



14 Consecutive Charity Navigator 4-Star Ratings

It's Back to School with Our Newly Opened Third Grade



It's back to school at Miami Lighthouse Academy, where children with visual impairments come together to learn and thrive in an inclusive environment. We are proud of the addition of third grade classes in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). The third-grade expansion aims to equip visually impaired students

with the skills, confidence, and accessible learning environment needed to succeed. Miami Lighthouse Academy is fully accredited and offers an inclusion environment for early learners (ages 1-4), and an early elementary with kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade for blind and visually impaired students. As a certified Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) provider, the Miami Lighthouse Academy enrolls students with and without vision impairment promoting an inclusive program and resulting in a sense of belonging for all children and families. In support of our mission, children without vision impairments are selected to aid the learning environment for children with vision loss.

We began offering third grade on August 16, 2025, in partnership with the M-DCPS Office of Educational Services and Exceptional Student Education. Third grade is a pivotal year in a child's academic journey particularly for blind and visually impaired children because students begin taking standardized tests in the fourth grade. Parent and teacher feedback demonstrates that visually impaired students need to be taught how to access and successfully complete standardized testing.

Our third-grade expansion was made possible with additional support from the Miami-Dade Impact Collaborative, The Hutson-Wiley and Echevarria Foundation, and the Dennis and Smith Foundation. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Florida Department of Education for partially funding our early elementary school through third grade, The Children's Trust for their continued support of our educational programs as well as the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe for their support of our VPK programming. We are grateful to Superintendent Dr. Jose Dotres and his leadership team for our partnership through the Miami-Dade County Public School Board. Learn more about our Academy, inclusive classrooms, sensory-based learning, and highly credentialed teachers on our website at www.MiamiLighthouseAcademy.org.



Isaac, Major and Joy were excited to start third grade!

FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH FOR 95 YEARS AND BEYOND

You can participate in our 95th Anniversary Matching Challenge to sustain programs for the blind and visually impaired by making a donation using the enclosed business reply envelope or by donating online at www.miamilighthouse.org

Miami Lighthouse Academy Parent Advisory Committee

At its recent meeting, the Miami Lighthouse Academy Parent Advisory Committee members shared heartfelt testimonials regarding their experiences with Miami Lighthouse Academy. Their testimonials reflected deep appreciation for the Academy's impact on their children and their families. Parents agreed to become more active in sharing Miami Lighthouse's posts and stories. They also set a goal of increasing parent involvement and participation in Academy-related events and discussions. We express our appreciation to the committee chair Andrea Lopez, parent of a toddler in our Academy, and to the parents who serve on this crucial committee.

Paul Harris Fellow Award Presentation

Rotary International recently honored President and CEO Virginia Jacko and Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser with the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow Award in recognition of their outstanding commitment to the Rotary Foundation's mission of advancing humanitarian and educational programs worldwide. The presentation was made by Rotary Club of Miami members, Miami Lighthouse Board Chair-Elect Scott Richey and Director Robert Shelley at the Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors meeting on September 18th. The Rotary Foundation supports global humanitarian and educational programs. Many notable figures have been named Paul Harris Fellows, including U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Mother Teresa, Pearl Bailey, U.S. astronaut James Lovell, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, and polio vaccine developer Dr. Jonas Salk.



CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Chair-Elect Scott Richey, Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser and Director Robert Shelley



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Chairman's Letter

Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

Please take a few minutes to read our semi-annual newsletter, the *Lantern*, which highlights our continuing achievements and the impact of our four strategic initiatives.

1. In order to ensure that Miami Lighthouse has the financial capacity to sustainably meet the increasing demand for service, as part of our 95th Anniversary celebrated last January our 95th Anniversary Campaign was launched to raise \$9.5 million, for which funds raised are invested to sustain and grow our programs for another 95 years. We announced that four very generous donors committed to matching \$4.75 million, of which nearly \$1.75 million has been committed and matched. We now need to raise the remaining \$3 million. We are pleased to announce that our Board External Relations Committee voted to have a gala in January of 2028 when we can celebrate the completion of our \$9.5 million campaign to sustainably meet the increasing demand for services.

2. The first year of our Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative \$2 million interdisciplinary study concluded this September, the first year of the grant, with one journal article accepted and another pending.

3. Specialized learning for third graders with vision impairment is underway in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Our goal is to prepare visually impaired students for standardized testing when they attend fourth grade at their community school.

4. We are pleased to announce that our Blind Soccer Program was selected for the 2025 Innovator of the Year Award by the Florida Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired in recognition of our commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of individuals who are blind or visually impaired in Florida. Students from age one to eighteen have been learning blind soccer on our new blind soccer mini pitch. All soccer participants wear blindfolds to level the playing field, so everyone has to rely on ear/foot coordination. Miami Lighthouse has United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) credentialed soccer coaches. Because of our soccer initiative, the Miami-Dade County Public School System also has PE, as well as football and soccer coaches working on their USABA credentials, so the sport of blind soccer can be enjoyed by an even broader group of students with and without a vision disability, both those attending our Miami Lighthouse programs and in community schools.

