



contact:

Virginia A. Jacko, President 305-856-4176

or Bryan Wolynski, O.D., Statewide Manager 786-362-7526

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FLORIDA HEIKEN CHILDREN'S VISION PROGRAM WILL SERVE SCHOOLCHILDREN THROUGHOUT FLORIDA

MIAMI--Jan. 17, 2010--The Miami Lighthouse Heiken Children's Vision Program in the three years since the merger that created it has brought free eye care to more than 6,000 underprivileged schoolchildren in Miami-Dade County in 2010. It is interesting to note that 75% of these children required prescription glasses which the program provided at no cost to the child. This outcome immediately leads to improved success in school.

Because of the strong infrastructure of this program, a contract was awarded in 2011 by the Florida Department of Health to provide these services to low-income children in 62 additional Florida counties (from which Orange, Seminole, Lake and Volusia counties are excluded). The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program LLC, as a newly created division of Miami Lighthouse, is collaborating with the Florida Optometric Physicians Network throughout the State of Florida. At the January 25th School Board meeting, a cooperative agreement will be executed so that needy children in Broward Public Schools can immediately begin receiving these services. As the program expands to counties north and west from Broward as far as Jacksonville and beyond, the number of children served by the program will increase to more than 10,000 per year.

"Miami Lighthouse has the capacity to take on this challenge," said CEO Virginia A. Jacko. "It is vital for every child in Florida to be able to see the board and keep up in class, because we know that uncorrected vision often goes untreated and leads to academic and behavior problems. The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program at Miami Lighthouse will transform the lives of tens of thousands of students in Florida."

The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program has its origins in the Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund, created by the Dade County Optometric Association. Since its inception in 1992 more than 55,000 financially disadvantaged children who failed school vision screenings but had no way to get eye care have received comprehensive eye examinations from a network of optometrists and eyeglasses when prescribed. Research by the American Optometric Association indicates that vision problems in children and teenagers may contribute to poor school performance, behavior issues and delinquency. Students with poor vision cannot see the board or do close work and fall behind in class. The Florida Heiken Program will ensure that schoolchildren in Florida's public schools who have no other access to eye care will no longer have to struggle because of low vision, which usually is easily corrected.

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, wrote in a letter of support, "The nationally-recognized financial and operation strengths of Miami Lighthouse and your strong statewide network of eye care professionals will ensure a highly successful state-wide implementation of the Heiken program."

###

Acknowledgements: Sincere appreciation is expressed to Sidney Stern, OD, a founding member of the Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund, Inc., for underwriting a substantial portion of the eyewear costs and for enabling the expansion of the Miami Lighthouse Florida Heiken Program to other counties in Florida through his managed care network of optometrists. Also, the following contributors have made a major impact in sustaining and expanding the program: Florida Optometric Association Charities, American Optometric Association, the National Eye Institute Community Awards Program, the Florida Department of Health, the Children's Trust of Greater Miami, the Batchelor Foundation, the Dunspaugh-Dalton Foundation, the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation and our trusted funding partner, Health Foundation of South Florida which has not only provided funding but unique leadership in bringing together the Directors of two distinct non-profit Boards creating a united mission for the future of Florida's children.

For additional information contact vjacko@miamilighthouse.org

###

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.*