



## Miami Lighthouse Unveils Blind Soccer Mini Pitch

We celebrated the dedication of our Blind Soccer Mini Pitch on February 24th, marking a major milestone for our campus and our Comprehensive Blind Soccer Initiative. Miami Lighthouse has developed the first comprehensive blind soccer curriculum for young early learners, ages one to four. In collaboration with the U.S. Association for Blind Athletes (USABA), our Comprehensive Blind Soccer Initiative for Miami's young children and youth with a vision disability aims to overcome challenges for visually impaired students who could benefit by learning and participating in a team sport.

As a recipient of the highly competitive Children's Trust Innovation Grant, Miami Lighthouse's Comprehensive Blind Soccer Initiative aims to reach 85 youth, ages one to twenty-two, and teach them the game of blind soccer.



*Blind Soccer Mini Pitch Ribbon Cutting*



*Gio, a student in in our Academy's toddler class, attends blind soccer training sessions twice a week led by a USABA certified coach*

Nine Miami Lighthouse employees and three community soccer experts received training from USABA to earn their blind soccer coach credentials. Miami-Dade County Public Schools, led by Superintendent Dr. Jose L. Dotres, is planning to

introduce blind soccer so that children with and without sight can play the sport together.

Our Comprehensive Blind Soccer Initiative is made possible with grant funding from The Children's Trust, U.S. Association of Blind Athletes, and the Honda USA Foundation. Miami Lighthouse has the first blind soccer pitch in Miami thanks to the generosity of the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation, AJNFF Family Foundation, Dixie Landscape and SFM Services. To support our Blind Soccer Program, visit [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org).

## FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH FOR 95 YEARS AND BEYOND

You can participate in our 95th Anniversary Matching Challenge to sustain programs for the blind and visually impaired by making a donation using the enclosed business reply envelope or by donating online at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)

## Inter Miami CF Hosts Fútbol Clinic for Miami Lighthouse Students

Miami Lighthouse students participated in an Inter Miami CF Fútbol Clinic in early October at Chase Stadium and the Florida Blue Training Center. Inter Miami CF and Florida Blue partnered to provide Miami Lighthouse Pre-Employment Transition Program teenagers with a fascinating touch tour and fútbol clinic. The specially designed clinic taught the students the history, basic skills and rules of soccer, and students used beeping soccer balls that enabled them to locate the soccer balls by sound. The Inter Miami CF HR Department also spoke to Miami Lighthouse's Pre-Employment Transition Program teens about different job opportunities within the organization. The clinic was arranged by Florida Blue in collaboration with Inter Miami CF. "The competitive and physical nature of soccer brings to life our Miami Lighthouse for the Blind slogan that 'It's Possible to See Without Sight™'," said CEO Virginia Jacko.



*Members of Florida Blue and Inter Miami CF with our Pre-Employment Transition Students at Chase Stadium*

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FOUNDED 1992

A DIVISION OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR  
THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED, INC.

### Miami Lighthouse

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## Chairman's Letter

Friends of Miami Lighthouse,


Please take a few minutes to read this semi-annual newsletter, the *Lantern*, which highlights our incredible achievements and provides details of our strategic initiatives.

There are four components of our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, and you can learn more about these initiatives elsewhere in this newsletter.

1. In order to ensure that Miami Lighthouse has the financial capacity to sustainably meet the increasing demand for services, we have created our 95th Anniversary Campaign to raise \$9.5 million which will be invested to sustain and grow our programs for another 95 years. Steadfast donors have committed to matching \$4.75 million, of which \$1.5 million has already been committed and matched. We now need to raise the remaining \$3.25 million.
2. Our Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center was created to address this critical global problem. With proper intervention, children with CVI can better access their world visually. Our CVI initiative has received a \$2 million gift for a two-year interdisciplinary study that started in 2024 and concludes in 2026.
3. After approval by our Board of Directors, discussions are underway with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to begin third grade in our Academy this upcoming fall semester to prepare visually impaired students for standardized testing in fourth grade when they move to their community schools.
4. On February 24th we dedicated our blind soccer pitch. The initial objective of our comprehensive blind soccer program for 85 learners ages one to twenty-two is to overcome challenges for visually impaired students who could benefit by learning and participating in a team sport.