Over the past 95 years we have grown and are now serving more than 28,000 program participants annually. I am proud to serve as board chair of this amazing institution and am grateful for your ongoing support. More than ever, we need your contributions as government funding has been scaled back both for our Heiken Children's Vision Program and for seniors. Our special thanks to all those who have given time and financial contributions in furtherance of our mission.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Solomon
Chairman, Board of Directors



President and CEO's Mid-Year Report

This report highlights some of the achievements made possible by contracts, grants, and most importantly the generosity of our donors. With your help, in fiscal year 2024 we served more than 28,000 program participants.

Blind Babies Early Intervention

Our Blind Babies Program offers early intervention and parent education through a home visitation program for blind or visually impaired children from birth to age 5. These in-home visits support families, empower parents, and enhance blind children's readiness to learn. During the most recent 12-month period our Children's Specialists have provided in-home early intervention weekly services to 133 blind babies, increasing from 119 served in 2024.

Senior Group Health and Activities Program (SGA)

Our SGA Program is the only program in Miami-Dade County providing vision rehabilitation services aimed at enhancing quality of life and independence for older adults (55+) who are legally blind. During calendar year 2024, there were 167 participants in our SGA and adult education programs. Visually impaired seniors typically attend our SGA program on Tuesday and Thursday or Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We express our gratitude to the Department of Education's Division of Blind Services and Miami-Dade County for helping support this program along with the M-DCPS Schoolboard through Lindsay Hopkins Technical College for continuing our GED and ESOL classes held at Miami Lighthouse for these visually impaired seniors.

Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

Our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program prevents blindness by providing comprehensive eye health, vision exams and prescription eyeglasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged students statewide in grades Pre-K through 12. Last calendar year our Heiken Program provided 19,161 comprehensive eye exams and prescription eyeglasses if required.



Your continuing generosity will sustain our programs that pave the way to academic achievement and independence. More than ever, we need your help because of government funding cuts. Please know that The Wildflower Foundation will match new gifts or increases in existing donor contributions in support of our art and music programs for children and adults, and an anonymous family foundation will match up to a total of \$40,000 donor support for our Academy received by November 15, 2025. Please use the enclosed envelope to make a donation.

With gratitude,

Virginia A. Jacko, President and Chief Executive Officer

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PROGRAMS

September was Cortical Visual Impairment Month

Our exclusive CVI expert virtual international panel, “Advancing CVI Awareness and Innovation,” convened on September 30th hosted by Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired and supported by a 2025 Delta Gamma Foundation Service for Sight Grant. This engaging session brought together Dr. John Ravenscroft, Chair of Childhood Visual Impairment at the University of Edinburgh, and Miami Lighthouse’s CVI Collaborative experts to provide education and research insights to support children with CVI addressing genetic and environmental risk factors, effective learning strategies, and the latest diagnostic tools for early detection and intervention in infants and young children leveraging the brain’s neuroplasticity. It was moderated by Dr. Francois Sainfort, Chair and Professor, Department of Management and Entrepreneurship, H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship Professor, Department of Population Health Sciences, Nova Southeastern University; Dr. Kiran C. Patel, College of Allopathic Medicine, Nova Southeastern University; Dr. Carlos Mendoza, Neuro-Ophthalmologist, University of Miami Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; Dr. Anuj Jayakar, Medical Director, Neurocritical Care Program, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Brain Institute; and Michael Berger, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Miami Lighthouse Academy.

Our first CVI report on this \$2 million project took place in August at an on-site luncheon with presentations by Dr. Carlos Mendoza, University of Miami’s Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; Dr. Francois Sainfort, Nova Southeastern University; and Dr. Anuj Jayakar, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, along with our Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons, and our highly credentialed Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Mike Berger. Highlights of the report are listed below:

