



# LIGHT LINE™

*A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND*

**Issue 2 May 2014**

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## **■ We Keep Growing!**

Our new 4th floor is almost completed and will shortly bring our facility to nearly 50,000 square feet according to Agustin Arellano, Jr., Miami Lighthouse Board Chairman. The \$2.5 million expansion, funded entirely by donors, will be home to the Sash A. Spencer Educational Empowerment Center consisting of the Jan and Dan Lewis Braille Homeroom, Carmella Witt Technology Lab, and Rev. Marta Weeks Transition Suite.

"We have come such a long way since the Miami Lighthouse opened in 1931 in a 900-square-foot bungalow, serving the blind community with chair caning and basket weaving workshops," says CEO Virginia Jacko. "These exciting new facilities are going to help get our young adults employed. For some it will provide a path to higher education. For others, it will prepare them for jobs in technical fields. A blind person can do anything a sighted person does. They just have to have the training, and this is our mission."

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[Truly A Night to Remember!](#)



The food was fabulous and the music magical! More than 200 guests gathered for "Music Under The Stars: Bon Appétit Miami" on Wednesday evening, April 30th. The weather was equally spectacular as guests dined on delicacies from Whisk, City Hall The Restaurant, Perricone's Market Place, Chocolate Fashion, OTC, Shorty's Barbecue, El Carajo International Tapas and Wine and more, while sipping on drinks from Tito's Handmade Vodka and Rex Goliath Wine.

A sparkling special appearance by Latin Grammy award winner Paul Hoyle was backed up by musicians from the Miami Lighthouse Better Chance Music Production Program™. Guests also participated in a super silent auction, all to benefit our very important Heiken Children's Vision Program which provides free comprehensive eye examination and prescription glasses to financially disadvantaged schoolchildren who have no insurance for eye care.

Pictured (left): Peter Harrison receives recognition for three generations of Harrison Family board leadership including participation in the founding of Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Pictured (right): David Samson is honored by Miami Lighthouse in recognition of our Heiken Children's Vision Program being selected as a Marlins Charity Partner in 2013 and 2014 by the Marlins Foundation.



*Dr. Eduardo Alfonso, Chairman, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Board Director Peter Harrison, President & CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Chairman Agustin Arellano, Jr., Board Director Louis Nostro, Esq.*

*Board Director Ray Casas, Miami Marlins President David Samson, President & CEO Virginia Jacko*

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## ■ Transition Program Teens Test New App for iTunes

Students in the Miami Lighthouse Transition Program served as prototype testers for "Blindfold Driver," a new application designed for teenagers who are visually impaired. The students had the unique opportunity of helping software designer Marty Schultz with their own suggestions and improvements for the game.

Unlike most games available for download from iTunes, "Blindfold Driver" players must use their ears, not their eyes, to play. The screen remains dark at all times as the player drives his or her car by listening to the environment via headphones and steering by tilting the iPad or iPhone left and right. The game is also fun for sighted kids to play after bedtime when their parents think they are asleep!

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## Profile Of The Month

*Meet Emily Nostro, Transition Program Specialist*



*Emily Nostro (center) with Transition Program Participants*

Miami Lighthouse's successful Transition Program for teenagers and young people is coordinated by Emily Nostro. With approximately 50 young men and women between the ages of 14 - 22 under her guidance, the program is geared towards helping those with visual disabilities get ready for independent living.

"Technology is one of the great equalizers in today's business world," says Emily. "The Transition Program utilizes computer skills as one means of meeting the challenges of the work force. Many of our clients will be graduating from high school and want to be ready to live independently despite their visual impairments. That's what this program is all about."

Emily, who looks much like a teenager herself, began volunteering at Miami Lighthouse when she was in high school along with her twin brother, Alex. Today, she holds a B.A. in History from Reed College in Oregon and is currently studying for her Master of Science Degree in Visual Disabilities taking classes through a distance learning program from Florida State University. She is totally Braille-literate. She is already certified as a teacher of the visually impaired and is working on her certification as an Orientation Mobility Specialist.

Last December, Emily spent 2 ½ weeks in India working as a United for Sight Global Fellow, spending 12-hour days working in an eye clinic. She brought with her, in her suitcase, 500 pairs of eyeglasses collected by our Miami Lighthouse Transition students for distribution to the poor in that country who could never afford them.