

ANNUAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

12 Months 2023

Our program enrollment has now returned to pre-pandemic levels with 8,054 adult program participants and 17,950 children, for a total of 26,004 which is over 50 times as many program participants as we served in 2004 when the total was 487.

Miami Lighthouse through education, training, research, vision enhancement and as a center for learning provides hope, confidence, and independence for people of all ages. For nearly a century, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind has been working to build a more inclusive society for the blind and visually impaired. Our innovative programming removes barriers to education, jobs and critical eye care. No one's potential should be defined by ability, age, zip code, income, race or ethnicity. Our program offerings reflect the diversity of the communities we serve and their unique needs. Through our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, we ensure Title I students and underserved schoolchildren can access the eye care they need to succeed in the classroom and later in the workforce.

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired consistently demonstrates it is worthy of donors' philanthropic investments. We have received 13 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator. Only 1% of the charities rated by Charity Navigator have received 13 consecutive 4-star ratings indicating that Miami Lighthouse outperforms most other charities in America. We are among the elite charities that have attained a perfect score for Financial Health as well as Accountability & Transparency resulting in an overall score of 100. Charity Navigator states that organizations achieving this exceptional score execute their missions in a fiscally responsible way while adhering to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities. This score is a testament to our tradition of sound fiscal management, transparency and responsible use of donor dollars—only eight cents of every dollar received goes to administration. We have also received perfect 100 scores on the new Charity Navigator Encompass Beacons for Leadership and Adaptability, which provides an assessment of our organization's leadership capacity, strategic thinking and planning, and ability to innovate or respond to changes in constituent demand/need or other relevant social and economic conditions to achieve our mission, and for Culture and Community, which provides an assessment of our organization's culture and connectedness to the community we serve.

Miami Lighthouse has been continuously accredited since 1978, having been first accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC). In 2017, NAC accreditation came under the executive management of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). Accreditation is a value-added process that ensures that consumers (i.e., clients and students) are provided services under quality-based conditions and operations. In December 2020 we received accreditation from AER which expires in 2024, and

renewal is in preparation. Additional accreditations include Department of Children and Families Gold Seal Quality Program and Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE).

Our Learning Center programs span children's ages from early intervention for blind babies; a first-of-its kind in the nation, fully inclusive pre-k (ages one through four) offered by a vision rehabilitation institution with all classes composed of 50% visually impaired and 50% sighted students; as well as kindergarten, first and second grades for visually impaired students. We collaborate on our educational offerings with the Early Learning Coalition, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and The Children's Trust. At the other end of the age spectrum, we offer Adult Basic Education classes, including GED and ESOL classes, also in collaboration with M-DCPS.

Our subsidiary, the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC, a blindness prevention program addresses eye health equity for underserved schoolchildren by providing dilated eye examinations and prescription glasses throughout Florida at no cost to parents. Our Heiken Program has received numerous awards for excellence in eye health care for schoolchildren from underserved communities. This incredibly successful program has been cited in *Optometry: Journal of the American Optometric Association* as a national model which other states should adopt. It continues to have documented impact on school performance, and we are committed to addressing the unmet need.

Our **Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC** takes primary eye health care directly to Florida schoolchildren targeting Title One schools using our five mobile eye care units that visit over 500 schools annually as well as providing vouchers in collaboration with our network of over 1,100 optometrists. *During 2023, 17,557 low-income schoolchildren received a dilated eye exam and 64% required and received prescription glasses at no cost to their parents.* In our 2020 market research survey funded by the Health Foundation of South Florida, nearly 80% of respondents reported that their child had improved in school because of the services provided by our Heiken Program.

Our **Low Vision Program** provides comprehensive functional assessments and eye examinations as well as instruction on assistive devices and optics for seniors with age-related vision loss. These low vision services are specifically designed to assist individuals in utilizing their remaining vision to achieve an active lifestyle and maintain their maximum independence. Exams are provided under the supervision of our low vision consulting optometrist assisted by our certified low vision occupational therapist, certified occupational therapy assistant, and licensed dispensing optician. In 2019, we were the recipient of a coveted Innovations in Healthcare four-year renewal grant from the Florida Blue Foundation as an expansion to a project they funded initially in 2015. The original initiative resulted in publication of a peer-reviewed, archival journal article "Bringing Low Vision Assessments and Interventions to Underserved Seniors Affected by Age-Related Eye Disease" in the *British Journal of Visual Impairment*. The four-year grant renewal enables Miami Lighthouse to provide low-vision programs for seniors

(55+) in vulnerable, low-income neighborhoods in Allapattah, Brownsville, Liberty City, and Overtown.

