

## programs

### Summer Programs Evolve to Better Serve Young Clients

Along with the heat and humidity, a summer season of new programs for youngsters of all ages has arrived at the Miami Lighthouse. After many years of providing a one-size-fits-all children's summer program, the Lighthouse has developed customized sessions tailored towards different ages and abilities.

"We listened to what our kids and their parents were telling us," said Roxann Mayros, President. "The sessions are shorter, but more concentrated with training and recreation geared more closely to age and ability. We hope to provide new experiences and a bridge to a richer quality of life."

For the younger children, **Summer Training and Recreation (STAR)** focuses on fun and learning. There are two STAR programs, one for 6-9 year-olds and another for 10-13 year-

olds. The three-week sessions include personal management training, mobility and safe travel and academic and social skills. But there is also plenty of fun, such as swimming, ice skating, kayaking and field trips to nature parks.

**Summer Keys to Independent Learning (SKIL)** is for teens, aged 14-18. This six week program also features recreational activities but also classroom work to develop typing, braille, computer skills and household management training.

**Summer Employment Experience (SEE)** is also for teens, aged 14-18, who are performing well in school and want to attend college or seek competitive employment after high school. This intensive five-week program includes field trips, job interviewing techniques and college-level classroom work.

For more information on our 2005 summer programs, call (305) 856-2288 and ask for Carol or Elly.

*Participants in the summer program make music, right, and take a kayak trip in Biscayne Bay.*



#### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Monday Sept. 27**

RP Support Group, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Lighthouse

**Friday, Oct. 15**

White Cane Safety Day Observance

**Monday Oct. 25**

RP Support Group 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Lighthouse

Contact the Miami Lighthouse at (305) 856-2288 for more information on these and other events.

### Lighthouse Unveils New Statement to Fit New Mission

*To provide individuals who are blind or visually impaired and their families with an environment, programs and resources that empower them to lead full and independent lives.*

While the Miami Lighthouse has moved forward, its mission statement had been left behind. So, a committee of staff and Board members developed a new one that would capture both the traditional and new components of the agency's mission.

"We wanted our statement to reflect the many new connections and opportunities we offer to the more than 60,000 blind and visually impaired people of Miami-Dade," said Elly du Pré, Director of Adult Services. Board members Kurt Alder and Meagan Kelley also assisted in the research and drafting of the new mission statement.



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If you know someone who is blind or visually impaired who can benefit from our services, please contact Dr. Elly du Pré at 305.856.2288, ext. 234.

# outreach

## Support Groups, Public Forum Keep Pace With Community Needs

### Public Forum Puts Spotlight on Agency Services

The large group of clients, former clients, friends and families who were crowded into the gallery for a public forum were given a broad task: review and comment on all Lighthouse programs and services.

"Our goal was to get a first-hand value assessment from blind people of just how timely and relevant our services are," said Dr. Elly du Pre, Director of Adult Services.

Their first step was to divide programs and services into three categories, *absolutely keep*, *start doing* and *stop doing*.

Most current programs fell into the *absolutely keep list*. Under the *start doing* category were ideas to address the "loneliness disease" that many blind people suffer from. Others wanted more employment programs and partnering with the businesses, more promotion of Lighthouse services throughout the community and age-specific social events and activities.

Most commented that recent program changes were a positive step and the computer training center is one of the best in the nation. Staff members received numerous accolades for professionalism and kindness. There was nearly unanimous agreement of the tremendous life-changing effect the Lighthouse has on people who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

Look for announcements of future public forums in Lantern and on the Lighthouse website.

### RP Support Group Off to Strong Start

Specialized support groups organized and hosted by the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired continue to grow in popularity. Earlier this year, a new group was formed for those with retinitis pigmentosa, a potentially blinding hereditary disease. The RP support group allows those with the disease to share information and ideas while providing encouragement, fellowship and understanding.

The members range in age from 19 to 65-years-old. The younger members can meet and interact with older individuals who have adapted to their condition and are successfully raising families and working in competitive jobs.

