

*Transforming Lives on the Road to Independence*



## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE CELEBRATES 95th ANNIVERSARY

Miami Lighthouse marked an historic milestone of 95 years of service at our Diamond Anniversary Celebration held on January 27th at the historic Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables.

The sold-out crowd of community leaders and philanthropists heard President and CEO Virginia Jacko speak about the Board of Directors' commitment to sustain and grow Miami Lighthouse for another 95 years. She announced a two-year campaign to raise \$9.5 million to sustain our legacy of transforming the lives of the blind and visually impaired, from blind babies to seniors. A "Matching Challenge Team" of philanthropists has already committed \$4.5 million to match additional donations to Miami Lighthouse. Your contribution to our 95th Anniversary matching challenge will sustain and grow our programs to help us meet the needs of the ever-increasing number of blind and low vision people we serve. For questions regarding this matching challenge contact Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176 or [vjacko@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:vjacko@miamilighthouse.org).



*"Shine Like a Lighthouse Diamond" on display at our gala auction*



*Frost School of Music students and graduates of the Miami Lighthouse Music Program Hannah Padilla and Silvio Plata*

Guests heard a duet, "Hero," by former Miami Lighthouse music students Hannah Padilla and Silvio Plata, enjoyed big band music performed by Miami Lighthouse Program musicians and vocalists, and watched a 95-year salute video.

A highlight of the evening was the exceptional performances orchestrated by the Music Program. The string quartet, led by Oman Pedreira, and the Big Band, directed by Carlos Camacho, offered an unparalleled musical experience.



*Thomas Abraham, David Lawrence Jr., Molly Quinn and Mark Ackermann*

*(95th Anniversary Celebration continued on page 2)*

## FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH FOR 95 YEARS AND BEYOND

You can participate in the 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](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)

## Miami Lighthouse Celebrates 95th Anniversary

We are grateful to our table sponsors and corporate sponsors who supported this special evening including Presenting Sponsor Northern Trust, Platinum Signature Sponsor Florida Power & Light, Design and Décor Sponsor Florida Blue, Audio Visual Sponsor CareSource, Program Booklet Sponsor Shutts & Bowen, Live Auction Booklet Sponsor Cunningham Advisory Group, Cocktail Sponsor Bacardí, Wine Sponsor El Carajo, Invitation Sponsor GrayRobinson, Auctioneer Sponsors and gala committee co-chairs Terri Shikany and Linda Corey, Print Media Sponsor Walgreens, Gift of Vision Sponsor Baptist Health South Florida, Valet Sponsor Murgado Automotive Group, Photography Sponsor Miller Construction Company, Video Sponsor Multivision, In-Kind Sponsor Go 2 Events and Lighthouse Art Takeaway Sponsor Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins.



*Past Board Chairman George Foyo, Emina Nazarian, CEO Virginia Jacko and Sam Nazarian*



*Brooke Solomon, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Chairman Steven Solomon and Staci Solomon*



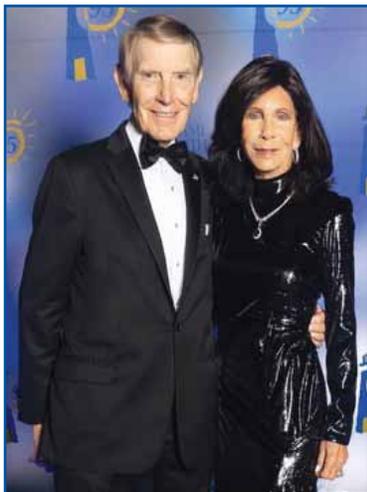
*Roe Stamps, CEO Virginia Jacko and Esther De Deo*



*Stephanie Kantsaw, CEO Virginia Jacko and Board Director Angela Whitman*



*Olga Nielson, CEO Virginia Jacko and Immediate Past Board Chairman Charles Nielson*



*Dan and Trish Bell*



*Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, CEO Virginia Jacko and State Representative Vicki Lopez*



*Scott Richey, Board Director, and Karla Richey, Miami Lighthouse Academy Officer*

## Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends of Miami Lighthouse,

For 95 years, Miami Lighthouse has provided unparalleled services to our community's blind and visually impaired. Each year, we serve more clients, improve our facility, and expand the programs and services we offer.

