

- Our Learning Center for Children demonstrated high levels of fidelity to our early childhood inclusion model and scored above the national average for high quality instructional practices.
- Children demonstrated significant gains in observed positive peer and task engagement, teacher and parent reported interactive peer play, and empathy.
- Teachers and parents reported observing positive changes in children's social and cognitive school readiness skills, noting in particular changes in children's peer relationships and empathic behavior toward one another.
- Parents reported gratitude toward our Learning Center's inclusive approach and felt that the Learning Center was a unique and special place for them and their children where "differences do not define who we are."

Based on the study's initial results, we are confident that our innovative early learning program is an asset to our community and will serve as a national model.

### Miami Lighthouse Celebrates 2018 Pre-Kindergarten Graduation

The first pre-kindergarten students who attended classes in our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ building graduated on June 7, 2018, and shared their memorable day with their dads at a special Father's Day celebration. Proud dads enjoyed a luxurious facial grooming experience courtesy of The Art of Shaving. Our young students delighted in applying shaving cream to their father's faces, which was a unique multisensory experience for the children.

We express our thanks to The Art of Shaving for enabling the children and their parents to have this delightful experience.



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



*Olivia with her father Sergiy*



*Ethan with his father Troy*

## Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

As we prepare to celebrate 90 years of vision rehabilitation services for the blind and visually impaired in Miami, we acknowledge with gratitude friends and donors who provided the foundation upon which our reputation of excellence was built. As we look to the future, we are thankful for continuing community support that enables us to sustain our existing programs and our vision for the future. In response to the phenomenal increase in the number of individuals who participate in our programs, it is more important than ever that we build our financial capacity to meet current commitments and future growth. A new \$1 Million four-year matching challenge of \$250,000 per year from The Wildflower Foundation will support blind musicians and artists in our year-round Music and Tactile Arts Programs. Please call CEO Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176 to learn how you can participate in this exciting new challenge.

We are proud to announce that we recently received our eleventh consecutive 4-star rating, the highest rating possible, from Charity Navigator, the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator (see graph on page 17), and GuideStar USA has awarded us their 2018 Gold Seal of Transparency. Miami Lighthouse attained these recognitions based on our tradition of sound fiscal management, transparency and responsible use of donor dollars.

In this issue of our *Lantern* newsletter you will read about our recent activities and see pictures of some of the children and adults who participate in our programs and of friends and supporters of Miami Lighthouse. We count on your ongoing generosity to ensure continuation of our tradition of excellence in service for the blind and visually impaired in the years ahead. Thank you for your help in sustaining our incredibly important effort.

Sincerely,



Louis Nostro  
*Chairman, Board of Directors*



## Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors

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## Developing Our International Partners

Miami Lighthouse was founded in 1931. Coincidentally, that was the same year that the Jewish Institute for the Blind was established in Jerusalem to educate school age blind children. This past May, CEO Virginia Jacko, her daughter Dr. Julie Jacko, and Miami Lighthouse Director of Children's Programs Isabel Chica had the opportunity to visit the Jewish Institute for the Blind, as well as the Nalaga'at Center in Jaffa and the ELIYA Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Children School in Petah Tikva, developing Miami Lighthouse's international partnerships in Israel.

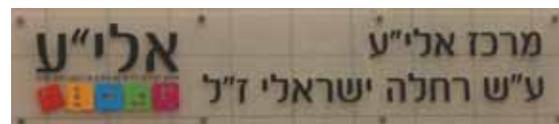


*Director Chica and CEO Jacko, left, with students in ELIYA School pre-kindergarten class*

At the Jewish Institute for the Blind, leaders from both institutions used the visit as a unique opportunity to exchange curricula, pedagogy, and feature descriptions of their respective facilities, seeking to identify commonalities and differences in order to learn from each other. Specifically, music instruction, musical performances, and technology labs were observed and discussed extensively in the context of the Miami Lighthouse Braille Music distance learning curriculum. One of the highlights of the visit was the impressive swimming facilities at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, which are used for enabling fluid and independent movement opportunities for students at the Institute.

In Jaffa, at the Nalaga'at Center, CEO Jacko, Dr. Jacko, and Director Chica attended a unique theater performance where deaf/blind actors performed a play that emphasized the creative and dramatic capabilities of the actors uniquely overcoming their disabilities. At this same facility, they enjoyed dinner at a restaurant in which all the patrons dined in the dark, providing perspective to the sighted patrons about the challenges and opportunities of dining without the ability to see.

