



PHILANTHROPIST GLORIA MARTIN HONORED AT INAUGURAL
MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE WOMEN OF VISION LUNCHEON

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MIAMI—October 25, 2007— Philanthropist Gloria Martin received the first Miami Lighthouse Woman of Vision award at the inaugural Miami Lighthouse Women of Vision luncheon, in recognition of her incentive matching gift of more than \$1.1 million to Miami Lighthouse in 2006.

The event took place October 24 at René Ruiz Couture in Coral Gables. “We plan to make Women of Vision an annual event,” said CEO Virginia A. Jacko, “in order to recognize the increasingly prominent role of female philanthropists.”

CEO Jacko introduced a vision for a Center of Excellence in vision rehabilitation to an enthusiastic audience at the luncheon.

“Miami Lighthouse always has looked to the future, anticipating what our clients will need and setting the pace for vision rehabilitation,” said CEO Jacko, who is blind. “The Center of Excellence will, among other things, meet a growing need for vision rehabilitation and education specialists, and enhance our understanding of how to use technology to help the blind.”

Current research indicates that the blind and visually impaired population will dramatically increase in coming decades. Already, many blind and visually impaired people have needs that are not being met; those needs will continue to grow. A lack of trained personnel has contributed to a generation of blind children for the most part not gaining proficiency in Braille and other school-readiness skills. The Miami Lighthouse

recently established collaboration agreements with Miami-Dade Public Schools, Florida State University, Florida International University, and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute to begin to address the shortage of Occupational Therapists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRTs), Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists and Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), but much more remains to be done.

The Center of Excellence in Vision Rehabilitation and Low Vision envisioned by Miami Lighthouse will train a variety of professionals to serve the blind and visually impaired, while serving as a resource center, practicum site, and living laboratory for developing standards and protocols for rehabilitation, therapy and education. The Center of Excellence will offer a wealth of training and research and service opportunities drawing on programs already in existence at Miami Lighthouse.

“Miami Lighthouse is uniquely positioned to become a benchmark training and research center for professionals who work with the blind and visually impaired,” CEO Jacko told the crowd of more than fifty business women and community leaders. “I am asking for your thoughts and assistance as the Center for Excellence concept is developed and executed,” she added.

Virginia A. Jacko was a successful and experienced executive when her vision began to deteriorate from retinitis pigmentosa. She eventually became totally blind, and came to the Miami Lighthouse first as a client in 2001; after completing her rehabilitation she became President and CEO in 2005. Her own experiences as a Miami Lighthouse client, volunteer and now as CEO, as well as her considerable executive experience prior to losing her eyesight, have given her a keen awareness of how much remains to be done for the future of blind and visually impaired Floridians. Earlier this year Virginia Jacko was named Business Woman of the Year by the *South Florida Business Journal*, and she received the Baptist Health Community Service Award/American Red Cross Spectrum Award in 2006.

Sponsors for the first Women of Vision luncheon were René Ruiz Couture, *Social Affairs* magazine, and BNY Mellon.

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