Our Miami Lighthouse proudly transforms the lives of 26,004 program participants annually, from babies to seniors, and has gained national recognition as a leader in serving the needs of the blind and visually impaired. I have witnessed firsthand the dedication of our incomparable staff, our life changing teachers at the Miami Lighthouse Academy, and the impact free eye exams and prescription glasses provided by our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program have in improving the academic performance of children statewide. Quite simply, no organization in Florida serves the vision needs of low-income schoolchildren and of the blind and visually impaired like we do at Miami Lighthouse.

Miami Lighthouse has earned thirteen consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from Charity Navigator. We are the only charity in Miami-Dade County to continually earn this top rating, placing Miami Lighthouse among the top one percent of charities nationwide. This achievement is a direct result of our innovative and inspirational Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Jacko, her leadership team and staff, and our committed Board of Directors. Most importantly, we could not continue to thrive without the generous contributions from our devoted supporters.

It is my privilege to serve as Chairman of this organization and work alongside our board members, each of whom is steadfast in their commitment to providing the highest level of service to our program participants and the highest degree of value to you, our stakeholders. I extend my thanks to my predecessor Charles Nielson who admirably served as Chairman 2021-2023. It is an honor to follow in his footsteps.

With your support, during the coming years we will continue to innovate, to work to meet the needs of people of all ages affected by a visual impairment and to provide exemplary education and vision rehabilitation for our program participants and transparency and accountability to our donors.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Solomon, Esq.  
*Chairman, Board of Directors*



P.S. Have you visited Miami Lighthouse recently? If not, I encourage you to schedule a tour with Virginia Jacko by calling 305-856-4176 or via email at [vjacko@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:vjacko@miamilighthouse.org). Prepare to be inspired!

## Miami Lighthouse Board of Directors

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*Immediate Past Chairman*

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*Legal Counsel, Shutts & Bowen LLP*

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# BOARD NEWS

## January 2024 Annual Board Meeting Actions

**Steven J. Solomon** assumed the position of Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The board expressed appreciation to **Charles Nielson** who completed his term as Board Chair and to **Alex Nostro** for his three years of service as Chairman of the Young Professionals of the Lighthouse.

**Rodrick T. Miller**, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Miami-Dade Beacon Council, was appointed to our Board of Directors. Mr. Miller holds a Master of Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a graduate diploma in finance from the Monterrey Institute of Technology in Mexico, and a Bachelor of Science degree in International Business from St. Augustine's College. He was also a Fulbright Fellow. He is a board member of the New Growth Innovation Network, the Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Board, New Corp (CDFI), and St. Augustine's University.



*Rodrick T. Miller,  
President and CEO,  
Miami-Dade Beacon Council*



**Victor Lopez**, became the representative of the Young Professionals of the Lighthouse. He holds an MA in International Studies and Eurasian Studies and a BA in International Relations, Latin American and Caribbean Studies from Florida International University.

The board also approved the 2024 slate of board officers, officers of the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program and the Miami Lighthouse Academy, and Honorary Board Members.

*Victor Lopez,  
District Legislative Aide for  
Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez*

## Officers of Miami Lighthouse Subsidiaries

**Miami Lighthouse Academy, LLC**  
Virginia A. Jacko, M.S., *President*  
Karla Richey, M.S., *Treasurer*  
Alan P. Levitt, O.D., *Secretary*



**Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC**  
Virginia A. Jacko, M.S., *President*  
Alan P. Levitt, O.D., *Treasurer*  
Stephen A. Morris, O.D., *Secretary*



President and CEO **Virginia Jacko** was featured in the November 27, 2023, issue of *The New York Times* in "Profiles in Change: For 7 Women, a Heartfelt Cause Became a Mission—Virginia Jacko, Accessibility and Education."

### Miami Lighthouse

Tel. 305-856-2288 • Fax. 305-285-6967  
HOURS: Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

### Miami Lighthouse Lantern Newsletter

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Editors: Sharon Caughill, Heidy Fariñas,  
Cameron Sisser  
Graphics: Susan Conroy Design

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*For the print impaired, the Lantern is available in an alternative format. For more information, call 786-362-7514 or visit our website at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)*



## PROGRAMS

### US Blind Soccer Comes to Miami Lighthouse

More than 150 participants took part in the USA Blind Soccer-Kickoff for Inclusion event on February 24, hosted by the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) in collaboration with the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation and Miami Lighthouse for the Blind.