In 2023 we provided 5,214 community members primarily affected by age-related eye disease with “Learning to Live with Low Vision” presentations and administered 536 low vision exams, 616 clients (578 adults + 38 Academy students) received occupational or physical therapy, 1,049 people visited our Solutions Center, and our online lighthouse.org platform received 8,894 visitors seeking devices to assist them with everyday activities.

Our Pre-Employment Transition Services Program is a year-round program that provides youth 14-22 the opportunity to develop skills to enter the workforce or post-secondary education. The primary purpose of this Florida Division of Blind Services funded program is to increase the number of blind and visually impaired students and youth who enter competitive integrated employment, training and/or post-secondary education. These objectives are fulfilled by the provision of high-quality comprehensive and coordinated pre-employment Transition instruction that enhances each individual’s abilities to be successful in competitive employment, training and academic settings. Students are taught life skills like home and personal management, computer/adaptive technology, job readiness, orientation and mobility, social skills and community integration. Students learn essential skills that prepare them for the workforce. Additionally, students in our **Able Trust High School High Tech** component of the Pre-Employment Transition Program are taught how to prepare resumes, participate in mock job interviews and career preparation. Our goal is to help these young adults reach their full potential. Miami Lighthouse received recognition from the Able Trust for exceeding the family involvement guidepost in our High School High Tech Program for our Pre-Employment Transition Program students. We exceeded the services provided among all the High School High Tech programs in Florida and are honored to have been recognized for providing high quality program service to our students in 2023. *Fifty youth were served in our Pre-Employment Transition Program.* As our world examines the idea of inclusion and equity, it is important we use the tools available to us to ensure that those with visual impairments are not left behind in these conversations. Two of the greatest equalizers we have at our disposal are technology and education. Through technology many people with a visual impairment can perform jobs as well as or better than their sighted peers and education is pivotal for teens to understand their varied career options as they transition out of school. Through our Transition program our focus is to remove the conventional limitations that are often imposed on someone with a visual impairment. We want to create a generation of visually impaired lawyers, artists, teachers, researchers and other professionals to create a more inclusive workforce that reflects diverse abilities.

Our Vocational Rehabilitation Program is for visually impaired adults that are either working or want to go back to work. The program provides comprehensive training in self-help skills, computer/adaptive technology, and job readiness. Other topics covered in the program include orientation and mobility, low vision services, and personal and home management. Our **Job Readiness Program** provides visually impaired

individuals with the skills needed to enter, remain in or return to the workforce in a variety of for profit and nonprofit entities, and we continue to expand our network of employers. *During 2023, we provided 178 clients with vocational rehabilitation training.*

In a digitally dependent world, accessible website design has never been more vital. Unfortunately, not all websites are accessible. **Our web auditing services** help ensure that entities with online presence have accessible websites that are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, Miami Lighthouse has provided assessments for local government and educational institutions, law firms, hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, entertainment venues, hospitals and airlines. *Through 2023, we have provided our website audit services to more than 250 companies to make their websites fully accessible.* Expertise along with accessible website auditing has brought significant national media attention to Miami Lighthouse by entities such as Time Inc., Forbes, and National Public Radio.

The Miami Lighthouse Early Intervention Program provides high quality services for visually impaired blind babies, toddlers, and their parents/caregivers in the child's natural environment which typically is in the child's home. *One hundred and four children were enrolled in this program, and support was provided to their families.* The program utilizes Parents as Teachers, an evidence-based model to support families in the home and in their local community. Through individualized child and family plans, this program provides developmental education for young children as well as addressing their unique needs and builds upon the assets of the adults in each child's life. Program goals include facilitating developmental functioning of participating children (ages birth to five); increasing the level of parent involvement in their child's development; increasing the capacity of other service providers to address visual impairment problems; and preparing children to enter elementary school successfully.

Our **Miami Lighthouse Academy, LLC** was created as a separate legal entity, replacing the Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children trademarked program name. *With an enrollment of 46 students,* our early learning program for students ages one through second grade, is an Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) for early learners. *Thirty-five students received speech therapy and 34 students received physical therapy.* This program, using the HighScope curriculum, is the only fully inclusive program in the U.S. The program model is unique in Miami-Dade County and is partially supported by Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). Our Miami Lighthouse Academy inclusion model has demonstrated benefits for students, teachers, and parents. In an ongoing longitudinal study, researchers at the University of Miami found that the quality of teacher-child interactions in emotional and behavioral support once again exceeded the national average of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an industry standard rating scale. Notably, our emotional support domain for toddlers scored 6.8 out of 7—more than two points above the national average of 4.62 out of 7.