With the recent opening of our new Pre-Kindergarten, CEO Jacko and Director Chica were very engaged with the professional staff of the Israeli pre-kindergarten school, ELIYA, located in Petah Tikva. At ELIYA they observed children in various classrooms and enjoyed a demonstration from one young boy on how he used the iPad. They learned that both ELIYA and Miami Lighthouse use the same screening tool, The Oregon Project for Visually Impaired Children, as a way to identify student goals and monitor students' progress. A synergistic connection was inspired by the same objective of helping early learners with visual impairments achieve academic success while gaining confidence despite their vision loss. Our mutual concept of being sister schools was immediately launched, and our long-distance professional consortium has been established.



*ELIYA Preschool signage*



*Director Chica (third from left) and CEO Jacko, (far right) with ELIYA professional staff*

Overall, the experience reaffirmed that Miami Lighthouse is a pioneer in the field of vision.

(continued from page 4)

Through this unique international opportunity in Israel, Miami Lighthouse can collaborate with teachers, occupational therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, speech therapists, and administrators of educational programs similar to our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ on best practices and innovative ways to transform the lives of the blind. This collaboration also enhances the strategic goal developed by the Board of Directors at their October 2017 retreat which was to “Increase Miami Lighthouse’s reputation for quality and innovation at the local, state, and national levels.” MLB is grateful to the generous Israeli who underwrote this opportunity for CEO Jacko, Dr. Jacko, and Director Chica to interact with colleagues in Israel.

## Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, Toured Miami Lighthouse Programs

On November 8, 2018, Archbishop Wenski witnessed how Miami Lighthouse teaches the blind and visually impaired that “It’s possible to see without sight™.” As it says in Isaiah 42:16 “And I will bring the blind by a way they did not know, I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight.” Archbishop Wenski called Miami Lighthouse “a beacon of hope.”



*Board Director John Harriman, CEO Virginia Jacko, Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, and Board Director Ramón Casas with Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ Pre-K students*

His visit began with a tour of our innovative Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™, where the Archbishop was serenaded by a group of pre-kindergarten children, half of whom are visually impaired and the other half sighted. Our students delivered a lively rendition of “You Are My Sunshine.” The students presented the Archbishop with their tribute gift, the lighthouse collage he is holding in the picture. Our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ is a first-of-its-kind fully inclusive pre-kindergarten for both visually impaired students and their sighted peers and is already being recognized as a national model with enrollment nearly quadrupling since its inception just three years ago.

As Archbishop Wenski visited our adult programs, including our Senior Group Health and Activities Program, he witnessed seniors, despite their vision loss, artistically expressing themselves through painting and ceramics. At our nationally recognized Miami Lighthouse Music Studio, our new United Voices Gospel Choir delivered a heartfelt performance of “I Believe,” and President and CEO Virginia Jacko, totally blind herself, told the Archbishop “the miracles we just sang about happen here every day.”

At our Low Vision Solutions Center he observed patients waiting for their low vision functional assessment by either a low vision optometrist or a low vision occupational therapist. He learned that one out of four seniors will have uncorrectable vision loss and about the low vision assistive devices available at Miami Lighthouse, for example, solar shields and electronic magnifiers for reading, and services we offer for people in our community affected by uncorrectable vision loss such as “Living with Low Vision” presentations.

“We greatly appreciate the Archbishop’s interest in the blind and visually impaired members of our community,” said Ray Casas, immediate past board chairman of Miami Lighthouse. “We share a goal of helping those in need, be it ministering to spiritual needs or physical impairment.”

## Board of Directors News

### Welcome New Board Members

The following board members were recently nominated by our Board Operations Committee and approved by the full Board:



**Sheila Freed** continues the tradition of service to Miami Lighthouse established by her late husband and past Board Chair Owen Freed. She is a realtor with Coldwell Banker specializing in residential real estate. Her commitment to our community includes participation in the Coral Gables Police Mobile Patrol, service on the University of Miami Citizens Board and two terms as President of Temple Judea.

**Stacey W. Jones** holds a B.A. in Psychology, Sociology and Secondary Education from Clark College and an MS in Administration and Supervision from Florida International University. During his career in education he taught social studies, was a guidance counselor, an assistant principal and a principal at three Miami-Dade County Public Schools: Booker T. Washington Junior High School, Citrus Grove Middle School, and Howard D. McMillan Middle School. He has served in several governance roles with Lions Club International, most recently as International Director from 2012 to 2014.



**The Honorable Tomás P. Regalado** was elected Miami City Commissioner in 1996 and subsequently served as Mayor of the City of Miami from 2009 to 2017. He has held a wide variety of positions in journalism. His journalistic achievements include being the first Cuban American member of the White House Press Corps.

**Frank J. Voytek** is a management consultant with Foxhall Advisory with over 40 years of business and consulting experience for non-profit and for-profit organizations. He holds an MBA from Fordham University and has been a Wharton Global Business Forum guest speaker.