The members meet once a month at the Lighthouse and also schedule Saturday social events, in which family members can participate. The group recently had a barbecue and pool party at a members home. A family with two teenagers with RP has an opportunity to learn that the disease is not a life sentence, but condition that to which one can adapt.

"Our main message is that you can still have a great and productive life with RP," said Sylvia Stinson-Perez, MSW, Community Employment Specialist.

For more information on the RP Support Group or meeting dates, contact Sylvia Stinson-Perez, (305) 856-2288

## Wish List is Your Opportunity To Help

The Lighthouse Wish List allows friends of the agency to donate specific needed items or the funds to purchase goods and services. For more information, contact the Development Office at (305) 856-2288.

Needed Items	COST
Blindfolds for inservice demonstrations (8 @ \$10)	\$ 80
Educational toys for blind and visually impaired children	100
Solar shields kit for those with light sensitivity	185
DVD player for inservice training	300
Computer projector for presentations	1,500
Portable low vision kit	1,750
STAR Scholarship for one child (Summer Training & Recreation)	4,050

# profile

## 'Time of Their Lives' Summer Scholarships Provided by The Children's Trust

Thanks to the Children's Trust, 60 blind and visually impaired children will have the "Time of Their Lives" this summer at the Miami Lighthouse.

The Children's Trust provided a \$64,452 grant to offset the cost of the scholarships under a program entitled, *Time of Their Lives*. The goal of this program is to provide blind and visually impaired children with a summer of discovering new skills and new potential, making friends and having fun, all leading to a richer quality of life (see page 1).

Recognizing that the needs of children in Miami-Dade County far exceeds the resources and support systems, the Trust was created by voter referendum in 2002. It was created as a dedicated source of funding to meet those needs and to make strategic investments in the futures of children and families.

# technology

## Website Adds Spanish and Low Vision Access

The Miami Lighthouse website is now much easier to access and use for larger segments of our population. The site was completely rebuilt earlier this year and additional improvements and upgrades continue.

Immediately noticeable on the welcome page are large prompts for low vision visitors. By clicking on these options, low vision users can select from three different large type sizes plus several options for type and background color.

"We consulted with low vision specialists on which type of colors and backgrounds work best," said Andy Ewell of BizSolutions, who designed the site. "Low vision visitors have given us glowing reviews."

Also new is the "Español" button on the bottom left of the welcome page. This will convert all the text into Spanish, an obvious plus for a major part of the Lighthouse audience. The low vision options also work in Spanish.

Other improvements are still in the planning stages, such as the possibility of cataloging and selling the products in the Solutions store on the website. "We will continue to make upgrades, so keep checking in with us online and let us know what you think," said President Roxann Mayros.

LOW VISION

ESPAÑOL

Visit us today at  
[www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)



The staff and 33-member board are committed to funding programs that offer the highest possible quality services. The Trust places a strong emphasis on active partnerships that move beyond typical collaboration to improve services and access for children and families in Miami-Dade. The Trust encourages creative approaches to coordinating, integrating and funding across and within the areas of health, safety and development and to promote increased parental and community involvement on behalf of all of our children.

"We are grateful to The Children's Trust for funding a program that will make a critical difference in the lives of these youngsters," said Lighthouse President and CEO Roxann Mayros.

## Lighthouse Remembers Friend Ray Charles

The Miami Lighthouse was saddened by the recent passing of Ray Charles, a giant in the world of music and an inspiration to all those with blindness and visual impairment.

While his music will continue to put a smile on everyone's face, he will be remembered with particular fondness by the Miami Lighthouse for his generous support, particularly his 1998 benefit concert to mark the expansion of the Lighthouse facilities.

He was a lasting role model for those with blindness or visual impairment and his music and legacy will live on.