- A manuscript entitled, “The Miami Lighthouse CVI Collaborative Center: A Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Initiative to Address Cortical Visual Impairment,” by Virginia Jacko, et al., was submitted to the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* and is currently pending review.
- Retrospective review and analysis of the Miami Lighthouse CVI database, in collaboration with Michael Berger, MLB (January 2025 - August 2025):
 - o Miami Lighthouse has conducted 133 CVI range assessments on 111 unique children. The data is being continuously updated by Michael Berger at the Miami Lighthouse.
 - o To date, 94 children were fully assessed using the CVI range assessment tool. Of those, 87 unique children were scored at least once. For the remaining 7 children, the data are still being processed to produce the quantitative scores.
 - o To date, there have been 12 patients in the Nicklaus Children’s Hospital NICU who have undergone Neonatal Assessment Visual European Grid (NAVEG) screening. The NAVEG screening was found to be positive in 11 of the 12 (92%).
 - o Miami Lighthouse has presented NAVEG presentations/training at Southernmost Coast Early Steps and Holtz Children’s Hospital, and plans are underway for training at North Dade Early Steps.
 - o Review of Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment: Clinical and Genetic Approaches (November 2024 - May 2025) was conducted by Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. This scoping review included 66 articles and was published by *Survey of Ophthalmology*, one of the highest-impact journals in the field (ranked 5th out of 95 in Ophthalmology).
 - o Collaboration between Bascom Palmer and Miami Lighthouse for the Blind strengthens the program by helping us better understand the educational and emotional needs of patients. In addition, these patients have already received or will receive a formal CVI assessment.
 - o The long-term opportunity lies in creating a formalized, research-backed CVI assessment tool. This tool could become a standardized approach for early intervention CVI evaluation and support filling a national and international need.

Children Need Comprehensive Eye Exams as Part of School Preparation

Without comprehensive eye exams, children are at risk of falling behind academically, experiencing social challenges, and facing eye health risks. For many children, a pair of glasses isn't just about seeing clearly, it's about unlocking their full potential in school and life. Yet far too many children still lack access to essential eye healthcare.

Our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, a Miami Lighthouse subsidiary, encounters these challenges every day. Addressing children's eye health is the sole mission of our Heiken Program. Since inception, through a network of licensed optometrists we have provided over 227,000 comprehensive dilated eye exams and have provided glasses when prescribed for underserved children across the state at no cost thanks to funding from the Florida Department of Health, The Children's Trust, and others. These comprehensive exams go beyond basic screenings. They detect serious eye conditions that could lead to permanent blindness if left untreated.

We express appreciation to the 2025 Florida Legislature for their support of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program through the Florida Department of Health. This past school year our Heiken Program faced an overwhelming 31,575 requests for service, an all-time high, and provided 16,494 comprehensive eye exams with the funding available to us.

Early detection, prevention, and intervention can change lives, and every child deserves the chance to see their future clearly. For more information about our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program visit www.FloridaHeiken.org.

We receive many expressions of appreciation from schools for the services our Heiken Program offers such as the following testimonial:

"This program is vital to our community. We are one of the least populated and rural counties in Florida. We do not have any specialty clinics, i.e., eye care, dentists, etc. Parents must travel 30 minutes or more to receive these types of services. I pray the funding for this program never runs out! Our school district appreciates the services Heiken Vision provides to our students."

Melissa Pearson, R.N., Lafayette ES/HS

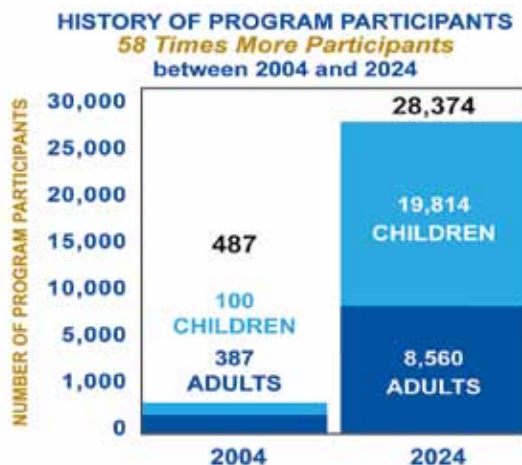


Schoolchildren with one of our Heiken mobile units



Children are offered a wide selection of frames

MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE SERVES 28,374 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ANNUALLY



Senior Group Activities Program Visits Calle Ocho McDonald's

Our Senior Group Activities Program (SGA) went on a field trip to our local McDonald's in Little Havana. During the visit, our senior program participants were warmly welcomed by staff, enjoyed a wonderful behind the scenes tour of the kitchen, and were and were treated to a delicious meal provided by the Montes Family's McDonald's. The Montes family has been a strong supporter of Miami Lighthouse for many years.



Melissa Montes Blanco, center, Kristina Montes, far right, and Jose Montes far right second row with our SGA Program participants

"Happy McFries," a mixed media work by a group of artists in our SGA Program, is now in its permanent home at the Little Havana McDonald's. See *Lantern Extra* for more about this exciting collaboration!

Exploring NASCAR through Touch

Our Pre-Employment Transition Services students had an exciting field trip at the Homestead-Miami Speedway that offered our blind and visually impaired teenagers a unique, accessible introduction to the world of NASCAR. Through tactile exploration, students had the chance to feel NASCAR tires, learning about their size, texture, and the intricate details that go into designing them.



