

# INDULGE

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## HOW VIRGINIA JACKO WENT FROM STUDENT TO CEO OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE

Virginia Jacko was a senior financial officer at Purdue University when she was diagnosed with an eye disease that would eventually steal her vision, leaving her blind.

"I called my mother," Jacko remembered. "She didn't say, 'I'm so sorry.' She said, 'I'll pray that you do something important for the blind.'"

Jacko did. Today, she is President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, the oldest and largest private agency in Florida serving visually impaired people of all ages.

### How Virginia Jacko Responded to a Life-Changer

"I was never depressed," Jacko said. "I knew I had to learn to do things differently, and I knew I had a lot of work to do. But I never doubted I could do it."

Coincidentally, her daughter, then an FIU professor researching computer accessibility programs for the visually impaired, knew about Lighthouse. She urged her mother to come to Miami.

Eager to re-learn skills that had brought her career success when she was sighted, Jacko packed her bags. "When I arrived, I immediately started learning," she said.

She also began to compare Lighthouse operations to those she was used to. "I said to myself, if only they ran this like a university and asked for grants and developed public-private partnerships. They could do so much."

Meanwhile, she had fallen in love with Miami. So instead of returning to Purdue as planned, Jacko decided to stay. She became a Lighthouse board member and later, after a national search for a new president and CEO, she was offered the position.



Virginia Jacko is CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired



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*the movers*

{VISIONARY}

## Virginia Jacko

*She went from student to CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, and she's not looking back.*

### Finding Satisfaction in Helping Others

Jacko believes it's important for her to be constantly visible to the community. "To be a successful CEO, you need to spend 25 percent of your time on relationship building," she said. "People give because of relationships."

Today, an independent Jacko lives alone except for her guide dog, a black lab named Eva. "In Hebrew, the name means full of life. She's my eyes and she gives me mobility, so I thought the name was very fitting."

As the holidays approach, Jacko noted the importance of giving back and volunteering. Even being present at a party — as a guest or host — can improve the cheer of those around you. "It's all about the people and interaction with others."

Jacko takes deep satisfaction in her work. "Whether we're working with seniors or preschoolers, we're truly transforming the lives of people who are often very vulnerable and forgotten."