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## **MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE RECEIVES 2008 NEI HEALTHY VISION COMMUNITY AWARD**

**MIAMI — February, 2008** — [Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) is one of 50 institutions in the United States to receive the 2008 [Healthy Vision Community Award](#) from the [National Eye Institute](#) (NEI). The award recognizes the achievements of the Heiken Children's Vision Program in the field of providing essential vision care to school-age children and includes a check for \$10,000 that will support ongoing efforts to ensure that children in Miami-Dade County receive complete vision care. NEI, part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, is a government agency established by Congress in 1968 to protect and prolong the vision of the American people.

The award, which will support the efforts of the [Heiken Children's Vision Program at Miami Lighthouse](#), is earmarked for research and public outreach that helps prevent and treat visual impairment in children. Miami Lighthouse will make presentations to Miami-Dade County School staff, parents, parent-teacher associations and community referral agencies to raise awareness of the Children's Vision Program. New program literature in English, Spanish and Creole will inform teachers and parents about the importance of early vision care to education and encourage participation in the Children's Vision Program.

“We are delighted to be working with NEI,” said Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia A. Jacko. “The aims of the Healthy Vision initiative are a perfect fit with the goals of Miami Lighthouse and its Children’s Vision Program, as we expand our mission to include eye health and education.”

Miami Lighthouse acquired the Heiken Children’s Vision Program in July 2007. Through a cooperative agreement with Miami-Dade County Schools, the mobile eye care unit has provided free vision care and eyeglasses to thousands of economically disadvantaged schoolchildren who failed state-mandated vision screenings. The Miami Lighthouse Children’s Vision Program is funded by The Children’s Trust, The Batchelor Foundation, Health Foundation of South Florida, Public Health Trust, Florida Optometric Association Charities, Blank Family Foundation, Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation, Peacock Foundation, Junior League of Miami, Shepard Broad Foundation, Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, Dade Community Foundation, Kennedy Family Foundation, Geiger Charity Foundation, D. Richard Mead Charitable Foundation, The Charles N. and Eleanor Knight Leigh Foundation and many others. The eyeglasses, which are free to the students, are provided by Florida’s Vision Quest, Inc. According to CEO Jacko, a second eye care unit is being mobilized to expand free eye care service to more financially disadvantaged children in both Dade and Monroe Counties.

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind is Florida’s largest and oldest agency serving the blind and visually impaired. In addition to the thousands of financially disadvantaged children receiving free eye care each year, the Miami Lighthouse helps more than two thousand blind and visually impaired people and their families learn to live safe and independent lives while coping with vision loss. Twenty percent of these clients are children. For more information visit [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org) or contact Virginia Jacko, President & CEO, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc. Direct (305) 856-4176 or email: [vjacko@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:vjacko@miamilighthouse.org)