Pre-Employment Transition Services Program students at Homestead-Miami Speedway

The hands-on experience extended to exploring racing equipment and discovering how tire systems work in a professional racing environment. This immersive visit not only expanded students' career awareness but also emphasized the importance of accessibility in technical fields. For teens with visual impairments, experiences like these are invaluable in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications, helping them understand and engage with the technical environments that might otherwise seem out of reach. We thank Homestead-Miami Speedway and Honorary Board Director George Foyo for making this experience a reality.

Annual Beeping Easter Egg Hunt

Our Annual Easter Egg Hunt was held on April 17th at our Miami Lighthouse Academy Owen S. Freed Playground. Students searched for colorful beeping Easter eggs assembled by the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad. According to CEO Virginia Jacko, the beeping sounds emitted by the eggs enable our blind and visually impaired children to locate them by carefully listening, reinforcing Miami Lighthouse's motto that "It's possible to see without sight™."



The South Florida Police Benevolent Association and the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad with students from our Miami Lighthouse Academy and the Easter Bunny

Easter baskets filled with candy were also distributed to the children, who all enjoyed an outstanding afternoon thanks to the generosity of our annual event sponsor, the South Florida Police Benevolent Association. WSVN Channel-7 news coverage of this event is available on our website www.miamilighthouse.org under the news and events tab, "In the News," April 17.

Miami Lighthouse Summer Camp Students Visit United States Bankruptcy Court



Pre-Employment Transition Services students visited the chambers of Chief Judge Laurel Isicoff of the United States Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of Florida

Our Pre-Employment Transition Services students participated in a fascinating experience with Chief Judge Laurel Isicoff of the United States Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of Florida, organized by Miami Lighthouse Board Chair Steven Solomon. The students observed several hearings held in the courtroom and via Zoom. Judge Isicoff explained key aspects of bankruptcy proceedings and U.S. laws. She also engaged in a Q&A with students and answered all of their questions.

On this occasion, Judge Isicoff also welcomed two special guests for the students: Assistant U.S. Deputy Attorney Daniel Matzkin, who has been blind since birth, and Deputy U.S. Marshal Marc Palomino, accompanied by his K-9 partner Mimi from the U.S. Marshals Explosive Detection Service. Students gained

valuable insight into the speakers' career paths and the professional journeys that led them to their present positions. We thank Judge Isicoff and her staff for providing our students with this meaningful summer experience.

Senior Group Activities (SGA) Program Participants Visit Key Biscayne Lighthouse

Our SGA Program participants recently enjoyed a field trip to the Key Biscayne Lighthouse. A sense of community is crucial to a happy life at any age — but especially as a senior. At Miami Lighthouse, we are honored to provide the opportunity for our senior participants to create just that: community joy through social activities. Our SGA Program has been fondly referred to as a 'country club' by participants, fulfilling that innate need to connect with others, enjoy life, and be a part of something bigger than oneself. We thank our SGA program supporters, such as the Florida Division of Blind Services and Miami-Dade County.

SGA Program Participant Angie Phang with Miami Lighthouse Supervisor of Fine Arts and Education Aaron Hill in front of the Key Biscayne Lighthouse



Music Students Enjoy a Multi-Sensory Experience at Formula E



Miami Lighthouse Music Students enjoyed Formula E at Homestead-Miami Speedway

On April 12th more than 20 of our music students ages 12-18 participated in a fascinating sensory-based activity during Formula E at the Homestead-Miami Speedway. Our students received exclusive access to a specially curated experience that included behind the scenes access to the Formula E paddock, interaction with Formula E cars and drivers, exhibits specially tailored for their engagement, exclusive wristband access to a private meet-and-greet with autograph session, and insightful conversations around careers in motorsports and STEM.

Formula E is the world's first all-electric FIA World Championship and the only sport certified net-zero carbon since its inception. This remarkable event with Formula E and our Music Program students reinforces our Miami Lighthouse motto that "It's possible to see without sight™."

Family Field Trip Fun with Miami Dolphins Rookies

Miami Lighthouse schoolchildren, accompanied by Miami Lighthouse Board Director Ali Mandsourwala, parents, volunteers and staff spent a wonderful day with the Miami Dolphins Rookie class that was filled with exciting, sensory-rich activities. Our students loved training with the players, wearing football gear, and interacting with the players. Our thanks go to the Dolphins Passing Game Coordinator and Quarterbacks Coach Darrell Bevell and his brother Adam Bevell for making this memorable experience happen.