Over the past 95 years we have grown and are now serving more than 28,000 program participants annually. Our special thanks to all those who have given time and financial contributions in furtherance of our mission. I am proud to be a part of this amazing institution and grateful for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Solomon  
Chairman, Board of Directors



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## PROGRAMS

### Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Diagnostic Indicators and Educational Best Practices for Affected Children

With a generous \$2 million gift, our Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center brought together a team of interdisciplinary healthcare professionals and research data scientists along with our Miami Lighthouse CVI team. Project collaborating institutions with subcontracts on this research include experts from UM's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Nova Southeastern University and others. Since inception, our Academy experts have conducted 140 assessments, with 98 first assessments, 34 second assessments, and 8 third assessments.

Collaborators acknowledge that current assessment tools are not perfect, lacking in reliability, validity, and utility. The team has conducted a systematic review of nearly 30 assessment tools and is developing a validated combined tool.

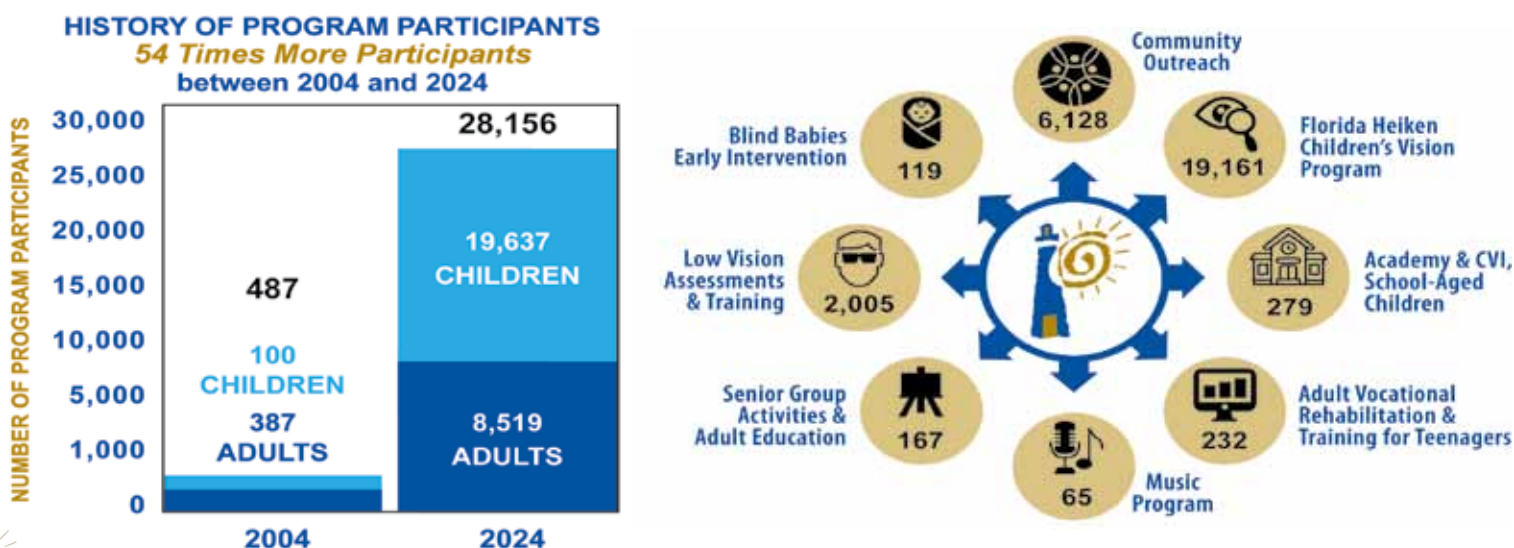
The neonatal visual assessment European grid (NAVEG) tool is being used to screen newborns for potential visual impairments. The tool has been successfully introduced in the NICU at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, and plans are in place to expand this initiative to other hospitals in Miami-Dade and Early Steps.