Attendees of all ages had the opportunity to meet athletes from the first-ever USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team, view a blind soccer demonstration and most importantly try the sport of blind soccer for themselves. They also met Oseas De Leon, a USABA developmental athlete who serves as Senior Technology and Braille Specialist at Miami Lighthouse, who has been playing blind soccer since he was

three years old. Oseas is now competing to be selected for the US National Team and was recently featured on WSVN-7 Spotlight. You can view the segment under the News and Events tab "In the News" on our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org). Assisting with the day's demonstrations were coaches and players from the Barry University and Christopher Columbus High School soccer teams. Other organizations attending, sponsoring or volunteering at the event were Florida Power & Light, Barry University Student Government Association, University of Miami Soccer, City of Coral Gables, Dade County FC, Florida International University Athletics, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Next Era Energy, Northern Trust, Nova Southeastern University, Orange Bowl Committee, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, The Children's Movement of Florida and internationally renowned pop artist Romero Britto.

Thomas A. Abraham, Chairman of the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, noted that "this pioneering effort highlights our strong belief in the transformative power of sports to create opportunities, dismantle barriers, and nurture inclusivity for the visually impaired." "Building Blind Soccer" sites, under the auspices of U.S. Soccer's "Innovate to Grow" grant to expand the sport at the grassroots level, have already been established in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Dallas, Columbus, Charlotte and Baltimore.



*Thomas Abraham with USA Blind Soccer Men's National Team*



*Thomas Abraham and internationally renowned pop artist Romero Britto experience blind soccer*



*Board Director USABA Gary Remensnyder, Chair of The Anthony R. Abraham Foundation Thomas Abraham, Chair of The Children's Movement of Florida David Lawrence Jr., CEO of Miami Lighthouse Virginia Jacko, CEO of USABA Molly Quinn, CEO of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau David Whitaker, CEO of the Orange Bowl Committee Eric Poms and Miami-Dade County Public Schools Administrator Natalie Tappert*



*Miami Lighthouse Senior Technology and Braille Specialist and USABA Blind Soccer Developmental Athlete Oseas De Leon drives for a goal*

## PROGRAMS

### ART PROGRAM

#### “It’s Possible to See ART without Sight”

With support from the Wildflower Foundation matching grant, our talented artists, despite their vision loss, continue to receive recognition and awards in local, regional and national art competitions. The instruction provided by the professional staff in our tactile arts program empowers participants in our Senior Group Health and Activities Program (SGA) and students in our academy to excel artistically. Their achievements are a testament to the artistic environment we are committed to fostering, reinforcing Miami Lighthouse’s teaching that “It’s Possible to See ART Without Sight.”

“Hands of Hope,” a mixed media painting created by children in our Miami Lighthouse Academy was displayed in the Florida State Capitol Rotunda in Tallahassee during the annual Children’s Week “Celebration of the Hands.” Academy art students’ handprints on the 36” x 36” painting are decorated in colors of gold, purple, blue and yellow and are texturized with puffy paint, glitter, and gems. Children’s Week Florida™ is the largest event held in the state that celebrates and honors its commitment to children, youth, and advocates. The children’s art serves as a daily reminder to legislators and visitors that the future of our children rests in their hands. We were honored that “Hands of Hope” was featured in a Children’s Week email blast that was sent to thousands of schools, providers and partners all over the nation.



*“Hands Of Hope” was chosen for display at the entrance to the “Celebration of Hands” exhibit*



*“Casas United”*

“Casas United” by our Senior Group Health and Activities Program emerging artist Juan Castenada won second place in the Unity Art Exhibition held in Tampa, Florida. It is a 12” by 14” mixed media depiction of a colorful seaside town landscape made of wooden sticks, sand, glitter, moss, and seashells.

We are pleased to report that at our 95th Anniversary Celebration auction two large collaborative mixed-media paintings by our SGA artists were sold. “Lighthouse Lion Luv” (on the right) was acquired for a private collection, and “Shine Like a Lighthouse Diamond” (shown on the cover) was acquired as a tribute to Miami Lighthouse.



*“Lighthouse Lion Luv”*

## “It’s Possible to See ART without Sight”

“Seeing Eye Dog #2” was acquired through a generous donation and now hangs in the entrance of the donor’s home in Bal Harbour, Florida.