Miami Dolphins Rookie class on the Baptist Health Training Complex field with our Miami Lighthouse families

Miami Marlins Team Up with Miami Lighthouse for the Beep Ball Classic and Sensory Tour

On July 8th with the Beep Ball Classic, the Miami Marlins brought the game of baseball to teenage program participants enrolled in our Pre-Employment Transition Services Program. The Beep Ball Classic is a game of adaptive baseball relying on auditory cues so the blind and visually impaired players can locate the ball. Mr. Marlin, Jeff Conine and his son Griffin Conine, now a Marlins player, participated in the fun game. Our teenagers also got to go on a guided tour around the ballpark that included walking the field, exploring equipment in the team's dugout with



Transition Students at the Beep Ball Classic

Miami Marlins Manager Clayton McCullough, and a sensory tour of LoanDepot Park. This unique experience brought a new level of intrigue and excitement to our teens, allowing them to learn about sporting events from a different perspective. Our thanks to the Miami Marlins Foundation, Miami Marlins players, staff, and Grounds Crew Manager Javier Carrilo-Milan for this memorable day.

Students Visit the United States Coast Guard

Students from our Pre-Employment Transition Services Program had an exciting field trip to the U.S. Coast Guard base in Miami. The visit began with a Q&A session where students learned about the Coast Guard's daily operations, including their critical roles in maritime safety and rescue missions. Students then went on a guided tour of the base and boarded one of the Coast Guard's airplanes used for Search and Rescue missions. Inside the aircraft, students were able to sit in the pilot's seat and explore the tools and technologies used during emergency operations. This field trip offered a brief yet inspiring glimpse into a rescue aviator's perspective. We thank Captain Robert Grant (Ret.) and Coast Guard staff who helped make this memorable, hands-on learning experience possible for our students.



Pre-Employment Transition Services students at the U.S. Coast Guard base in Miami

(PROGRAMS continued on page 10)

PROGRAMS (continued from page 9)

Students Experience Special Fire Safety Demonstration



Transition student learning how to use a fire hose

Pre-Employment Transition Services Program students experienced a unique tour of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Station 2 Firehouse. The students not only had the opportunity to explore the building and the equipment, but they also interviewed the fire rescue team about their careers and experienced fire extinguisher training. “Reinforcing pre-fire preparations, planning and practicing an escape plan in the event of an actual emergency, installing smoke alarms, and involving the Fire Department to help plan an escape route, are all very important safety lessons and even more so for our visually impaired

population,” noted President and CEO Virginia Jacko. We thank Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Chief Raied Jadallah and Firehouse Station 2 firefighters for hosting our teenagers. You can view a video of this visit at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDsznZZhyDQ>

Summer Work Experience at Restaurant Brands International

Our students had an exciting job-shadowing experience at Restaurant Brands International (RBI), where they explored a variety of career paths and gained firsthand insight into the professional world. The visit included an introduction to careers in marketing and social media, where students learned how brands connect with customers and build their online presence. One of the highlights of the day was participating in a Burger King taste test, allowing students to sample products and better understand how customer feedback plays a role in product development. They also toured the company’s test kitchen, where they saw how new food items are created, tested, and prepared before reaching the market. The experience offered students an engaging and interactive look at the behind-the-scenes operations of RBI, helping them connect their interests to real-world career opportunities. We thank Miami Lighthouse Board Director Jill Granat for organizing the incredible experience.



Pre-Employment Transition students explored careers in marketing, social media, and culinary innovation at Restaurant Brands International

Low Vision Solutions Center

John Garcia has been named Manager of Community Engagement, which includes outreach to grow our visibility in the community for our Academy and Vision Solutions Center and our on-campus programs for children and adults. His new position is partially funded by a Miami Community Foundation grant. Miami Lighthouse benefits from John’s many years’ experience as a low vision optician. In his new position he will continue to dispense glasses to low-income schoolchildren following their eye exams received through our Heiken Children’s Vision Program. John has been an expert on electronic magnifiers for people with low vision for more than thirty years when his family business introduced this crucial device for people with low vision to enable them to read. Visit www.LighthouseShop.org to view a variety of products for all your vision needs. Contact John at 786-362-7514 with any questions you may have about the low vision services and products we offer.



John Garcia

Braille Music

Pablo Rodriguez of the Filomen M. D’Agostino Greenberg School of Music (FMDG) recently completed our 26-lesson music Braille certification. Pablo joins faculty and staff members at the school who are able to share their braille music expertise as a valuable part of the FMDG student experience.

SUPPORT FOR OUR PROGRAMS

Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program Receives Award from the Ocean Reef Community Foundation

We are proud to announce that our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program was awarded \$10,000 by the Ocean Reef Community Foundation (ORCF). We want to express our sincere gratitude to ORCF for this generous award that will help provide over 710 comprehensive eye examinations and prescription eyeglasses when needed to low-income children in Homestead, Florida City, and the Upper Florida Keys.



Our unique Heiken Program takes mobile optometric units directly to Title 1 schools, advancing eye health equity for many children who would not have access to eye health care.

ORCF Secretary Yurianna Mikolay, Director of Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program Angela Vazquez, ORCF Executive Vice President Stephen G. Woodsum, and ORCF Executive Vice President Janie Sims

Other supporters of our Heiken Program include:

The St. Joe Community Foundation - \$12,600 to fund comprehensive eye-exams and prescription glasses for at-risk youth at local Bay County schools in partnership with the Bay County Health Department.