While CVI is a complex and often challenging condition to diagnose and manage, early screening and diagnosis, appropriate assessment, and individualized clinical and educational interventions can lead to significant improvement for children. By shining a spotlight on this condition and being the first in Florida to open a statewide CVI Collaborative Center, Miami Lighthouse hopes to set an example and provide a blueprint for others looking to make an impact on CVI. If a child has CVI, the key is getting the child the help they need as early as possible. With all the technology available at our fingertips, no child should be left behind due to a lack of diagnostic clarity.

*Aimee, a student with CVI, started at the Miami Lighthouse Academy in the toddler class. She is currently in first grade and continues to show improvement in her visual and cognitive skills, and her ability to engage with her learning environment is steadily growing. With ongoing support, Aimee is thriving and working hard to reach her developmental milestones. In this picture, Aimee is celebrating her birthday and was excited to share with her classmates the goodie bags she put together.*

## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE SERVES 28,156 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ANNUALLY



## Miami Lighthouse Academy

As part of our Strategic Plan 2023-2025, discussions have been underway with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) leadership to add third grade to our Miami Lighthouse Academy starting fall semester of 2025. With an award from The Miami-Dade Impact Collaborative, we are optimistic that the school board will support this expansion.



### *Why Add Third Grade?*

Third grade is a pivotal year in a child's academic journey, particularly for blind and visually impaired children because the standardized tests in fourth grade can determine a child's future academic track. Parent and teacher feedback demonstrates that visually impaired students need to be taught how to access and successfully complete standardized testing.

By adding third grade our goal is to prepare visually impaired students for standardized testing beginning in fourth grade when they move to their community schools by solidifying students' academic foundation and reading proficiency and familiarizing them with accessible testing materials or alternative formats. Our objective is to empower most children with a vision disability on their Individualized Education Program to enter fourth grade on an equal footing with their sighted peers.

To learn more about our Miami Lighthouse Academy or schedule a tour, please contact our Program Coordinator at 786-362-7483 or e-mail our Academy Director, Mara Gonzalez, at [MGonzalez@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:MGonzalez@miamilighthouse.org).

## Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

Our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program prevents blindness by providing comprehensive eye health and comprehensive vision exams and prescription eyeglasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged students statewide in grades Pre-K through 12.

The need for vision care among Florida's children has never been more urgent. Last year, our Heiken Program faced an overwhelming 30,000 requests for service – an all-time high. While we provided 18,000 comprehensive eye exams, a staggering 12,000 low-income children were left without the essential vision care they desperately need. This year the demand has skyrocketed, already outpacing last year by an alarming 36%. Yet, despite this unprecedented surge, our ability to serve these children has been crippled by a devastating \$500,000 funding cut from the Department of Health, leaving thousands of children at risk of falling through the cracks. To help schoolchildren in need of crucial eye care, please visit our website and make a donation earmarked for our Heiken Program.



## Monster Jam invites Miami Lighthouse Academy Students for Sensory Experience

On January 24th, our early elementary school kindergarten through second grade Miami Lighthouse Academy students were invited to visit Monster Truck Jam® at LoanDepot Park to “Touch a Monster Truck,” a unique multisensory experience. NBC-6 captured video of this very special event that allowed our blind and visually impaired students to engage in hands-on, interactive activities through their sense of touch, smell and hearing. To watch the NBC-6 video, please visit our website [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org), select the “News and Events” tab and then “In the News” and click on “NBC6, January 31, 2025, ‘Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired Students to Visit Monster Truck Jam® for Touch-A-Truck Multisensory Experience’.”



*Miami Lighthouse students at Monster Truck Jam®*

## Wing Chun Training

Miami Lighthouse provides Wing Chun training for self-protection and defense to our adult program participants who are blind and visually impaired. Wing Chun is one of the youngest and most contemporary styles of Kung Fu, having been constantly refined and adapted over its 300-year existence.

Why Wing Chun? Wing Chun is a Chinese martial arts style that emphasizes close-quarters combat, often practiced with a focus on tactile sensitivity, which allows practitioners to effectively defend themselves even when partially or completely blindfolded, making it an ideal technique for those who are blind. We are grateful for a generous donor who brought Wing Chun instructor Robert Collazo to Miami Lighthouse.