*“Seeing Eye Dog #2”*



Works by five of our SGA artists were selected for the “Celebrating Resiliency” art exhibition at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center in Ocala, Florida. Our winning entries are shown below:



*“Mind Flower Power” by Dora DeLeon*



*“Inner Music Rhythms” by Grisel Diaz*



*“Fantasy of the Future” by Nora DeLabat*



*“Eyes Focused on the Future” by Ester Almaguer*



*“Mindful Universe” by Shari Smith*



“Pink Bromeliad” by SGA artist Sophie Jean Paul was selected for the “Honoring the Woman” art exhibition at the Milander Center for Arts and Entertainment in Hialeah. This collaborative mixed media painting is an abstract bromeliad in pink adorned with mirrored glass pieces and plastic clear beads.

*“Pink Bromeliad”*

## “It’s Possible to See ART without Sight”



“Magical Monet” by Miami Lighthouse Academy second graders and “Lady in the Flower Glass Window” by SGA artist Nora DeLabat were selected for inclusion in the American Printing House for the Blind International 2024 “Insights” Calendar.

*“Magical Monet”*

*“Lady in the Flower Glass Window”*



Decorative bunny masks crafted by children in our Miami Lighthouse Academy were showcased at the “Bunnies and Beyond” event prior to the grand opening of Miami Art Week that featured many renowned artists’ works. Our children’s bunny mask artwork was featured in the November 13, 2023, issue of *Luxury Guide Magazine* in an article entitled “Children from Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visibly Impaired Shine in Pre-Event Activity for Miami Art Week in Partnership with Manolis Projects Gallery.” The article is available on our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org) in the “In the News” section under the “News and Events” tab.

WPLG Local 10 television featured SGA artist Ester Almaguer on January 2, 2024, in a segment entitled “Legally blind woman wins statewide art competition” in recognition of her artwork “Owl Vision” having been selected for the 2024 Arts4All Florida Calendar. The artwork, a textured mixed media work comprised of gems and stones of various colors, is featured on the November page of this year’s calendar that is distributed throughout the state. The art competition was open to all Florida residents with a disability. The text of the WPLG Local 10 segment is available on our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org) under the “News and Events” tab “In the News” 2024 section.



*Ester Almaguer and her winning artwork “Owl Vision”*



Art by our SGA clients was displayed during the SOBE Jazz Festival where Miami Lighthouse had a booth. Our booth was located in front of Romero Britto’s studio store on Lincoln Road.

*Aaron Hill, Supervisor of Fine Arts and Art Education, and Alondra Roldan, SGA Intern, at the SOBE Jazz Festival*

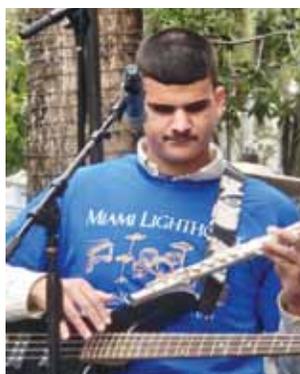
Congratulations to [Alondra Roldan](#), SGA intern, artist and former client. Alondra has been chosen to participate in a five-month internship at Walt Disney World.

*Alondra Roldan proudly displays her art*

## MUSIC PROGRAM

Miami Lighthouse is a leader in music education and facilitation for the blind and visually impaired and has received numerous national and international recognitions. We are the only organization in the nation offering all-inclusive music, audio instruction, and development programs for the blind and visually impaired of all ages. Miami Lighthouse provides the only Braille music distance learning curriculum, which is accessible from anywhere in the world. Our Music Program is supported in part by The Wildflower Foundation Challenge for Music and Tactile Arts.

At this year's SOBE Jazz Festival, students in our Miami Lighthouse Music Program displayed their exceptional abilities across various musical domains, including piano, guitar, vocals, drums, percussion, flute, bass, and more. The repertoire presented by these gifted individuals was met with resounding success leaving a lasting impression on all in attendance. The performance demonstrated not only the exceptional musical talent nurtured by the Miami Lighthouse Music Program but also the dedication and commitment of our young musicians.



*Music students Ray and Michelle performing at the SOBE Jazz Festival*



The talent of our Miami Lighthouse Music Program students was showcased at Art Basel in December of 2023. Their musical presentation reflected the diverse talent within our Music Program. Our students had the opportunity to share moments with notable hip-hop artists and enjoyed listening to a hip-hop group's performance. We extend our thanks to Dr. Hayes Harbor for graciously inviting our Music Program to participate in Art Basel.

*Miami Lighthouse music students at Art Basel*

We are grateful to our generous donors who have helped our artists excel by contributing to the Wildflower Foundation Matching Challenge. You can help our artists and musicians demonstrate that visual impairment is not a barrier to artistic achievement by joining the new Wildflower Foundation Matching Challenge by donating online at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org). New gifts or increases in existing donor contributions will be matched dollar for dollar. Please call CEO Virginia Jacko at 305-856-4176 for details.