An important component of our services for children is our **Cortical Visual Impairment Collaborative Center**. Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), the leading cause of pediatric

visual disabilities in developed countries. Approximately 30-40% of children with visual impairments have CVI. Cortical Visual Impairment is a brain-based visual impairment. It is different than conditions causing ocular visual impairment because functional vision in children with CVI can be expected to improve when early screening, early diagnosis, appropriate assessment and CVI-specific instructional intervention are put in place. The goal of our CVI Center is to ensure that the learning content for students with CVI is stimulating and ultimately helps the child read and progress in school to reach their individual potential. Teachers of the Visually Impaired in our Academy have completed training in the Perkins-Roman CVI Range© Assessment/Functional Vision Assessment, which enabled them to provide appropriate learning modalities for 53 students in South Florida.

Miami Lighthouse has made significant headway with our CVI Collaborative partners including a research protocol for the medical diagnosis of CVI, student assessment outcomes, infant screening protocols in the NICU and PICU setting. These collaborators include Bascom palmer eye institute, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Perkins School for the Blind, Miami Dade County Public Schools Office of Exceptional learners and NSU College of Business and Medicine for Data Analysis. *In 2023, our CVI Collaborative Center received the coveted Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Business Innovative Excellence Novo Award.*

Miami Lighthouse provides a variety of alternative services that are funded by numerous sources. These programs include Senior Group Health and Activities, Music Performance and Production, Independent Living, Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language (ESOL) in collaboration with M-DCPS Adult Education.

Our **Senior Group Health and Activities (SGA) Program** targets financially disadvantaged blind and visually impaired adults primarily over 55 years of age to develop a fuller, more well-balanced life. This important program enables blind seniors to stay out of expensive assisted living facilities and reduces medical costs. Our SGA program includes group discussions, language and computer classes, fitness, nutrition management, and music instruction as well as field trips. Art creation and music appreciation are integrated into this comprehensive programming. Despite their vision loss, our artistic clients continue to win local, state, and national recognition. Clients may also participate in our **GED/ESOL Adult Education Program** as part of a grant from Miami-Dade County Public Schools Adult Education. These SGA clients also become part of a peer community, which research has shown increases feelings of self-esteem reflecting a more positive self-image, a greater acceptance of their blindness and a willingness to help their peers overcome similar obstacles. *We provided instruction to a total of 170 clients.*

Our **Music Program** provides an innovative year-round music education initiative targeting sighted and visually impaired young adults utilizing music appreciation, instruction, and exploration as tools to foster work readiness skills and enhance self-efficacy and positive peer relations. Teens and adults learn music composition, performance, recording, sound engineering and business skills. Training includes the

use of JAWS screen-reading software and ZoomText screen enlargement software to access standard music industry software such as MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) and ProTools on the Mac computer. Braille music is taught through distance learning to students around the globe. Music appreciation and instruction for children in our Miami Lighthouse Academy is also provided. *There were 63 client participants in our Music Program.* The sound engineering platform we developed over ten years ago was instrumental as our clients began to use remote learning; not only did we use this platform for Braille Music but it gave our technology team an accessible online platform to teach our students.

Our **Independent Living Program** is for visually impaired individuals who are not employed and intend to remain in their homes. These clients receive orientation and mobility training and personal management instruction which offers help in such areas as home and kitchen safety, basic meal preparation, nutrition, grooming, personal hygiene, money identification, organization, labeling and medication management. Clients also learn Braille as needed to improve communication as well as iPhone and computer skills. Low vision services as well as counseling sessions are available. Our independent living program consists of two age groups: **Independent Living Adult Program (age 54 and under)** and **Independent Living Older Blind (age 55 and over)**. *The two Independent Living Programs enrolled 172 clients.* Our Bright Beacons program is for children ages 6-12. We offer both year-round instruction and an intensive eight-week summer camp. Eighty-three students were enrolled in these programs. The Bright Beacons program provides instruction devoted to Braille and Technology literacy on Saturdays and holidays during the school year. The goal of these programs is education, development of scholastic skills and continuous reinforcement of Braille knowledge. The summer camp is designed to enhance literacy skills, encourage physical fitness, and promote social interaction. The program offers an enriched learning environment focusing on literacy, technology, physical fitness, social skills development, art, and music. We have also added an early intervention summer camp for young children ages one to five to prevent the “summer learning regression” that often happens to children with disabilities when they are not in school.

Our **Adult Educational Program** is made up of two components, offered in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools Adult Education. Forty-four adults participated in these programs. Our Adult Basic Education/GED and ESOL programs provide adult clients the education to empower them to earn their GED in order to pursue higher education and to position themselves for employment. Our ESOL program gives adults the opportunity to master the English language which is required in order to move into the GED program.