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## Beauty tips benefit visually impaired

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CARL JUSTE / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

Mary Padilla, who is visually impaired, gets a closer look of herself with the help of a mirror.

Paola Espinosa smiled from ear to ear as she got her nails done in bright pink polish. She then applied pomegranate lip gloss straight from the applicator, and finally sat as her hair was softly braided and twirled.

A sweep of nail color, a dab of lip gloss and a perfect coif.

All are steps many women take for granted in their endless quest for beauty.

But for Espinosa and others who are blind or visually impaired, it was a learning experience aimed at enhancing their self image and boosting their independence.

"I want to feel good about myself and go out and look pretty," said Espinosa, 25, of Miami, her shiny lips matching her newly painted nails.

On Monday, local cosmetology experts offered tips and tricks to about a dozen visually impaired women and men at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

and Visually Impaired's first "Beauty for the Blind" event.

"Beauty is everything," said Cameron Sisser, manager of external relations at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, who came up with the idea. "It's a cool event to teach them certain techniques on how to make themselves pretty."

Owners and staff from three local businesses, Nail Bar & Beauty Lounge, Blo Blow Dry Bar Midtown and Robbie Lip Gloss were on hand to pamper participants and dole out advice and samples.

Among the tips: Before applying nail polish, refrigerate it for 15 minutes, so you can feel it when it touches your skin, advised Desiree Parth, owner of Nail Bar & Beauty Lounge in Midtown Miami.

Start with clean hands, and file and buff your nails before applying cream.

"I want to teach them nail care — how to take care of their nails, to hydrate, moisturize and shape," Parth said.

To take care not to burn yourself when you style your hair, Kailey Magder, franchise partner in Blo Blow Dry Bar Midtown, recommended using gloves to hold a flat iron or curling iron.

And for the lips, Shira Kastan, chief executive of Robbie Lip Gloss, suggested first squeezing the tube gently, then touching the tilted applicator to the mouth and gliding it along the lips.

Without a doubt, the participants, ranging in age from 20s to 60s, relished getting the royal treatment.

“Make-up makes you look better,” said Carmen Davis, after applying her own gloss. “You look healthier, and I like to take care of myself.”

Afterward, Carly Bramhill used a curling iron to lift Davis’ hair into bouncing curls.

“I love it,” she said. “I feel like a queen.”

Visual impairment can follow a spectrum, and many afflicted are able to see slightly — perhaps shadows or shapes, Sisser said. Many have also had their sight deteriorate later in life, due to diseases such as diabetes, he said.

After getting his nails filed and buffed, Marcos Puglielli sat patiently as Bramhill flat ironed his hair, then spiked it with wax and set it with hairspray.

He got raves for his new look. Now, he said, he was ready for a date.

Said Puglielli, smiling: “I’m a superstar.”