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 27 members, and our honorary board consists of 19. 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.

## Board of Directors News

### Board Kudos

**Board Chair Louis Nostro, Esq.**, Nostro Jones, P.A., has been recognized among the top 100 2018 Miami Super Lawyers. He is listed as the top-rated estate planning and probate attorney in Miami. Super Lawyers is a rating service of outstanding lawyers from more than 70 practice areas who have attained a high-degree of peer recognition and professional achievement.

**Board Director Harry W. Flynn, Jr., M.D.**, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, has been honored as one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in the World of Ophthalmology. An internationally known retina specialist, Dr. Flynn is an expert in the field of diabetic retinopathy with special interests in vitreoretinal surgery. He holds the J. Donald M. Gass Distinguished Chair in Ophthalmology and has served as the president of the Vitreous Society as well as the Retina Society.

**Board Director Sheila Freed** was recognized as the Top Sales Agent of the Coldwell Banker's Coral Gables office for the second year in a row. She has been a top-rated Realtor for the 38 years she has served the South Florida market.

**The Honorable Tomás P. Regalado** was appointed by President Trump as Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, which oversees Radio and TV Martí.

**Board Director Steven J. Solomon, Esq.**, has been named Managing Director of the Miami office of GrayRobinson, P.A., where he will take charge of over 40 attorneys and professionals. A Miami native, he joined GrayRobinson in 2009 and has been a bankruptcy practitioner for over 25 years.

**CEO Virginia Jacko** was awarded a scholarship by the Harvard Business School Club of South Florida (HBSCSF) to attend the prestigious Harvard Business School Executive Education Program "Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management." HBSCSF member and Board Director José Pepe Abrante nominated CEO Jacko and Luis Zuluaga, President of HBSCSF, and Club members endorsed her scholarship application.

### In Memoriam

Former Miami Lighthouse Board Chair (1977) **Preston Prevatt** passed away on August 6, 2018. Preston served as our pro bono legal counsel for many years. In 1993 he wrote a letter based on Shutts & Bowen's records documenting Miami Lighthouse's role in the establishment of Bascom Palmer Eye Institute which has served as an invaluable historical reference. We extend our sympathy to Preston's wife, Dottie, and his family, who generously designed Miami Lighthouse to be the recipient of memorial gifts in his honor.

**Barbara Weintraub** passed away on September 23, 2018. While serving on the Miami Lighthouse Board, Barbara personally solicited from the Health Foundation of South Florida the seed funds to start our Early Intervention Blind Babies Program which more than 100 mothers and their blind babies now benefit from each year. We offer our condolences to her husband, Michael, and her sister, Honorary Board Director Carol Russo.

Long-time staff member **Brendan Gibson** passed away on August 14, 2018. Brendan began his employment with Miami Lighthouse in 2000, and he most recently served as Job Readiness Instructor Specialist. In that capacity Brendan served as a mentor and helped visually impaired people like him prepare for employment in a sighted world.



## Staff News



**Chief Program Officer Carol-Brady Simmons**, COMS, has been invited to serve on the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services (DBS) Community Rehabilitation Personnel (CRP) Credential Review Committee. This committee is comprised of two CRP representatives and two DBS staff and oversees the credentials of DBS State office and District employees. Carol's experience relevant to this appointment includes serving since 2000 as a peer reviewer for the National Accreditation Council, which is accreditation agency for organizations serving blind and visually impaired throughout the U.S. She is a member of and certified by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist and has

training and certifications in protecting human research participants, early childhood development for blind and visually impaired and low vision technology. Carol holds a B.S. in Visual Disabilities with a specialty in Orientation and Mobility Mobility, a B.S. in Leisure Services Studies with a minor in Gerontology, and A.A. in Elementary education.

Joining Miami Lighthouse in 1989, she was instrumental in starting our Blind Babies Program in 2003 and has served in progressively responsible capacities as Director of Client and Vision Enhancement Services, Director of Children's Programs and Vision Services, Chair of Orientation and Mobility Services and other supervisory positions. Carol was a co-author on the article "Blind Babies Play Program: A Model for Affordable, Sustainable Early Childhood Literacy Intervention through Play and Socialization," which was published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* in 2013 and on our 2015 copyrighted "A Case Study on Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, Developed by Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for the First Florida Resident to Receive a 'Bionic Eye,' " which documents the unique vision rehabilitation program developed by Miami Lighthouse for the first Florida recipient of the Argus II Retinal Implant.

