



# LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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## Welcome Back to School at Miami Lighthouse Academy

Our Miami Lighthouse Academy welcomed students back to school on August 23rd. This year is special as we had second graders join our Academy for the very first time. We recently celebrated the Grand Opening of the classroom expansion to our Miami Lighthouse Academy and excitement was in the air.

To sustain our nationally recognized programs for children ages one through eight, an announcement was made at the Ribbon Cutting by a very generous philanthropist that donations up to \$1 Million would be matched to support our Miami Lighthouse Academy Sustainability. Additionally, we have The Family Foundation matching challenge of \$50,000 to hire a full time nurse, fitness, music and art instructor. Your continuing support is crucial to sustain Miami Lighthouse's most venerable mission of educating blind early learners. To have your donation doubled today, [click here](#).



*Arianna on the first day of school*

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## Miami Lighthouse student is a finalist in the International Braille Challenge

We are so proud to tell you about 9-year old Jeremy “JJ” Matthews, one of our talented students, who was a finalist in an international braille literacy competition. JJ was among 50 finalists from the U.S. and Canada competing in the Braille Challenge, a test of reading and writing skills for blind and visually impaired children. He was one of only 10 finalists in his age group.

JJ was diagnosed with bilateral retinoblastoma, a form of pediatric cancer, when he was 15 months old, eventually rendering him completely blind. At age 3, he began learning the fundamentals of braille. Today he is amazingly adept on his braille tablet, especially during the pandemic when he was able to do his assignments on Microsoft Word in braille and then email them to his teachers who received them in regular print. To read more, [click here](#).



*Jeremy "JJ" Matthews a finalist in the international braille literacy competition*

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## **Miami Marlins make an impact this summer with our Miami Lighthouse teenage students**

This summer, Miami Lighthouse music student Kaden, performed the “Star Spangled Banner” on his trumpet, at a recent Miami Marlins baseball game with our Director of Music Programs, Zachary Brown. Kaden participates in both our Transition and Music Programs. After initially learning to play the piano, he began playing the trumpet about five years ago. He is prolific at reading Braille music, which is the only way a blind musician can read music directly. Click below to watch his performance.



*Video of Kaden and Zachary performing at the Miami Marlins game*

As part of the Miami Marlins Impact Week presented by UKG our teenage students visited loanDepot Park for a Beep Ball game on the field and special Touch Tour which allowed them to feel, smell and hear different aspects of a baseball game. To read more, [click here](#).



*Our teenage summer camp students attend the tour and game with Billy the Marlin*

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## **Miami Women's Club makes another generous donation to Miami Lighthouse**

Our warmest thanks goes out to the Miami Women's Club once again for making a very generous monetary donation to Miami Lighthouse. This gift will go a long way towards enabling our seniors to continue engaging their creative abilities. The donation will be used to purchase much needed art supplies, such as, large and medium size canvases, macramé cords, beads and gem stones, colorful markers, paint and paint brushes. We look forward to posting examples of our seniors' remarkable artistic work in the near future.



*The Miami Women's Club presents check to support seniors who are blind*

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## Getting students ready for Back to School during Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month. Miami Kids Magazine and our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program recently provided free eye exams and glasses for financially disadvantaged students as part of Back to School celebrations. Over 50 schoolchildren received a comprehensive eye exam with dilation. By receiving prescribed glasses these students in need are getting the best chance at academic success this school year. We thank Miami Kids Magazine for their marketing efforts and for helping students get back to school and ready to learn.



*Student chooses her favorite frame from our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program*

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## In the News:

[MLB, August 11, 2021 – "The Miami Marlins and the Miami Marlins Foundation continue giving back to the South Florida community with the return of Impact Week presented by UKG"](#)

[Community Newspaper, August 10, 2021 – "Miami Lighthouse Academy expands classroom space, sets grand opening"](#)

[CBS Miami, August 10, 2021 – "Miami Lighthouse For The Blind Campers Get VIP Treatment During 'Touch Tour'"](#)

[South Florida Hospital News, August 9, 2021 – "Miami Lighthouse Academy Expands Its Classroom Space Announces Grand Opening"](#)

[Read more!](#)

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*Contributed by Joan Spector*

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