The Jim Moran Foundation - \$30,000 to fund comprehensive eye-exams and prescription glasses for at-risk youth in Palm Beach County.

Suncoast Credit Union Foundation - \$31,500 to fund comprehensive eye-exams and prescription glasses for at-risk youth in Lee County.

In addition, we express our appreciation to:

The A.D. Henderson Foundation for increasing their commitment to the well-being of young children in Broward County by awarding \$200,000 over two years to fund comprehensive eye exams and prescription glasses for at-risk children ages 3 to 8.

The Children's Services Council of Broward for doubling their funding to provide comprehensive eye-exams and prescription glasses for at-risk children in Broward.

The Quantum Foundation for their continued support. We are on year two of their \$90,000 commitment over three years to fund comprehensive eye-exams and prescription glasses for at-risk children in Palm Beach County.

VISITORS AND TOURS



The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Board and staff were presented artwork made by our Miami Lighthouse Academy students

While visiting our VPK classroom, our students presented gifts to their visitors: tiny, hand-painted canvases that they created for the "Celebration of the Hands" art project displayed at the State Capitol in Tallahassee in April to celebrate Children's Week. We express our thanks to Evelio Torres, President and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition, for introducing us to his board and leadership team.

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Visits Our Blind Soccer Practice

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe recently watched our Miami Lighthouse Academy early learners practicing the inclusive sport of Blind soccer on our new mini pitch. This exciting new program is supported by an Innovation Grant from The Children's Trust.



VISITORS AND TOURS

Miami Lighthouse Welcomes Back Delta Gamma Beta Tau Chapter

Miami Lighthouse was delighted to have new members of the Delta Gamma Beta Tau chapter at the University of Miami visit our campus. Delta Gamma Beta Tau chapter, originally installed at The University of Miami on February 16, 1946, has had a long history of volunteering at Miami Lighthouse. We look forward to continuing our partnership of promoting the Delta Gamma motto of "Service for Sight."



University of Miami Delta Gamma Beta Tau Chapter members with President and CEO Virginia Jacko

A Very Special Visit from the President of Miami Dade College



Miami Lighthouse welcomed Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariaga and Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Dr. Maryam Laguna Borrego for a special tour of our campus. We look forward to many meaningful conversations and future collaborations between Miami Lighthouse and Miami Dade College.

Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser, Miami Dade College Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Dr. Maryam Laguna Borrego, President and CEO Virginia Jacko and Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariaga

Libra Group Founder George Logothetis visits Miami Lighthouse

George Logothetis, founder of the Libra Group, Juliana Saenz, Chief of Staff, and Esther Abinador, Senior Associate, recently toured Miami Lighthouse, reinforcing a fruitful collaboration. Mr. Logothetis addressed our Pre-Employment Transition Services Program students about their summer mentorship program at Elandis, a Coral Gables real estate partner company of the Libra Group.



Founder of Libra Group George Logothetis, Chief Programs Officer Carol Brady-Simmons, Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser with Miami Lighthouse students Emily and Lavardis

Additionally, two Miami Lighthouse students were invited to attend the 2025 Annual Concordia Summit in New York along with our Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons and Senior VP for External Relations Cameron Sisser. After meeting with our students, Mr. Logothetis said, "I had an incredibly profound meeting with your students. Both of them shone in front of students from all over the world. I look forward to our continuing partnership." We extend our gratitude to Dr. Eduardo J. Padron, former Miami Dade College President and longtime Miami Lighthouse partner, for connecting us with the Libra Group and Mr. Logothetis.

Miami Lighthouse was proud to participate in a breakfast with The Children's Trust hosted by Miami Community Newspapers and Baptist Health South Florida featuring guest speakers James Haj, President and CEO, and Natalia Zea, Chief Public Policy and Engagement Officer of The Children's Trust.

Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser, The Children's Trust Chief Public Policy and Engagement Officer Natalia Zea, The Children's Trust President and CEO James Haj, and President and CEO Virginia Jacko



EVENTS

Annual Get Together of the Miami Lighthouse and the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

Thursday evening, September 25th, Steven Solomon, Chair of the Board of Miami Lighthouse, welcomed Bascom Palmer faculty, fellows, and residents to our annual Miami Lighthouse collaborative dinner, which reinforces the longstanding, strong relationship between the two institutions. Dr. Palmer made it his life's work to raise funds and garner support for the eye hospital in cooperation with Miami Lighthouse. A strong collaboration between Miami Lighthouse and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute continues to this day, with both institutions working together to transform lives through vision-related services and research. CEO Virginia Jacko emphasized the importance of referrals to Miami Lighthouse and that a doctor should never tell a patient "There is nothing more that we can do for you."



