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Miami Lighthouse Owes Helen Keller

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When she visited in the late '20's, Keller's activist fire and personal energy were clearly evident when she exhorted the Lions to be "knights for the blind." Her call to action inspired a dedicated group of Floridians to work together to found the Florida Association of Workers for the Blind, the organization which soon became the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Keller returned to Miami Lighthouse in 1955 to celebrate her 75th Birthday and our organization's 25th anniversary. This year, Miami Lighthouse celebrates 90 years of service to the blind and I have the humbling honor of being its first blind President and CEO.

Keller's example and her influence remind me of another advocate of the blind, Dr. Bascom Palmer, who served as Chairman of Miami Lighthouse's Board of Directors from 1947 to 1952. His activism grew out of the movement inspired by Keller's visits to Miami.

The strong collaboration between Miami Lighthouse and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute continues to this day, as both institutions transform lives through vision-related services and research. None of this would be possible without Helen Keller's visit and the energy and dedication she inspired in our community, as embodied by the activism and tireless action of Dr. Bascom Palmer.



The 140th birthday of Helen Keller on June 27th reminds us that activism and advocacy of equality can never rest, even more so now with the events taking place across our nation. We are all familiar with isolated, bewildered young Helen Keller of 1890, as portrayed in "The Miracle Worker," but by the 1920's Keller was an eloquent champion for the rights of the blind and deaf in America, as well as, a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union.


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