*Wing Chun Instructor Robert Collazo works on close-quarters self defense with Carlos Argueta, a participant in our Social Group Activities Program*

## Lions Essay Contest Winner!

We are thrilled to share that Jeremy Camacho, a talented student from the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, won the Lions International District 35-N Peace Essay Contest. This recognition highlights the incredible talent and dedication of our students. Congratulations to Jeremy, and thank you to everyone who supports our programs!



## PROGRAM SUPPORT

### Blue Water Shipping Check Presentation



*Blue Water Shipping employees Marisabel Porcell, Paula Pereira da Silva and Christian Finnern present check to Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko and Senior Vice President of External Relations Cameron Sisser*

We thank the Blue Water Foundation for its generous donation. This funding will enable us to ensure sustainability and program growth for the blind and visually impaired such as our Pre-Employment Transition Program that assists young people ages 14-22 to develop skills to enter the workforce or post-secondary education.

These students learn important life skills like home and personal management, assistive technology, job readiness, orientation and mobility, social skills and community integration. We thank the more than 1,500 colleagues from over 80 locations in more than 30 countries that came together in Miami to celebrate Blue Water Shipping's birthday and to raise funds for Miami's non-profits. We were honored to be among the organizations chosen to receive

their support. On behalf of all our program participants, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Blue Water Foundation.

### Addressing Food Insecurity

"UiPath Americas was honored to collaborate with Miami Lighthouse and the Lions Club Hunger Relief Committee at our 2025 Sales Kick Off in Miami. Integrating local volunteer opportunities into our events is a huge passion point for our organization. It's not only a way to support the local community but it's how we build that same sense of community within our team. Over 300 UiPathers participated, and in less than an hour we finished packing over 200 food bags for youth and seniors! With the Lions' '50s playlist keeping us energized, this experience was a highlight of the week. We were so grateful for the opportunity to partner with Miami Lighthouse on this important cause," said Ben Fiechtner, President, Americas at UiPath.



*UiPath CFO Ashim Gupta, President and CEO Virginia Jacko, Lion Elizabeth Fisher and UiPath President Ben Fiechtner*

CEO Virginia noted, "More than eighty percent of our blind and visually impaired students and seniors are low income and face food insecurity on a daily basis. Thanks to all UiPath employees and the Lions Club Hunger Relief Committee for participating in Miami Lighthouse's biggest food packing event ever and for helping solve food insecurity among our blind and visually impaired program participants."

## EVENTS

### 2025 McCrea Family Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

Miami Lighthouse celebrated Valentine's Day with our annual McCrea Family Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. This year three exceptional individual volunteers were honored: Julietta Jacobs, Yuki Sommer, and Dr. Robert B. Jacko. Julietta and Yuki through their work with the Ceramic League of Miami volunteered with both our seniors and Miami Lighthouse Academy students. Dr. Jacko saved Miami Lighthouse countless man hours and money doing an array of volunteer work including completing on an annual basis the Energy Star building performance standards.



*Miami Lighthouse Board Directors: Mauricio Villasuso, Robin Shelley, Jill Granat, Chair Steven Solomon, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Directors Deborah Montilla, Laura Lagomasino-Sabo, Scott Richey, Charles Nielson, and Stacey Jones*

We also celebrated Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs for their ongoing support, and we recognized our volunteer Board Directors, Honorary Board Directors, Legal Counsel, and the many volunteers who give their time to volunteer in our programs. This cherished tradition is made possible through the generosity of the McCrea Family Foundation, whose commitment to volunteerism began in our earliest days when Helen Sloan McCrea (1898-1978) dedicated herself to serving the blind community.



*Lions Club Members*



*Rotary Club Members*



### The 16th Annual Engaging the Low Vision Community through Education, Research, and Service

On February 1st, Miami Lighthouse in collaboration with Florida International University's Nichole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Department held our annual continuing education seminar for 40 occupational and physical therapists and OT and PT assistants and students.

