



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **First-ever 'Dog-a-thon' at the Shops at Midtown Miami Benefitting the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

March 30, 2008—Walkers and their dogs, including guide dogs, other service animals and regular pet companions, will walk to support Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired Sunday, March 30. Registration for the first annual Dog-a-Thon begins at 9 a.m. at the Shops at Midtown Miami at 3401 N. Miami Avenue in the PetSmart garage. Free parking is available in the garage. Walkers are welcome with or without dogs.

A leisurely dog walk begins at 10 a.m., followed at 11 by contests for most talented dog, dog with the best smile and dog/owner look-alike. At 11:30 there will be a Working Dogs Demonstration, a Seeing Eye Dog presentation and the presentation of the PetSmart "Canine Good Citizen." Walkers who collect more than \$50 in pledges for Miami Lighthouse will receive a free Britto-designed T-shirt. Funds raised will help support the many vision rehabilitation programs at Miami Lighthouse, which include preliminary training for the use of a guide dog.

“This will be a fun day, and my guide dog Gibney and I are looking forward to meeting lots of people and their pets and guide dogs” said Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko, who is totally blind. “Besides raising money for our great programs at Miami Lighthouse, the Dog-a-Thon is a wonderful awareness-raiser for the presence of service animals of all kinds in our community. They are not pets; it is a working relationship. Gibney and I work together as a team and it takes a lot of effort and mutual trust.”

Miami Lighthouse prepares blind people who plan to use guide dogs by providing Orientation & Mobility training; successful completion of this training is a prerequisite for attending guide dog school.

Throughout the day musicians from the Miami Lighthouse’s innovative Music Program will provide entertainment. Some things to remember: don’t touch a guide dog that is in harness, or you may distract it from its work. Always keep other dogs well away from guide animals.

A registration and pledge form may be downloaded at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org). On-site registration is \$20; the fee is waived for visually impaired walkers. The Dog-a-Thon is sponsored by PetSmart, Ameriprise Financial, the Shops at Midtown Miami Romero Britto, Dunkin Donuts and Multivision Video and Film.

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Miami Lighthouse for the Blind is Florida’s largest and oldest agency serving the blind and visually impaired. In addition to providing free vision care to thousands of financially disadvantaged children each year, Miami Lighthouse helps more than two thousand blind and visually impaired people and their families learn to live safe and independent lives while coping with vision loss. For more information please visit [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org) or to schedule a tour call Julia King at 305-856-2288, ext. 249.

#### MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide vision rehabilitation  
and eye health services  
that promote independence,  
to educate professionals, and  
to conduct research in related fields.