*Music legend Ray Charles graciously accepts a plaque of appreciation from the Miami*



*Lighthouse during a 1986 Miami concert. In 1999 he returned to perform a benefit for the dedication of the Lighthouse expansion.*

# diagnosis

## Doctors and Parents Try to Understand the Mysteries of Children's Cortical Blindness

Cortical blindness or cortical vision impairment is a neuro-ophthalmological disorder most often diagnosed in children before the age of five. It is a term used to describe a condition in which there is a lack of visual function even though doctors can find nothing wrong with the eyes. "Cortical" refers to the visual cortex part of the brain, where images from the eyes are processed.

**Q:** I've never heard of cortical blindness. Is it rare?

It is not common, but it is often misdiagnosed. Sometimes referred to as blindsight, it is often associated with neurological disorders, trauma or other brain damage.

**Q:** How is cortical blindness diagnosed?

Cortical blindness is diagnosed when a thorough evaluation of the eye reveals no abnormalities and there is poor visual function. A VEP (visual evoked potential) and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) are useful in documenting the neurological deficit and ruling out other potential causes, including tumors.

**Q:** What is the treatment?

Visual stimulation activities and regular programs called "patterning" seem to help young cortical blind patients. It is theorized that these activi-

ties "exercise" the nerve fibers and their connections within the optic system, particularly the retina, optic nerve and brain. It is theorized that visual recovery is linked to improving the connections and feedback between the eye and the brain.

Studies have also shown that the potential for improved visual functioning is better in a younger child than in an adult.

**Q:** What is the long-term prognosis?

The prognosis for regaining some visual functioning in young children is good, although the recovery pattern is not easily detected by standard ophthalmic tests. Also, visual behaviors are unique in each individual. Ultimately, cortical blind children become good prospects for low vision treatment. Case studies have shown that many children recover the ability to identify single letters of large print. Most can eventually name colors and can detect a moving object in the peripheral areas better than their central vision.

Short evaluations should not determine the visual potential of a child, since progress will take time. Significant visual recovery may take at least a year and can continue over a decade or more.

*Information provided by the National Eye Institute and Low Vision.org*

# solutions

## Let The Games Begin!

## Specialized Products Designed for Kids at Play

The Miami Lighthouse's Solutions Store not only makes home and work activities easier for people who are blind or visually impaired, it also makes leisure time more fun, particularly for youngsters.

From balls that beep to braille Monopoly to talking chess boards, Solutions has specialized toys and games for kids of all ages. Other games include jumbo dominos, braille dice and both blind and low vision Scrabble. Other items are designed for both blind and visually impaired children. Board games and playing cards, for example, have large print along with braille tags. Game boards have raised lines and borders and the game pieces have been modified to be identified by touch, such as large holes in the center of black checker pieces so they can be easily distinguished from the red ones.

Solutions also has educational toys for blind and visually impaired toddlers, such as stacking rings, raised letter blocks and audible balls that can be located by sound.

*TOP: The oversized playing cards also have braille tags for identification. Bottom: In this game, similar to tic-tac-toe, notice the black pieces have holes, while the red do not.*



# happenings

## Bascom Palmer Ophthalmologists Tour

In an occasion that brought full circle the historical connection between two prominent Miami organizations, doctors from the world-famous Bascom Palmer Eye Institute recently toured the Lighthouse to learn about the variety of services and programs offered by the agency.

More than 30 Bascom Palmer ophthalmologists attended the event, including Medical Director and Department Chairman Carmen Puliafito, M.D., Chief Resident Steven Gedde, M.D., Director of Optometric Services Charles Pappas, O.D.

President Roxann Mayros welcomed the group and touched on the deeply intertwined roots between the Lighthouse and Bascom Palmer and how those important connections can benefit both organizations.

The doctors received demonstrations from staff in personal management, computers, cane use and the children's center.