Steven Gedde, M.D., Byron Lam, M.D., Henar Albertos-Arranz, O.D., Ph.D., Board Director Stephen Morris, O.D., President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Teacher of the Visually Impaired Michael Berger, Tamara Juvier, M.D., Ph.D., Board Chair Steven Solomon

Cars for Charity

More than 70 of our blind students heard the roar of Ferraris, the power of McLarens and realized the excitement of riding in Lamborghinis, Rolls Royce's and Porsches at our third annual Cars for Charity on Saturday, September 13. Participating in the exciting event were our Saturday program participants including Bright Beacons, early elementary school aged children, Pre-Employment Transition Services students aged 14-22 and Miami Lighthouse Music Program students. The lucky group embarked on an extraordinary adventure as they interacted with an impressive fleet of nearly 20 high-performance vehicles. A special



President and CEO Virginia Jacko with Cars for Charity Drivers and Sponsors

thank you to all of our donors who helped the event raise over \$100,000. We express our appreciation to car enthusiasts and sponsors that donated their time to give our students an unforgettable experience including Lead Philanthropic Sponsor Michael Weintraub and Lead Automotive Sponsor The Collection as well as Waymo, Grove Bank & Trust, Baptist Health South Florida, Homestead Miami Speedway, Miami International Autodrome, Gray Robinson, Cary and Ed Ruggiero, Luisa and George Foyo, Martha and Frank Voytek, The Fernandez Cabrera Group, JP Morgan, Juan Fernandez-Barquin, Jose Cueto, Caterina Camaiani, Ryan DiMarzzio, Yolanda and German Valencia, Alexander Mendoza, Pepe Abrante Cosio, Dr. Mike McDermott, Dr. Ari and Patty Abril, Ali Mandsourwala, Jonathan Horowitz, Erick Passo, Olga Villaverde, SFM Services, Ben's Pizza and others. The remarkable event reinforced what Miami Lighthouse teaches on a daily basis, "It's possible to see without sight™."



EVENTS

Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association Meeting Held at Miami Lighthouse in September



Carlos Mendoza-Santiesteban, M.D., President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Henar Albertos-Arranz, O.D., Ph.D., Miami Lighthouse Academy Teacher of the Visually Impaired Michael Berger, Tamara Juvier Riesgo M.D., Ph.D., and Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons

Members of the Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association (MDOPA) held their September 8th dinner meeting at Miami Lighthouse. In our Miami Lighthouse Low Vision Solutions Center we welcomed our new Manager of Community Engagement, John Garcia. Virginia Jacko, President and CEO, gave an overview for guests about Miami Lighthouse programs and asked they never tell a patient that “there is nothing more that we can do for you,” and rather say “Miami Lighthouse is the next step on your journey.” Dr. Carlos Mendoza-Santiesteban, University of Miami Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Principal Investigator for our Cortical Visual Collaborative Center’s project “Cortical Visual Impairment Diagnostic Indicators and Educational Best Practices for Affected Children,” told attendees about the importance of raising awareness and diagnosing Cortical Visual Impairment and about the collaborative grant between Miami Lighthouse and and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. The evening’s music was provided by Miami Lighthouse Latin Grammy Award Finalist Music Program professors Tony Cobo and Victor Castillo. The event was sponsored by Tarsus Pharmaceuticals.

Manager of Community Engagement John Garcia, President and CEO Virginia Jacko, MDOPA President Samantha Fernandez, O.D., Board Director Stephen Morris, O.D., and Leslie Scher, O.D.



2025 Padel for the Blind

The Young Professionals of Miami Lighthouse hosted “Light up the Court” and Padel for the Blind on September 14th at Wynwood Padel Club. Guests enjoyed beverages and light bites sponsored by El Carajo and the “Light up the Court” Padel Tournament. Thank you to our generous sponsors Playbypoint, JP Morgan Private Bank, Equinox, and Wynwood Padel Club. All proceeds will support the Miami Lighthouse’s Blind Soccer Initiative.

YPOL President Pablo Lüchau with event sponsors Wynwood Padel Club and Equinox



Music Under the Stars Bon Appétit Miami

On May 21st, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind raised funds for our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program to provide more than 1,000 underprivileged school children with the gift of clear vision. The event honored City of Miami Commissioner Miguel Angel Gabela’s funding support for 300 comprehensive eye exams for schoolchildren in District 1. Recognized at the event were the Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association and our Florida State Government Champions: Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, Representative Demi Busatta, and Representative David Borrero.

Music Under the Stars was emceed by Barry Johnson, former President of The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and a longtime radio and television news anchor. The program featured an unforgettable lineup of entertainment, headlined by our very own nationally recognized Miami Lighthouse Band, with special guest performances by Grammy award-winning jazz guitarist Leo Quintero, saxophonist extraordinaire Jeff Zavac, and Cantor Marcos Askenazi, the proud parent of a third grade student in our Miami Lighthouse Academy.

