



## **MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND EXPANDS CLASSROOMS AND NAMES ITS SCHOOL MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY AT “TOPPING-OUT” CEREMONY**

MIAMI – Miami Lighthouse for the Blind will celebrate the “topping-out” of its expanded facility with a ceremony on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 12PM unveiling its school’s new name, Miami Lighthouse Academy. In a multifaceted educational approach to serving students who are blind, the school which contains pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grades, is one component within the Miami Lighthouse’s Children’s Programs. Other Children’s Programs include Early Intervention for Blind Babies and services for elementary and middle school children during the summer, school holidays and Saturdays.

The “topping-out” ceremony pays homage to a long-held construction tradition marking the installation of the highest piece of structural steel on the new building’s fifth floor roof. Construction is expected to be completed in time to begin the new school year in August 2021.

Miami Lighthouse, located for nearly 90 years at what would become known as “Little Havana”, at 601 Southwest 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Campus, will host the “topping-out” ceremony in collaboration with Miller Construction Company and Wolfberg Alvarez Architects. The 30,000 sq. ft. expansion to the current 115,000 sq. ft. facility was made possible by private donations in response to challenge grants from local philanthropists.

This classroom expansion will enable Miami Lighthouse Academy to have the capacity to teach blind kindergarten, first and second grade students in a highly accessible learning environment separate from their early learning Pre-school/Pre-kindergarten early learners.

Blind and visually impaired children from communities throughout Miami-Dade learn side-by-side with their sighted classmates from the surrounding neighborhood, ages one through four enrolled in our 50/50 inclusive learning environment that has been recognized as a national model for inclusive learning. This unique learning initiative, in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, The Children’s Trust and the Early Learning Coalition of Miami Dade/Monroe, addresses a need identified by the U.S. Department of Education to support inclusion of children with disabilities and school readiness in a high quality learning environment. The Miami Lighthouse Academy has been designed as a safe, family centered program with a wide array of tactile experiences through which early learners explore the world around them in an accessible, engaging and fun way.

Established in 1930 by Dolly Gamble with the aid of Helen Keller and support from the Miami Lions and Miami Rotary Clubs, Miami Lighthouse is the oldest and largest private agency in Florida assisting persons of all ages who are blind and visually impaired. Today, Miami Lighthouse annually transforms the lives of 90,000 blind and visually impaired people, babies to seniors, and their families. The impact of programs is statewide, national, and international. For more information about Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, visit [MiamiLighthouse.org](http://MiamiLighthouse.org), or call 305-856-2288.