Since 2017 Carol has participated in weekly grand rounds at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, where she acts as a resource for doctors who refer children and adults to Miami Lighthouse for vision rehabilitation, and has served on the BPEI Safety Committee. She also has assisted public and private institutions create accessible and safe environments. In 2014 she participated in a panel entitled "Meeting Needs of Special Populations: Unique Needs, Challenges and Opportunities" at the South Florida Hospital and Healthcare Association Healthcare Summit and in 2013 led an in-service training on caring for blind and low vision patients for the nursing leadership at South Miami Hospital. Carol also shares her expertise by conducting sessions at our annual continuing education seminars for Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and nurses that is offered in collaboration with the Florida International University Nichole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Department.

Our **Certified Occupational and Low Vision Therapist Raquel Van Der Biest** was honored with Florida International University's Dr. Gail Ann Hills Award. The award recognizes an Occupational Therapist who embodies the spirit of Dr. Hill and is currently making an impact as an Occupational Therapist. Because of Raquel's efforts, the FIU Occupational Therapy Department now partners with us on a grant from Florida Blue that brings low vision assessments to underserved populations. She also acts as a mentor, educator and role model as she oversees practicums at Miami Lighthouse for FIU Occupational Therapy Students involving them in low vision therapy and our work with seniors affected by age-related eye disease.

## AWARDS, RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

### The Able Trust Recognizes Miami Lighthouse High School High Tech Sites

The Able Trust, a leader in providing opportunities for successful employment for Floridians with disabilities, awarded our High School High Tech (HSHT) Sites its statewide “HSHT Quality Recognition Award” at their annual conference. Sites the “HSHT Quality Recognition” award once specific goals and standards set by The Able Trust have been achieved. Congratulations to our hardworking blind and visually impaired teenagers and instructors who met the requirements to receive this recognition.



*Congratulations to our 2018 Transition Services/High School High Tech Program graduates: (left to right) Asdrubal, Eric, Ronald, Manuel, Adriel, Rey, Jaquelin, and Romelus. Pictured with our graduates are Betty Chavarria, Miami Lighthouse Manager of Transition and Education Services (far left), Reinaldo Sanchez, Miami Lighthouse Computer Technology Services Instructor (center, white shirt), and Allison Chase, Vice President, Youth Programs at The Able Trust*



*The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. More information about The Able Trust can be found at [www.abletrust.org](http://www.abletrust.org)*

### Miami Lighthouse Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program Receives Grant from The Ocean Reef Community Foundation

The Ocean Reef Community Foundation generously awarded \$10,000 to support the delivery of our Miami Lighthouse eye wellness program for disadvantaged schoolchildren in Homestead, Florida City and the Florida Keys Head Start Programs. Our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program has provided nearly 400 comprehensive eye examinations with dilation for children in these areas this year.

The importance of our Heiken Program continues to be reinforced by research. *Science News* recently reported that the number of preschool children in the U.S. with visual impairment is projected to increase more than 25% in the coming decades, with the majority resulting from simple uncorrected refractive error. We thank the Ocean Reef Community Foundation for their generous support of our Heiken Children’s Vision Program.



*Dr. Alan Levitt, Miami Lighthouse Board Director and Heiken Advisory Committee Member, and Dannielle Dixon, Heiken Children’s Vision Program Manager, accept Miami-Dade County Public Schools 2018 Values Matter Award*



Rotarian Phil Seipp, CEO Virginia Jacko, Karla Richey of *Miami Kids Magazine*, and Rotarian Dave Skinner. We are grateful to the Rotary Club of Miami and *Miami Kids Magazine* for their support of our Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ by making a contribution toward the new children’s playground currently under construction adjacent to our Miami Lighthouse for the Blind Learning Center for Children™.

## AWARDS, RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

### Best Buy Community Grant Awarded to Miami Lighthouse Music Program

Our unique Music Program, an inclusion program with both sighted and visually impaired students, has again been awarded a significant grant by Best Buy. The majority of our Music Program students reside in under-served, low-income communities countywide. Research suggests that the inclusionary design of our program fosters understanding and appreciation for individual differences among students and minimizes the adverse effects of segregation based on disabilities.



*Best Buy check presentation to Miami Lighthouse's Music Program*

Our Miami Lighthouse Music Program provides the opportunity for blind musicians to learn how to work and perform in a sighted world. Best Buy's generous grant will allow us to expand our capacity to provide our blind and sighted students access to the newest and most innovative equipment and technology.

### Florida Division of Blind Services District Administrator Juan Carlos Diaz Receives Award

Our District 12 Administrator, Juan Carlos Diaz, was the recipient of the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services 2018 "Excellence in Leadership Award" in appreciation of superior services and dedication to blind and visually impaired Floridians and of his leadership abilities to guide staff and far surpass district goals." We are grateful to District Administrator Diaz for his collaboration with Miami Lighthouse.