THE WILDFLOWER  
FOUNDATION, INC.

## SGA Winter Wonderland Banquet

Lions for the Blind sponsored our Senior Group Health and Activities (SGA) Program Winter Wonderland Banquet on December 8, 2023, which had 100 attendees. Our SGA clients had a wonderful time and crowned their new queen and king.

Olga has a vibrant and cheerful attitude. She is always willing to help others, even though she is completely blind. She creates intricate art projects, and her singing talent brings smiles and rhythm to SGA daily. She is a shining example of “It’s possible to see without sight.”™



*SGA Queen Olga Jimenez and King Juan Camejo*

Juan has excelled as an SGA student by helping the staff distribute art boxes, translating messages for clients, and assisting staff with any other needs. He always has a cheery and positive attitude when arriving at the Lighthouse and is a great messenger of news and updates. He also assists with GED and English classes. Juan is a true advocate for the visually impaired.

At the event, Adita Vazques, President, Lions for the Blind, presented our SGA Coordinator Diana Cheng a Certificate of Appreciation for her dedication and service to Lions for the Blind.

We extend our thanks to the Lions for the Blind for their sponsorship and to staff and volunteers who assisted during the event.

## “Blind since birth, Brown University student helps others like him” *Miami Herald*, January 19, 2024



*Daniel Solomon with Billy the Marlin at White Cane Day 2023*

Daniel Solomon’s parents brought him to Miami Lighthouse as a young child when he was diagnosed with ocular albinism. Daniel has never let his disability keep him from living a productive life. He graduated summa cum laude from Palmetto Senior High School, was a 2022 Silver Knight Award recipient, and was accepted to his first college of choice, Brown University.

Daniel attributes the training he received at Miami Lighthouse to be the foundation for his ability to succeed in life. In recognition of the importance of programs specifically designed for the visually impaired such as those offered by Miami Lighthouse, he has worked with Brown University to develop initiatives to bridge the gap between education and inclusivity for the blind. He proposed and now co-teaches a course entitled “Blindness, Arts, and Media” at Brown’s School of Public Health. Daniel said in the *Miami Herald* article, “For the majority of students, this was the first time they were ever exposed to learning about blindness in their daily lives, urging them to think critically about how their actions impact the blind community.” Daniel is the co-founder and president of Blind@Brown, Brown’s association of blind and visually impaired students.

## Cortical Visual Impairment Collaborative Center Update

Our Miami Lighthouse Cortical Visual Impairment Collaborative Center is Florida's first collaboration between medical professionals, educators, researchers and service providers responding exclusively to CVI, and we want to share with you an overview of our progress and achievements.

- Our CVI Collaborative Center collaborators include Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Perkins School for The Blind, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Exceptional Learners, and NSU College of Business and Medicine for Data Analysis. We and our collaborators have made significant headway including a research protocol for the medical diagnosis of CVI, infant screening protocols in NICU and PICU settings and assessment and rehabilitation practices.
- In 2023, our CVI Collaborative Center received the coveted Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Business Innovative Excellence Novo Award.
- Our CVI Collaborative has hosted four professional development workshops led by experts in the field and in furtherance of our goal to establish our CVI Center as the national leader for best practices in CVI education, screening, diagnosis, intervention and research, and we were invited to make presentations at five professional conferences, three in Florida and two nationally.
- In-service training and lunch-and-learns were completed for professionals and optometrists at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, an Early Learning Coalition Provider Meeting, Miami Vision Therapy and Optometry, United Way Center for Excellence, ICU Baby and a Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association continuing education event.
- As a result of our community outreach, in-services, professional development workshops, CEU presentations, and ongoing support for families and children with CVI in the community, we have seen an increase in awareness and interest in CVI which has led to a growth in the number of referrals.
- We have provided CVI-specific assessments and comprehensive reports on educational interventions for all children referred to our CVI Collaborative Center. Since 2020, we have completed 160 CVI children's assessments. These assessments are of utmost importance because functional vision in such children can be expected to improve with appropriate intervention.
- We continue to refine and grow our database by collecting information on the children assessed by our CVI Collaborative Center such as referral source, demographics and ethnicity, diagnosis, pre- and post-assessment data and other pertinent data in order to support CVI research efforts in service delivery, diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation.