The goal of the seminar is to empower healthcare professionals in attendance with the knowledge they require to meet the needs of the growing number of patients impacted by vision loss. We are grateful to the Deering Trust for funding that enables us to conduct this seminar for which professionals obtain seven continuing education credits.



On the survey conducted at the conclusion of the seminar, attendees' satisfaction ratings averaged 98%. Responses to the question, "What information did you find most useful?" included, "Everything! Especially all the devices available for the visually impaired clients," "Guidance techniques and Cortical Visual Impairment presentation," and "How assistive devices can support client independence."

*Rachel Echevarria, Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, spoke to attendees about adaptive devices for the blind and visually impaired*



## A Weekend with Maestro Andrea Bocelli

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Anthony R. Abraham Foundation for inviting Miami Lighthouse to the Heart and Music Charity Dinner at Britto Palace, benefitting the Andrea Bocelli Foundation. It was an honor to meet the evening's distinguished guest, the legendary Maestro Andrea Bocelli, and his wife Veronica Berti Bocelli. Adding to the magic their talented daughter, Virginia, delighted the audience with her incredible voice.

The weekend featured a memorable performance by Maestro Bocelli at the Kaseya Center. Bocelli's production company, Gelb Productions, generously donated an allotment of tickets for the holiday performance. Our guests attended an intimate Italian dinner before the show that served as a fundraiser for Miami Lighthouse.



*Norma Jean Abraham, Miami Lighthouse Musician Oman Pedreira, Miami Lighthouse Music Program graduate Silvio Plata, CEO Virginia Jacko, Vice President Gelb Productions Pete Kepes, Thomas Abraham and Senior Vice President Cameron Sisser at the Bocelli Holiday Concert*

*Veronica Bocelli and Andrea Bocelli with Virginia Bocelli who received a kiss from CEO Jacko's Guide Dog Sama*



## Miami Lighthouse Hosts the Executive Committee of the Miami-Dade Beacon Council

The Miami-Dade Beacon Council Executive Committee, a powerhouse of local leaders championing economic prosperity in our community, held its year-end meeting at Miami Lighthouse. Among them was Rodrick Miller, President and CEO of The Beacon Council, who is also a Miami Lighthouse Board Director and proud father to one of our Miami Lighthouse Academy's role-model VPK students. At the meeting, Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko led a conversation on the critical role businesses play in giving back to their communities. She also highlighted the vital need for

website accessibility to ensure that blind and visually impaired individuals can access business services digitally. For more information about Miami Lighthouse's website accessibility services visit <https://www.miamilighthouse.org/ADACompliance.asp>.



*The Miami-Dade Beacon Council Executive Committee*

**(EVENTS continued on page 12)**





**“Celebrating Hands of Our Future,”** a 36- by 48-inch mixed media painting created by Miami Lighthouse Academy students ages four to nine will be featured in the State Capitol rotunda in Tallahassee, Florida, for the 30th Anniversary of “Children’s Week” April 13 -18. Decorated hands created by children from all over the state will hang in an artistic display, cascading down from the center of the capitol rotunda for this amazing event.

*“Celebrating Hands of Our Future”*

We congratulate our Senior Group Activities Program (SGA) artists on having their artworks selected for the **“Hidden Treasures”** art exhibition celebrating the work of Florida Artists with disabilities, which was held at the Franciscan Center of Tampa in January and February. In addition to being chosen for the exhibit, **“Many Facets of a Woman,”** a collaborative mixed media painting by Nora DeLabat and Grisel Diaz, was showcased on social media and featured on the advertisement for the event. Victor Mercado’s **“Three Horse Amigos,”** an intricate wood carving, was also exhibited.

*“Many Facets of a Woman”*



Our SGA Program along with seven other organizations and schools focusing on disabilities participated in **“Accessing the Arts”** performances. The Arsht Center Accessing the Arts Program offers inclusive, transformational and cultural arts experiences for all students, including children with disabilities. In partnership with Arts4All Florida and Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Arsht Center implements nationally recognized, inclusive residencies designed to integrate the creative arts into classrooms for students with disabilities.

