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Miami Lighthouse breaks ground for Learning Center for Children



Pictured (l-r) are Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado, Tom Abraham, State Sen. Gwen Margolis, U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mary Spencer, Ray Casas, Virginia Jacko, Eva the Seeing Eye Dog, State Rep. David Richardson, Marcel Marlotte and Jorge Munilla. (Photo credit: Robbins-Udel Images)

BY DAVID STIEFEL

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired broke ground on Aug. 3 for an addition to its growing campus — the 72,000-square-foot Lighthouse Learning Center for Children.

Miami Lighthouse, located at 601 SW Eighth Ave., co-hosted the groundbreaking ceremony in collaboration with Munilla Construction Management LLC and Wolfberg Alvarez Partners. The new facility was made possible by private donations in response to a challenge grant from a local philanthropist.

Guests included U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, State Representatives David Richardson and Cynthia Stafford, Miami-Dade Commission chair Jean Monettime, Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado, and

other civic leaders and education professionals, as well as with supporters of Miami Lighthouse.

In addition to housing innovative intervention programs for youngsters from birth through 4 years old, the Lighthouse Learning Center for Children will provide the community with a first-of-its-kind pre-kindergarten program. Blind and visually impaired children from communities throughout Miami-Dade will attend alongside sighted classmates from the surrounding Brickell neighborhood.

Miami Lighthouse is introducing this unique pilot project, in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the Early Learning Coalition, to more easily transition blind and visually impaired students to public schools.

The Lighthouse Learning Center for Children

has been designed as a safe, child-oriented environment with a wide array of tactile experiences through which toddlers and young children can learn about the world around them in an engaging and fun way.

Established in 1931 by Dolly Gamble with the aid of Helen Keller and support from Miami's Lions and Rotary clubs, Miami Lighthouse is the oldest and largest private agency in Florida assisting persons of all ages who are blind and visually impaired. Today, the agency serves more than 14,000 clients per year with an array of programs that enable blind and visually impaired persons to achieve independence.

For more information about Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, visit MiamiLighthouse.org, or call 305-856-2288.