*See related article - Page 8*

*Top: Doctors watch Braille demonstration. Bottom: (L-R) Charles Pappas, O.D., Lighthouse President Roxann Mayros and Bascom Palmer Medical Director Carmen Puliafito, M.D. In front are Dr. Puliafito's son's, Ben and Sam.*



## Luncheon Honors Deering Trust, Spotlights Client

The Miami Lighthouse was one of the many charitable organizations represented at the *Donor Next Door* luncheon, an event sponsored by the Leave a Legacy Foundation to promote philanthropy throughout the community.

The Lighthouse took the opportunity to thank the Deering Trust for its continuing support over more than 50 years. Hundreds of blind citizens have accessed Lighthouse programs and services because of the Trust's generosity.

Also in the spotlight was the Reverend Bruce Coleman, a minister and client who recently completed his training at the Lighthouse and has volunteered to be a peer group leader for a newly formed support group for blind and visually impaired residents in the North Miami area.



*At the Donor Next Door luncheon are (L-R) Reverend Bruce Coleman, President Roxann Mayros and Preston Prevatt of the Deering Trust.*

## Mrs. Florida Shares Crown With Young Client



*Mrs. Florida, Michele Morland, shares her crown with client Antonia Patrick.*

If the crown fits, wear it.

That was the feeling expressed by client Antonia Patrick who wore the crown of a beauty queen during a recent luncheon at the Lighthouse. Mrs. Florida, Michele Morland, recently visited and toured the Lighthouse along with 17 members of the PGA Tour Wives Association. The group also served Lighthouse clients a catered lunch.

Antonia, who has impaired vision and also suffers from cerebral palsy, was approached by Mrs. Florida and asked if she wanted to wear the crown.

# honors

Feb. 1, 2004 - May 31, 2004

Make a Living Tribute to that special person in your life.  
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Feb. 1, 2004 - May 31, 2004

A gift to Miami Lighthouse in loving memory of a late relative or friend makes a lasting remembrance. The family will receive notification of your legacy.

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Feb. 1, 2004 - May 31, 2004

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6

Summer  
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If you are interested in making a charitable contribution or have questions, please contact the Miami Lighthouse Development Department at (305) 856-2288.

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Donor listings are from  
Feb. 1 to May 31, 2004.  
Any other donations will be  
listed in our next issue.

# chronicle

## 1950s Lighthouse Plants Seed That Blossoms Into World-Class Eye Hospital

As the Miami Lighthouse approaches its 75th year, it can proudly look just two miles away at a world-famous ophthalmic patient care, research and educational institute that literally sprouted from its own roots nearly a half-century ago.

In the 1920s, Dr. Bascom Palmer was a pioneering local ophthalmologist, the only doctor in Florida performing corneal grafts. Through the Rotary Club of Miami, Dr. Palmer learned of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and joined the Board in the early 1940s. At the time, he was also a Trustee of the University of Miami and Chairman of a committee seeking to establish a medical school at UM.

Dr. Palmer shared his long-held dream of opening an eye hospital in Miami with his fellow Lighthouse Board members and he often solicited donations from his wealthy patients to help establish such a facility. Dr. Palmer was elected President of the Lighthouse Board in 1947 and the following year, the Board purchased the land for an eye hospital. That land is where renown Bascom Palmer Eye Institute is located today.

But Dr. Palmer would not see his eye hospital built. He remained president of the Lighthouse Board until 1952, the same year the medical school was established. He died in 1954. But the Lighthouse Board kept the dream alive, raising money and working with the new medical school and Dade County to make the hospital a reality.

With the arrival at UM in 1959 of an ambitious Ophthalmology director, Dr. Edward Norton, the final push for the new facility was complete. With the Lighthouse playing a central role and providing \$500,000, ground was broken in 1961 and the four-story building completed in 1962. That building is now part of Bascom Palmer's research facility.

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*Dr. Bascom Palmer, Lighthouse President, 1947-52.*



*At the 1961 groundbreaking for the new eye hospital were (L-R) Dr. Kenneth Witmer, Lighthouse President Mo Harrison, Mrs. Bascom Palmer and a two-time former Lighthouse President Keith Philips.*

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