*We are grateful to the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services and the State of Florida for partially supporting the following programs: Early Intervention Blind Babies, Vocational Rehabilitation, Pre-Employment Transition Services, Independent Living Adult and Independent Living Older Blind and Senior Group Health and Activities.*

CEO Virginia Jacko, Lions Clubs International First Lady Navita Aggarwal, Lions District 35-N Governor Betty Barrera, Miami Lighthouse Board Director and Past International Director, Lions Clubs International, Stacey Jones (rear) and Mary Jones. Miami Lighthouse was honored to host the Lions Club International Board of Directors and their spouses as they celebrated the Organization's 100th Anniversary in Miami.



On May 23, 26 INK Global volunteers served lunch to our clients as part of their annual "Conference for a Cause." The group also raised more than \$15,000 to support Miami Lighthouse Programs.

## EVENTS



WHITE  
CANE DAY  
2018

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind celebrated nearly 90 years of service to the blind and visually impaired community on National White Cane Day in Miami on October 15, 2018. Escorted by City of Miami Police, over 200 people of all ages walked from Miami Lighthouse at 601 SW 8th Avenue, down 8th Street and back. Miami-Dade County Commissioners Sally Heyman and Eileen Higgins led the way as Grand Marshals. The celebration continued with food and music featuring our Miami Lighthouse United Voices Choir, which provided a joyful rendition of “We are Family” as everyone joined in with song and danced.

Emcee Ron Magill, Goodwill Ambassador at Zoo Miami, delighted the crowd, and a special presentation about the changing healthcare landscape was made by Doug Bartel, Senior Director of Business Development and Media Relations at Florida Blue.

The event also showcased a first-of-its-kind 3-D map for the blind developed by John Stuart, AIA, Executive Director of FIU College of Communication, Architecture + The Arts, Miami Beach Urban Studios, and our Miami Lighthouse orientation and mobility instructors and our clients.

We thank our presenting sponsor Florida Blue and all of our other sponsors including MassMutual Miami, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Lions for the Blind, OrCam, Walgreens #15994, Ms. Cheezious and Burger King #12778 for making our White Cane Day celebration a great success.



*Ron Magill, Zoo Miami; Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins; President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Miami-Dade Commissioner Sally Heyman; and Doug Bartel, Florida Blue*



*Board Director Alfred Karram, Jr., John Stuart, Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Director Frank Voytek, Board Director and Lion Stacey Jones, Emcee Ron Magill*



On October 19, 2018 Miami Lighthouse hosted a meeting of the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. Florida Division of Blind Services Director Robert Lee Doyle III and CEO Virginia Jacko are pictured on the left with members of the Florida Rehabilitation Council and staff of the Florida Division of Blind Services and Miami Lighthouse.

## Miami Lighthouse Celebrates Nearly 90 Years of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation

More than 250 community leaders attended our annual “See the Light” luncheon on October 25, 2018, where the focus was on how Miami Lighthouse has transformed the lives of the blind and visually impaired in our community since 1931. CEO Virginia Jacko recalled Miami Lighthouse’s early history when prominent Miamians such as Mrs. Charles Brickell raised funds by hosting garden parties, one of which was attended by Helen Keller. The theme of excellence in vision rehabilitation was demonstrated by the speakers and musicians on the program, which began with “You Raise Me Up” by vocalist Arantza Espinosa, Miami Lighthouse student and winner of Melodias del Alma, the first International Blind Singing Competition and The Children’s Trust Young Talent Big Dreams 2012 competition. The keynote address was given by Joseph Chica, former Miami Lighthouse program participant and current student at the University of Miami, who was accompanied by his guide dog Gunner. Joseph told the luncheon guests how his family enrolled him in the Miami Lighthouse Early Intervention Program at age three. He continued to receive vision rehabilitation training throughout his school years, learning how to use a white cane and participating in orientation and mobility training which was a prerequisite for his getting a guide dog. Joseph was President of the Christopher Columbus High School speech and debate team and received honorable mention in the 2016 *Miami Herald* Silver Knight Awards. Joseph is pursuing degrees in music and economics at the University of Miami and now helps other visually impaired students by volunteering at Miami Lighthouse where he coaches speech and debate for Pre-Employment Transition Services Program students and during the summer works with younger students in our Summer Training and Recreation Program.



