



## MEDIA ALERT

### MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE PROVIDING FREE VISION CARE TO LOTUS HOUSE CHILDREN ON OCTOBER 29 TO CELEBRATE WORLD BLINDNESS AWARENESS MONTH

WHAT: Free vision examinations and glasses for sheltered children

WHERE: Lotus House Women's Shelter  
217 Northwest 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 33136

WHEN: Thursday, October 29, 2020, 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

**\*Press must arrive between 7:00-7:45pm and must present press/media badges or identification. All press will be temperature checked before entry is allowed and will be given an KN95 mask to wear at all times\***

WHO: Provided by Miami Lighthouse for the Blind  
Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

DETAILS: Free eye examinations and prescription glasses will be given to more than 30 sheltered children at Lotus House, a safe haven for women, youth and children experiencing homelessness, by licensed optometrists in a fully equipped mobile optometric unit operated by a subsidiary of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind & Visually Impaired, The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program.

"Too many underprivileged children suffer from undiagnosed vision problems that limit their abilities to learn." said Virginia Jacko, President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse. "October is Blindness Awareness Month and our Heiken Program is committed to preserving the sight of all children at Lotus House and throughout Florida whose vision issues would otherwise go undiagnosed."

The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, in collaboration with a network of nearly 1,000 optometrists and five mobile eye care units throughout the State, take primary eye care directly to Florida's school children. Each year, more than 1,000 schools from Tallahassee to Key West refer underserved children, so that the Heiken Program can provide free dilated eye examinations and prescription glasses to needy children whose families cannot afford these services. An important component of these comprehensive eye exams is prevention of blindness and 320

school children last school year were referred for medical intervention for retinal tears, glaucoma and other eye abnormalities. Approximately 77 percent of all children examined require and receive prescription eyeglasses, confirming the importance of a follow-up eye exam after a student fails the state-mandated vision screening.

“Miami Lighthouse’s Heiken Program is making a real difference in the lives of the participating youngsters, giving them the type of eye care that their families would not otherwise be able to afford,” said Constance Collins, President and Executive Director of the Lotus House, Sundari Foundation. “This vital vision service complements Lotus House’s goal of putting children first in ending homelessness and what better way to conclude Blindness Awareness Month than to offer these eye examinations at no cost to our children.”

Lotus House is an organization dedicated to improving the lives of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness – some of the most vulnerable in our community. It provides sanctuary, support, education, tools and resources that empower them to heal, learn, grow and blossom into who they are truly meant to be.

The Heiken Program has successfully implemented safety protocols on the mobile eye care units that follow and comply with COVID-19 Safety Guidelines of the American Optometric Association and the Center for Disease Control.