



PRESS RELEASE

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**STATE REPRESENTATIVE LUIS GARCIA WILL LEAD
WHITE CANE WALK OCT. 15 FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE**

MIAMI—October 4, 2007-- Imagine walking down Eighth Avenue blindfolded and not able to see curbs, parking meters or cracks in the sidewalk. Thanks to newly-installed auditory pedestrian signals at Eight Avenue and Seventh Street, blind and visually impaired clients of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired can walk to Walgreens, a block away from the Lighthouse on the corner of Eighth Street. The auditory signals were a joint project between state and county highway authorities.

The new accessible pedestrian signals will add to the feeling of achievement and progress at the local celebration of White Cane Day, a national event. Hundreds of graduates of Miami Lighthouse vision rehabilitation programs, community leaders, friends and volunteers will participate in the annual White Cane Day Walk on Monday, October 15. The festivities will include a Walk-A-Thon, speakers, lunch and performances by blind and visually impaired musicians of the Miami Lighthouse music program. Registration begins at 8:30 am and activities will begin at 9:30 am.

State Representative Luis Garcia is the Grand Marshall of the Walk. “It is fitting that Representative Luis Garcia serve as Grand Marshall,” said Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko, “because blindness was a very personal thing for him as he helped his beloved grandfather live with severe vision loss.” This year’s walk will also include members of the Blind Veterans Association.

The noted Miami Lighthouse musicians will perform at the White Cane Day celebration, and local Burger King franchisee Al Cabrera will provide four hundred hamburgers for the event. Other speakers in addition to State Representative Garcia will include Eric Bridges, Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs, American Council of the Blind, Washington, D.C.; Heidi Johnson-Wright, Director of Miami-Dade County's Office of Americans with Disabilities Act Coordination, will discuss legislative issues for the blind and disabled.

White Cane Safety Day was established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, in recognition of the white cane as both a tool and a symbol of blindness. With proper training, people using the white cane (or a guide dog) can enjoy greater mobility and safety by determining the location of curbs, steps, uneven pavement, and other obstacles, giving them the freedom to travel independently to their schools and workplaces and to participate more fully in the life of their communities. State of Florida Title XXIII Motor Vehicles 316.1301 states in part: "Whenever a pedestrian is crossing, or attempting to cross, a public street or highway, guided by a dog guide or carrying in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red, the driver of every vehicle approaching the intersection or place where the pedestrian is attempting to cross shall bring his or her vehicle to a full stop before arriving at such intersection or place of crossing and, before proceeding, shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid injuring such pedestrian."

Each year the Miami Lighthouse helps almost 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.

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