Keynote speaker Joseph Chica



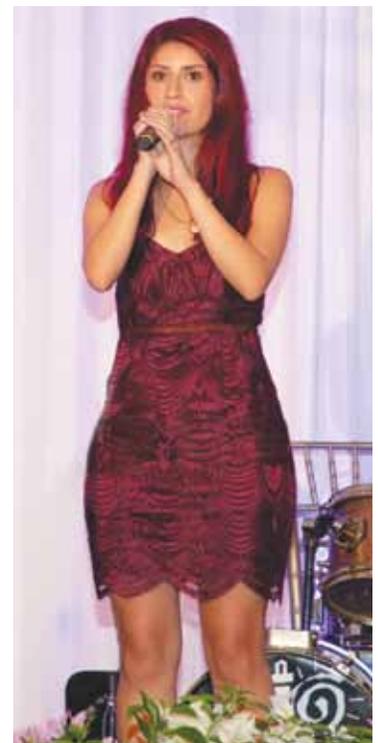
Board Chair Louis Nostro and CEO Virginia Jacko



Ben Mollere, Isabel Chica, Joseph Chica and his guide dog Gunner, Hope Schachter, and Board Director Frank Voytek



Christine Stiefel, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Director Angela Whitman



Arantza Espinosa

## Miami Lighthouse Celebrates Nearly 90 Years of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation

In her remarks CEO Jacko expressed gratitude for the vision rehabilitation training she received at Miami Lighthouse that enabled her to fully utilize her executive skills after becoming blind and to head the organization dedicated to helping others learn how to excel despite vision loss and to lead confident, independent and productive lives.

Attendees viewed a video underwritten by event sponsor Northern Trust entitled “It’s Possible to See without Sight™” which showcased the comprehensive scope of the transformational vision rehabilitation and eye care programs offered by Miami Lighthouse for all ages from early intervention for blind babies to low vision rehabilitation for seniors with age-related vision loss as well as dilated eye examinations and prescription glasses at no cost for low-income schoolchildren statewide. You can view the video on our website homepage at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org).

Miami Lighthouse serves 35 times as many program participants as it did in 2004, now providing life-changing vision rehabilitation and eye care to more than 17,000 individuals annually. To help meet this extraordinary increase, luncheon guests were apprised of the opportunity to participate in a new dollar-for-dollar challenge to support visually impaired participants in our Music and Tactile Arts Programs. For information about making a contribution to this four-year \$1 million Wildflower matching challenge call CEO Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176.

The program concluded with a spirited rendition of “We Are Family” performed by the visually impaired program participants of the Miami Lighthouse United Voices Choir. Sponsors of our See the Light luncheon included Northern Trust, The Art of Shaving, Norma Jean Abraham, Monster Sound Productions, Rimland’s Nursery, El Carajo and an anonymous donor.



*Music Program Manager John Nichols (left) with Miami Lighthouse United Voices Choir*



*Norma Jean Abraham and CEO Virginia Jacko*



*Charles D. Nielson, Board Director Charles J. Nielson and Olga Nielson*



*Karla Richey and Board Director Scott Richey, Northern Trust*

## Miami Lighthouse Musicians Stage Eye Opening Performance at 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Music Under the Stars Event Benefitting Our Heiken Children's Vision Program

The 250 guests at our 2018 Music Under the Stars event on May 16, 2018, enjoyed something old and something new as our Miami Lighthouse musicians and chorus presented a new musical score to "The Great Train Robbery," the iconic silent film. As the gifted students and instructors of our Miami Lighthouse for the Blind Music Program provided live music and sound effects, the historic film classic was shown onscreen to the delight of the audience.

Held on the Miami Lighthouse Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Campus on May 16, Music Under the Stars raised more than \$90,000 for our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, a statewide initiative that provides underserved students throughout Florida with comprehensive eye examinations and prescription glasses at no cost. Last school year, our Heiken Program received 17,000 school referrals of students needing eye care and provided more than 11,000 dilated eye exams and prescription glasses when required.

"Music Under the Stars is always a 'don't miss' evening for an important cause," said CEO Virginia Jacko. "This year, our guests enjoyed a unique entertainment experience that demonstrated the ability of the visually impaired to achieve something extraordinary."

"The Great Train Robbery" is a historic black-and-white silent film, originally shot in 1903 and based on an actual train robbery perpetrated by famed bandit Butch Cassidy. "The Great Train Robbery" is considered the first American action film and was selected for preservation in the U.S. Film Registry of the Library of Congress.

The dramatic new musical score premiered at Music Under the Stars was written by Miami Lighthouse instructor Oman Pedreira. The musicians and chorus, most of whom are blind or visually impaired, wore headsets to receive audio cues from our Music Program Manager John Nichols allowing them to transition seamlessly through the music and sound effects of the 12-minute Western adventure film. Our Miami Lighthouse musicians were honored to subsequently present this classic silent movie and perform the innovative score at the Adrienne Arsht Center Annual Arts Launch in September.