### The Miami Lighthouse Mission Statement

Through education, training, research and vision enhancement, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides hope, confidence, and independence to people of all ages.

*CEO Virginia Jacko and Miami Lighthouse  
Board Director Rod Miller share our mission  
with Consul General of Japan Kazuhiro Nakai*

## Grants in Support of our Programs

The Florida Panthers Foundation awarded \$10,000 in support of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program to fund critical software updates necessary to expedite processing eligibility of the nearly 50% increase in the number of students (Pre-K to 12) referred to our Heiken Program.



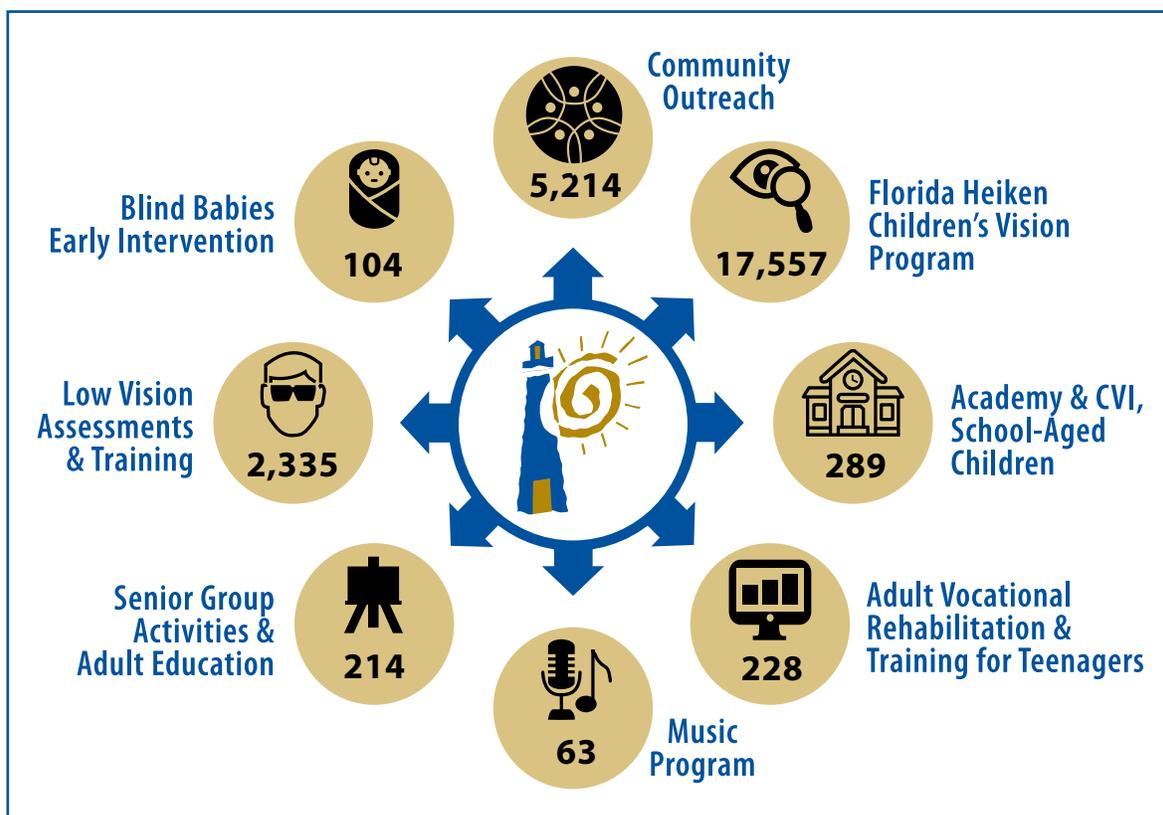
*Cameron Sisser, Miami Lighthouse Senior Vice President for External Relations, and Matthew Smith, Manager of Community Relations, Florida Panthers Foundation*

Miami Lighthouse was the recipient of a \$5,000 McDonald's Golden Grants award to support our specialized art program for blind or visually impaired children enrolled in grades K-2 in our Miami Lighthouse Academy.

