

# MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2021

SERVING SOUTH FLORIDA'S MOST IMPORTANT AUDIENCE



Photo Credit: Miami Kids Magazine

**President and CEO Virginia Jacko welcomes early learners to the expanding Miami Lighthouse Academy.**

## Miami Lighthouse Academy new classrooms open Aug. 23

Thanks to the commitment and good will of all concerned, students at the Miami Lighthouse Academy will be able to move into new classrooms at the start of school on Aug. 23.

"The collaboration of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Wolfberg Alvarez & Partners and Miller Construction, and the timely assistance of the City of Miami assured that a temporary certificate of occupancy would be received in time for the 2021 school year," said President and CEO Virginia A. Jacko.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for Aug. 13.

Miami Lighthouse Academy offers a nationally recognized inclusive classroom learning environment for early learners in pre-kindergarten, half with and half

without vision impairment. Specialized classrooms with learning from both a licensed classroom teacher and a licensed teacher of the visually impaired for visually impaired students in kindergarten, first grade and second grade encompass the new classroom expansion.

Parent workshops selected by the Parent Advisory Committee are held throughout the academic year.

A recent University of Miami longitudinal research study of the academy, funded by the Children's Trust, found that the overall total scores of teacher-reported empathy for children in all classrooms significantly increased from fall to spring, with parents also reporting improved empathy and patience in their children.

The study also found that the quality of

teacher-child interactions at the academy, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, significantly exceeded the national average in the emotional and behavioral support domain.

Teachers observed that preschool children made substantial gains across academic and social-emotional development, as reflected in Child Advantage Observation Record scores. One pre-kindergarten teacher commented that at the beginning of the year, one student with vision seemed reluctant to help visually impaired students, and sometimes avoided them. After the teacher formed inclusive groups, the student was more inclined to play with and help classmates despite their vision disability.

CEO Jacko expressed deep gratitude to

the two philanthropists that created matching challenges to attract donors in spite of the pandemic. Additionally, special donor tributes recognize crucial donors:

- The Wildflower Foundation Children's Gallery

- Hutson-Wiley and Echevarria Foundation memorial tribute to former Chairman of the Board

- Owen S. Freed Playground

- Helliwell Family Foundation Classroom

- William and Jan Morrison Classroom

- The Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation at The Miami Foundation Children's Pavilion

- Saul and Theresa Esman Foundation Classroom

- Betty and Michael Wohl, in honor of Heather Wohl Herzberg Teachers Suite

- Lions Club of Miami Foundation Planter Box

- Do Unto Others Trust, in memory of Justino Celorio Planter Box

Additional naming opportunities are available to recognize donors helping to sustain this nationally recognized best practice learning environment for blind and visually impaired students. Please call (305) 856-4176 for more information.