*Miami Lighthouse musicians performing at Music Under the Stars*



*Left: Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman gives proclamation to honoree Lee R. Stern; Right: Representative David Richardson, Florida State Health Care Appropriations Democratic Ranking Member, presents check on behalf of Miami-Dade Delegation to President and CEO Virginia Jacko*



## Miami Lighthouse Musicians Stage Eye Opening Performance at 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Music Under the Stars Event Benefitting Our Heiken Children's Vision Program



*Chair Louis Nostro, CEO Virginia Jacko with Trish and Dan Bell at the ribbon cutting dedication of our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children's Trish and Dan Bell East Terrace*

In addition to the spectacular presentation of "The Great Train Robbery," Music Under the Stars featured the dedication of our Lighthouse Learning Center for Children's™ Trish and Dan Bell East Terrace, named in honor of the prominent Miami philanthropic couple. The event also honored Lee R. Stern of Medegy Health Systems and the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation for their support of our Heiken Program.

Guests enjoyed a cornucopia of culinary delights prepared by popular restaurant sponsors including The Big Cheese, Brazilian Grill, El Carajo Seasons 52, Mario the Baker, Perricone's Marketplace, Sports Grill and others.

Emceed by Olga Villaverde, anchor of Lifetime TV's "The Balancing Act," Music Under the Stars was sponsored by ABB Optical Group, U.S. Ophthalmic, Publix Super Markets Charities, Marlins Foundation, Florida Power & Light, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, GrayRobinson, Genesis Systems Consulting, Florida International Bankers Association, Gus Machado Ford, *Miami Kids Magazine*, the H. Angela Whitman Foundation, Pamela Garrison, Essilor, The Art of Shaving, Affiliated Healthcare Centers, Susan Conroy Design, Perry Ellis and EC Connects.



*Event Sponsors (left to right): Michael Jimenez, Genesis Systems Consulting; Ralph Niebles, The Art of Shaving; Steven Solomon, GrayRobinson, P.A.; Carinia and Gustavo Lancewicki, US Ophthalmic; Karla Richey, Miami Kids Magazine; Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman; Michele Pedersen, The Art of Shaving; Board Director H. Angela Whitman; Honorary Board Director Pamela J. Garrison and Eileen Camejo, EC Connects*

## Miami Lighthouse Hosts Web Accessibility Seminar

A panel of legal and technical experts examined the issue of website accessibility for persons with disabilities during a seminar held at Miami Lighthouse on August 8, 2018. Co-sponsored by the Greater Miami & The Beaches Hotel Association, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau and Miami Lighthouse, participants discussed and demonstrated the differences between accessible and non-accessible websites using screen-reading software that visually and hearing impaired people require to access internet websites. Also discussed in depth was whether public websites are actually accommodating the technologies required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Participating in the panel headed by CEO Virginia Jacko were Robert Fine, Esq. of Greenberg Taurig, LLP and Daniel Benavides, Esq. of Shutts & Bowen, LLP along with Miami Lighthouse technology specialists William Rivera and Jorge Hernandez.



*Left to right: William Rivera, Senior Accessibility Specialist and Computer Technology Services Manager, and Jorge Hernandez, Computer Services Instructor, Miami Lighthouse; Daniel F. Benavides, Esq., Partner, Hospitality Practice Group, Shutts & Bowen, LLP; Robert S. Fine, Esq., AIA, National Chair, Disabilities Rights Laws Counseling and Defense, Greenberg Taurig, LLP; Wendy Kallergis, President and CEO, Greater Miami & the Beaches Hotel Association; Virginia A. Jacko, President and CEO Miami Lighthouse; William D. Talbert, President and CEO, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau*

Miami Lighthouse is a leader in reviewing corporate and government websites for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To learn more about screen-reading software and website compliance consulting services offered by Miami Lighthouse contact CEO Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176 or [vjacko@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:vjacko@miamilighthouse.org)

## Annual Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Reception at Miami Lighthouse

On August 15, 2018, more than 60 faculty, residents and fellows from Bascom Palmer Eye Institute gathered for an informative evening at Miami Lighthouse. Dr. Eduardo C. Alfonso, Chair of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, was in attendance with his colleagues. Guests toured our Miami Lighthouse facility learning about the variety of vision rehabilitation programs we offer and the assistive devices and services available in our Low Vision Center.