*CEO Virginia Jacko and McDonald's Owner/Operator Milly Montes*



## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE SERVES 26,004 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ANNUALLY



## EVENTS

### See the Light Luncheon



*Board Director Caterina Sastri and her son Lorenzo, a graduate of our Miami Lighthouse Academy*



*Keynote speaker Kirk Adams, Ph.D.*

Our 95th Anniversary Fund to Sustain Programs was announced officially during our October 26th, 2023, See the Light Luncheon at The Historic Biltmore Hotel to a crowd of over 250 donors and supporters. All donations to this fund will be matched by our 95th Anniversary “Matching Challenge Team.” By making a contribution to this important initiative you will help us build upon our status as a National Center of Excellence in Low Vision and Vision Rehabilitation and sustain our programs for the blind and visually impaired of all ages. You can contribute by using the enclosed business return envelope or by visiting our website: [miamilighthouse.org](http://miamilighthouse.org).

The luncheon was emceed by Marissa and Julia Bagg, NBC-6 journalists. Students in our Miami Lighthouse Academy second grade class performed a heartwarming musical rendition of “This Little Light of Mine,” and an inspiring keynote speech was given by Dr. Kirk Adams, Managing Partner, Innovative Impact LLC and Former President and CEO of American Foundation for the Blind. The call to action continued with a moving testimonial by Caterina Sastri, Miami Lighthouse Board Director, and her son Lorenzo, a Miami Lighthouse Academy graduate. Caterina and Lorenzo shared the many ways, big and small, by which attendees can help make a difference at Miami Lighthouse.

The event raised over \$200,000 which will be matched dollar for dollar by the new 95th Anniversary Fund to Sustain Programs or The Wildflower Foundation Matching Challenge for art and music. Sponsors for this year’s luncheon included TD Bank, Avante-NEA Insurance Group, The H. Angela Whitman Foundation, Norma Jean Abraham, Genesis Systems Consulting and Murgado Automotive Group.



*Miami Lighthouse Board Directors David Harrison and Peter Harrison, CEO Virginia Jacko, and Michael Harrison*



*Norma Jean Abraham and CEO Virginia Jacko*



*Emcees Marissa and Julia Bagg, NBC-6 journalists*

## EVENTS

### Another Great “White Cane Day” Celebration!

October 15th, 2023, marked another successful White Cane Day celebration at Miami Lighthouse. White Cane Day was established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 in an effort to raise awareness of the white cane as both a tool and a symbol of independence for the blind. As part of the festivities, 150 blind and visually impaired program participants walked together along Calle Ocho to emphasize the importance of programs like those offered at Miami Lighthouse.

We are especially grateful for the City of Miami Police Department and the Department of Fire-Rescue, event Emcee Gisella Aboumrad and sponsors of our community event including Uber, McDonald’s, Tropical Financial Credit Union, Vispero, Verizon Tracfone, Ambutech, Mattingly Low Vision, Keiser University and 305 Hive.



*Billy the Marlin; Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins; CEO Virginia Jacko; Kevin Roque, Aide to Miami-Dade County Commissioner Micky Steinberg; Giovanni Castro representing Uber; and Chyrstie Gonzalez del Valle, Chief of Staff to M-DCPS Board Member Lucia Baez-Geller with Miami-Dade Office of the Mayor with the Board of County Commissioners proclamation commemorating White Cane Day 2023.*

*White Cane Day 2023*



### “Valentine’s Luncheon” Celebrates our Volunteers

Miami Lighthouse celebrated Valentine’s Day with our annual McCrea Family Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. Saying “thank you” to our volunteers is a longstanding tradition made possible by the McCrea Family Foundation, whose legacy of volunteerism began in our very early days when Helen Sloan McCrea (1989-1978) devoted herself to the important mission of serving the blind.

This year’s lunch honored the Miami Springs Lions Club and the Rotary Club of Miami, who have held events throughout the year to put food in backpacks for students attending our Miami Lighthouse Academy thereby preventing food insecurity among our Miami Lighthouse Academy families. Our volunteer Board Directors, Honorary Board Directors, and Legal Counsel were also honored.



Although not in attendance at the luncheon, we want to recognize volunteer Joan Spector who conceived of our Light Line™ blog 10 years ago. Since inception, Joan has donated her time each month to build the content for our blog.

We extend special heartfelt thanks to David B. McCrea for his continued sponsorship of this signature event.