Our generous sponsors included ABB Optical Group, Publix Super Markets Charities, Gray Robinson, FP&L, Rotary Club of Miami, Grove Bank & Trust, Bizitss, Choice Waste, H. Angela Whitman Foundation, H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Nova Southeastern University, Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association, Miami-Dade Beacon Council, George and Luisa Foyo Foundation, Bank United, *Miami Kids Magazine*, Monster Sound Productions, Biz Solutions, Susan Conroy Design, Perry Ellis International, SFM Services, Inc., Affiliated Healthcare Centers, Inc., Miami-Dade County Commissioners JC Bermudez, Ambassador Kevin Marino Cabrera, and Senator Rene Garcia and more. Our fabulous restaurant and beverage sponsors included Knights of Columbus providing arroz con pollo, Flannigan's, P.F. Chang's, Seasons 52, Roasters 'N Toasters, The Big Cheese, Batch, El Carajo, The Cheesecake Factory, Truman Vodka, Eagle Brands and more.



CEO Virginia Jacko presenting Miami Lighthouse Academy student artwork to Representative David Borrero and Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez

Young Professionals of the Lighthouse (YPOL) Host "Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon"



Florida State Legislature check presentation to Miami Lighthouse at the annual Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon

Our annual Miami Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon was held on July 22nd in appreciation of our elected officials' support of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, Miami Lighthouse Academy and our Senior Group Activities Program. The event provided attendees with the opportunity to meet and network with local elected officials, our Board Directors, and other community leaders. Appreciation was expressed to the Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation and Florida Legislature for continuing funding for our programs. Guests enjoyed a special musical performance by our Bright Beacons Program and patriotic songs by our talented Miami Lighthouse Summer Music Program student ensemble. We thank Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman for sponsoring the luncheon.

Our annual Miami Lighthouse Legislative Luncheon was held on July 22nd in appreciation of our elected officials' support of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, Miami Lighthouse Academy and our Senior Group Activities Program. The event provided attendees with the opportunity to meet and network with local elected officials, our Board

PUBLICATIONS

"Empowering Independence: Essential Tools for Orientation and Mobility" by Virginia A. Jacko and Jessica Smith appeared in the May 2025 issue of *Exceptional Parent Magazine*.

"Back to School for Children with Visual Impairments," by Virginia A. Jacko and Mara Gonzalez appeared in the August 2025 issue of *Exceptional Parent Magazine*.

Accepted for Publication:

"A Scoping Review on Clinical and Molecular Diagnostic Approaches for Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI)," by Henar Albertos-Arranz, Tamara Juvier-Riesgo, Francois Sainfort, Anju Jayakar, Eduardo C. Alonso, Virginia A. Jacko, and Carlos E. Mendoza Santiesteban, *Survey of Ophthalmology Publications pending:*

"The Miami Lighthouse CVI Collaborative Center: A Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Initiative to Address Cortical Visual Impairment Challenges," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*

"Learning to Play, Playing to Learn: Peer Interactions and Executive Functioning in Inclusive Preschool Classrooms Serving Children with Visual Impairment," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*

SAVE THE DATE!

See the Light Luncheon
Thursday, November 13, 2025
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
at the Historic Biltmore Hotel



Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Campus
601 SW 8th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33130

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Robert, a Pre-K student on
the first day of school at our
Miami Lighthouse Academy

Please assure delivery by October 30, 2025

CURRENT CHARITY NAVIGATOR SCORES

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has received 14 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator.

Attaining a 4-star rating indicates that our organization adheres to sector best practices, exceeds industry standards and executes its mission in a financially efficient way.

CHARITY NAVIGATOR ENCOMPASS BEACONS

June 3, 2024 - Miami Lighthouse is proud to announce that we have successfully completed all four of the new Charity Navigator Encompass Beacons, which provide a comprehensive analysis of our performance across four key domains:

ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCE 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of a charity's financial health (financial efficiency, sustainability and trustworthiness) and its commitment to governance practices and policies.

LEADERSHIP AND ADAPTABILITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's leadership capacity, strategic thinking and planning, and ability to innovate or respond to changes in constituent demand/need or other relevant social and economic conditions to achieve the organization's mission.

IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT 98%

This beacon estimates the actual impact a charity has on the lives of those it serves and determines whether it is making good use of donor resources to achieve that impact.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's culture and connectedness to the community it serves.

Source: Miami Lighthouse listing on Charity Navigator website:
www.charitynavigator.org



CONTACT US: General Information: 305-856-2288
Low Vision or Vision Rehabilitation Services: 786-362-7479 • Senior Case Manager: 786-362-7445
Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center: 786-636-6498
Visit our website: www.miamilighthouse.org