

‘I think of myself as a CEO who happens to be blind.’ Miami Lighthouse CEO honored globally

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Under the leadership of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired CEO and President Virginia Jacko, the nonprofit has grown exponentially and now serves 22,000 people a year.

The oldest and largest nonprofit in Florida serving visually impaired people of all ages has expanded its services to include the Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™ and a Low Vision Center for seniors affected by age-related eye disease.

Jacko, who is blind, was recently selected by the Viscardi Center as one of 10 recipients around the world of the 2019 Henry Viscardi Achievement Award. The awards honor “leaders in the global disability community,” who have made significant contributions to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

This year’s recipients come from countries including South Korea, Pakistan and Belgium.

Jacko said it is humbling to be among those people making a difference around the world.

“Too often, on first blush, people think that people with disabilities can’t do what others can do,” said Jacko, who first started at Miami Lighthouse as a student and was eventually hired as its CEO. “I don’t think of myself as a blind CEO; I think of myself as a CEO who happens to be blind.”

The award, which was given in a ceremony in New York on December 5, was awarded first in 2013 to commemorate Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., who himself wore prosthetic legs, and became an advocate for people with disabilities.



Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired CEO and president Virginia Jacko was given the 2019 Henry Viscardi Achievement Award in New York, December 5, 2019.

The yearly winners are chosen by a selection committee, which was co-chaired for the sixth consecutive year by Robert Dole, former U.S. senator, and Sherwood “Woody” Goldberg, Esq., retired U.S. Army Colonel, Vietnam veteran, and civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army in Washington, D.C.