*“Three Horse Amigos”*



Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman recently acquired **“Seeing Eye Dog #4,”** a collaborative mixed-media painting created by eight artists in our SGA Program. This 36” x 36” artwork is made from gems, sand, tile, foam, glitter, and glass.

*“Seeing Eye Dog #4”*





# NNING ARTISTS

We are proud to announce that three works by our SGA artists were chosen from more than 1,000 submissions to be part of the prestigious [Gasparilla Festival of the Arts](#) in Tampa, which is recognized as one of the top-rated outdoor fine art festivals in the country. Each year more than 250 artists are selected through a juried process to exhibit their work for art enthusiasts. The festival is free to the public and attracts an estimated 100,000 visitors.

“Happy Casas” was created by Juana, who is from Nicaragua and has just discovered her mixed media talent in the last few years of participating in our SGA art program at Miami Lighthouse. Although her vision is very limited due to diabetic retinopathy, Juana has continued to accel in the arts program with her growing creativity. She has also contributed to SGA’s collaborative large mixed media paintings that have won many awards both locally and internationally.



*“Happy Casas”*



*“Fashionista Abstracted”*

capture the essence of all women. Being from Cuba, Nora’s art exudes a touch of Latin flare.

“Fashionista Abstracted” is a work by Grisel Diaz who was born in Cuba and is legally blind. She paints each week in our SGA art program. Her paintings could be described as modern cubist style. Her growing passion for art accounts for the improvement in her work and the awards she has won over the past several years.

Creator of “Frida Kahlo Homage,” Nora DeLabat is an emerging artist in our SGA Program. Her paintings have won many awards in art competitions over the last several years, and her portraits of women



*“Frida Kahlo Homage”*



*“Modern Madonna”*

[Milander Center for the Arts](#) chose paintings by two our SGA artists for the “Women’s Gallery” exhibition: “Lady in Pink,” a 20” x 26” acrylic painting by Nora DeLabat, and “Modern Madonna,” a 20” x 16” acrylic painting by Grisel Diaz. This collective art exhibition highlights the history and accomplishments of women in our community.



*“Lady in Pink”*

are available for purchase at the [arts4allcollective.com](https://arts4allcollective.com).



## EVENTS (continued from page 9)

### Northern Trust Hosts Donor Reception

We express our gratitude to Northern Trust's Coral Gables office and Senior Managing Director and Miami Lighthouse Board Director Scott Richey for providing a very special evening event to say, "thank you" to some of our major donors prior to our annual "See the Light Luncheon" on November 14th, 2024.

*Board Directors Dr. Stephen Morris, Rob Shelley, Deborah Montilla, Jean Putnam, CEO Virginia Jacko, Board Directors Scott Richey, Sheila Freed, and Board Chair Steven Solomon at Northern Trust event*



### See the Light Luncheon

On November 14th, 2024, we held our annual See the Light Luncheon at The Historic Biltmore Hotel, which was attended by more than 275 donors and supporters. NBC-6 journalists Marissa and Julia Bagg served as emcees. The event was highlighted by a heartwarming musical performance of "You've Got a Friend in Me" sung by our adorable Miami Lighthouse Academy second grade class. Emily Bejerano, a former Miami Lighthouse Transition Program student now studying Behavioral



Neuroscience at Florida International University, gave an inspirational keynote address. The call to action continued with a moving testimonial by Yadira Dueñas, the mother of two Miami Lighthouse Academy students. The event raised over \$350,000, which was matched by our 95th Anniversary Fund or The Wildflower Foundation Matching Challenge for art and music. Sponsors for this year's luncheon included TD Bank, Avante-NEA Insurance Group, The H. Angela Whitman Foundation and Norma Jean Abraham.