*Board Directors Thomas E. Johnson, M.D.; Donna Abood; Alfred Karram, Jr.; Angela Whitman; Board Chair Louis Nostro; Eduardo Alfonso, M.D., Professor and Chairman, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; President and CEO Virginia Jacko; and Board Director Harry W. Flynn, Jr., M.D.*

The group was welcomed by Miami Lighthouse Board Chair Louis Nostro, and CEO Virginia Jacko spoke on “Continuing the Dream of Dr. Bascom Palmer through Collaboration and a Tribute to Our Early Founders.” Board Director Harry W. Flynn, Jr., M.D., Professor of Ophthalmology, talked about the origin of BPEI when Dr. Bascom Palmer, President of the Miami Lighthouse’s Board of Directors from 1947 to 1952, established a fund at Miami Lighthouse devoted to a dream he harbored: the creation of an eye hospital in Miami. Miami Lighthouse provided the land and seed money, which was most of the funds the University of Miami School of Medicine needed to construct the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute’s original building enabling Dr. Palmer’s dream to become a reality. A special presentation was made by Board Director Thomas E. Johnson, M.D., Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology, on “Eye Enucleation and Vision Rehabilitation.”

The evening’s entertainment was provided by our talented Miami Lighthouse Music Program instructors: guitarist Tony Cobo and violinist Oman Pedreira.

## Luncheon Honors Florida Legislature’s Support of our Heiken Children’s Vision Program

The Young Professionals of the Lighthouse (YPOL) hosted our annual Legislative Luncheon on July 11, 2018 honoring Miami Lighthouse champions in the Florida Legislature. During the recent legislative session funding was passed for support of our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program as well as our Senior Group Health and Activities Program. Appreciation was also expressed to our city and county elected officials for Elder Care funding and facilitating construction of our new Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™. Miami Lighthouse Board Chairman Louis Nostro welcomed the luncheon attendees after which “The Star Spangled Banner” was sung by Miami Lighthouse student Silvio Plata. A special thank you was extended to Thais A. Asper, AT&T Regional Director, for AT&T’s generous sponsorship of this year’s luncheon.



*YPOL Co-Chair and Board Director Alex Suarez (left) and Senior Group Health and Activities Program Participant Victor (center) present handmade American flag to AT&T representatives Cristal Cole, Thais Asper and Alex Dominguez*

*Representative Nicholas Duran, School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas, Representative David Richardson, Senior Group Health and Activities Program Participant Nick with handmade American flag, CEO Virginia Jacko, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, and Mayor of North Miami Beach Beth Spiegel*



## Engaging the Low Vision Community through Education, Research and Service

On June 9, 2018 Miami Lighthouse in collaboration with the Florida International University Nichole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Department offered our annual continuing education seminar for occupational therapists, physical therapists and nurses. The goal of the seminar was to empower the more than 40 healthcare professionals in attendance with the knowledge they require to meet the needs of the growing number of patients impacted by vision loss. We are grateful to the Deering Trust for funding that enables us to conduct this seminar through which professionals are able to obtain continuing education credits.



Miami Lighthouse Certified Occupational and Low Vision Therapist Raquel Van Der Biest received Florida International University's Dr. Gail Ann Hills Award. (See Staff News on page 8)



**Young Professionals of the Lighthouse (YPOL) Fourth Annual Chicken Wing Championship**  
YPOL Co-Chair and Board Director Will Beckham, sponsors Jeremy and Morgan Ben-David from AXS Law, first-place winner Corey Green, second-place winner John Reed, and YPOL Co-Chair and Board Director Alex Suarez

## 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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### Miami Lighthouse Donor Bill Of Rights

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<http://www.miamilighthouse.com/Docs/ADonorBillOfRights20100812.pdf>

**Join the Helen Keller Legacy Society by including Miami Lighthouse in your estate plans.  
Contact Virginia Jacko, President and CEO, at 305-856-4176**

### EASY WAYS TO DONATE!

We would like to thank friends of Miami Lighthouse who support our mission when making online purchases through AmazonSmile and eBay giving works.



If you are shopping at Amazon, simply shop through the AmazonSmile website and choose Miami Lighthouse as your charity. Amazon will then donate 0.5% of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Miami Lighthouse.



If you are shopping on eBay, make Miami Lighthouse your "Favorite Non-Profit" and choose to give a donation at checkout.



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**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**EVENTS AT MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE**

**Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**  
 Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™  
 Playground  
 Monday, December 17, 2018  
 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

**McCrea Family Volunteer Luncheon**  
 Thursday, February 14, 2019

**Music Under the Stars**  
**Bon Appétit Miami**  
 Wednesday, May 15, 2019

**Miami Lighthouse**  
 601 SW 8th Avenue • Miami, FL 33130  
 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: Sharon Caughill

**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.**  
 601 SW 8th Avenue • Miami, FL 33130  
 www.miamilighthouse.org

For the print impaired, the Lantern is available in an alternative format.  
 For more information, call 786-362-7514 or visit our website at  
[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)