



A Division of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired

History and Accomplishments:

- **1992** – The Dade County Optometric Association started the Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund, the first program of its kind to provide eye care and glasses when needed at no cost to financially disadvantaged schoolchildren who had no other source for vision care.
- **2007** - The Miami Lighthouse acquired the program, calling it the Miami Lighthouse Heiken Children's Vision Program. Within one year capacity doubled, and since the 2007 merger the Heiken Program has provided over 19,000 exams and glasses when prescribed.
- **2011** - In January, in a competitive bid process, the Miami Lighthouse was awarded a contract with the Florida Department of Health to provide eye care to 62 additional counties, and the name was changed to the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC, a division of the Miami Lighthouse. Since January, the Statewide Program has provided eye care for financially disadvantaged schoolchildren from Key West in Monroe County, to Pensacola in Escambia County.
- Since the inception of the Heiken Program twenty years ago, more than 65,000 disadvantaged public schoolchildren in Miami-Dade County and throughout the State have received free eye care and prescription glasses when needed.

The Facts:

- Up to **80%** of academic learning is presented visually
- Up to **40%** of children who failed their vision screening do not receive the follow up eye care they need
- **64%** of teachers notice a significant improvement in school performance when students receive corrective lenses
- **60%** of problem learners (labeled as learning disabled or attention deficit disorder, and those exhibiting behavioral problems), actually have a vision impediment
- **1 in 4** school-aged children have an undiagnosed vision problem that can be easily corrected by prescription glasses
- Some eye disorders such as amblyopia and strabismus (lazy eye) if not detected early in a child's life will cause decreased vision as an adult

The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program promotes health education, prevention, and early detection of eye disease for those children who otherwise would not have access to eye care. With corrective lenses, children are able to read their assignments, see the board, and learn to their fullest potential. Their prospects for succeeding in school and passing the FCAT improve immeasurably. A recent Vision Summit meeting held in Washington D.C., which included educators and health care organizations, issued a joint statement that every student should have a comprehensive eye exam, confirming the mission of our program. The Florida Heiken Program is a national model for vision and eye health care for low-income children.