*Joan Spector*



*Miami Springs Lions Club District 35-N and The Rotary Club of Miami were honored at the McCrea Family Volunteer Recognition Luncheon*



*Miami Lighthouse Board Chairman Steven Solomon, Director Dr. Stephen Morris, Director Robin Shelley, Past Board Chairman George Foyo and Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser*

## STAFF NEWS

### Congratulations Carol Brady-Simmons, our Chief Program Officer!

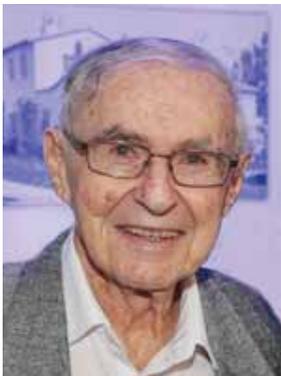


*Carol Brady-Simmons,  
Chief Program Officer*

We are proud to announce that 2024 marks 35 years of outstanding service by our Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons. Carol brings both energy and creativity to the many projects she undertakes. She has served in several different capacities during her tenure at Miami Lighthouse including Chair of Orientation and Mobility, Interim Director of Adult Services, Director of Children’s Services and Director of the Low Vision Program. She is also responsible for starting our highly successful Blind Babies Program and has also overseen daily operation of our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program.

We extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to Carol for her expertise and the crucial role she performs as our Chief Program Officer at Miami Lighthouse.

## IN MEMORIAM



*Dr. Murray Heiken*

Dr. Murray Heiken passed away on March 12, 2024. Our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program was founded in 1992 by the Miami-Dade Optometric Physicians Association as the Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund in memory of their colleague, Dr. Bruce Heiken, Murray and Rosalyn Heiken’s son, who frequently provided free eye care to children.

The Heiken Fund was Florida’s first program providing free eye care and eyeglasses to children without other access to vision care. Since its inception, the Heiken Program has provided over 203,500 comprehensive eye exams and more than 147,600 prescription glasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged schoolchildren throughout the state.

We extend our sympathy to Rosalyn along with our heartfelt gratitude for her and Murray’s support of our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program.

# SAVE THE DATE

## Music Under the Stars

Honoring Dr. Jose L. Dotres,  
Superintendent of Miami-Dade  
County Public Schools  
Wednesday, May 8th, 2024  
at Miami Lighthouse

## White Cane Day

Tuesday, October 15th, 2024  
at Miami Lighthouse

## See the Light Luncheon

Thursday, November 14th, 2024  
at The Historic Biltmore Hotel



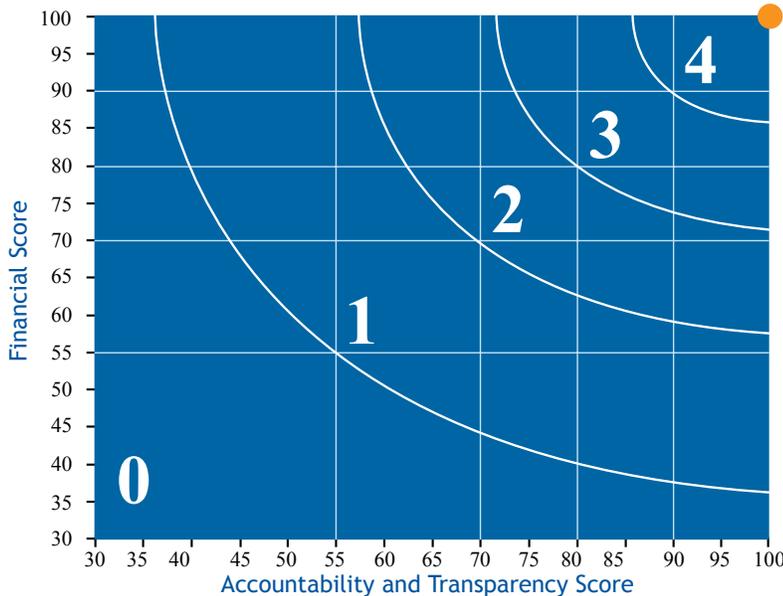
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Please assure delivery by April 15, 2024

## CURRENT CHARITY NAVIGATOR SCORES

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has received 13 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator. Only 1% of the charities rated by Charity Navigator have received 13 consecutive 4-star ratings indicating that Miami Lighthouse outperforms most other charities in America.



	SCORE (out of 100)	RATING
OVERALL	100.00	★★★★★
• Financial	100.00	★★★★★
• Accountability & Transparency	100.00	★★★★★



Source: Miami Lighthouse listing  
on Charity Navigator website  
[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

## CHARITY NAVIGATOR ENCOMPASS BEACONS

### 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.

### CULTURE AND COMMUNITY 100%

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

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](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)