*Miami Lighthouse Academy second grade class singing "You've Got A Friend in Me"*



*Karla Richey, Miami Kids Magazine and Treasurer, Miami Lighthouse Academy; CEO Virginia Jacko; and Board Director Scott Richey*



*Linda Kroll, luncheon sponsor and Board Director Angela Whitman and Kristina Bryn*



*Board Chair Steven Solomon welcomed luncheon guests*

### Miami Lighthouse Celebrated the 60th Anniversary of White Cane Day

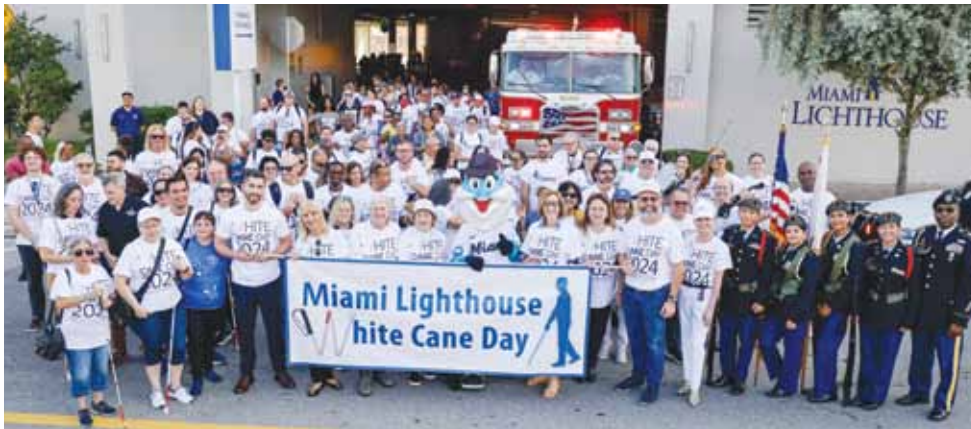
On October 15th, 2024, over 150 blind and visually impaired program participants were escorted by members of the City of Miami Fire and Police Departments and led by Grand Marshals Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, City of Miami Commissioner Miguel Angel Gabela, the Miami Senior High Color Guard, and Billy the Marlin as they walked from Miami Lighthouse down SW 8th Street and back.

The celebration began with breakfast sponsored by Bagel Bar East followed by lunch sponsored by The Montes Family's McDonald's. Other event sponsors included Uber, Captain Awesome Charities, Humana, CarePlus, Tropical Financial Credit Union, 305 Hive, *Miami Kids Magazine*, Vispero, Ambutech, and others. Award-winning actress and writer Gisella Aboumrad served as emcee.

President Lyndon B. Johnson established White Cane Day in 1964 to raise awareness about White Cane Safety laws. The day is set aside to celebrate the many achievements of the blind and visually impaired and their important symbol of independence, the white cane.



*Board Chair Steven Solomon, Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, CEO Virginia Jacko, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, Former State Representative David Richardson, Billy the Marlin, School Board Chair Mari Tere Rojas, and Brenda Lampon representing Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava*



**WHITE  
CANE DAY  
2024**

## **Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association Meeting Held at Miami Lighthouse**

Members of the Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association (MDOPA) held their annual dinner meeting on November 20, 2024, at Miami Lighthouse. President and CEO Virginia Jacko, welcomed participating optometrists and asked that they never tell a patient “There is nothing more that we can do for you,” and rather say, “Miami Lighthouse is the next step on your journey.” Dr. Scott Gartner, Miami Lighthouse’s low vision optometrist, gave a continuing education presentation titled “Remaining Independent with Low Vision.” The evening’s music was provided by Miami Lighthouse’s nationally recognized Music Program, and the event was sponsored by Apellis Pharmaceuticals. Our Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program was established by MDOPA members in 1992 as the Dr. Bruce Heiken Memorial Fund, and since then more than 220,000 underserved schoolchildren have received the “gift of vision” with a dilated eye exam and glasses when prescribed or medical intervention when required.



*MDOPA President Dr. Samantha Fernandez; CEO Virginia Jacko; Board Member Dr. Stephen Morris; Apellis Pharmaceuticals Event Sponsors Dr. Francesca Francois and Dr. Matthew Weinheimer, Miami Lighthouse Low Vision Optometrist Dr. Scott Gartner, and Young Professionals of Lighthouse Chair Victor Lopez*



## VISITORS AND TOURS

### Mayor Daniella Levine Cava Visits Miami Lighthouse

Miami Lighthouse was proud to host Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava for a tour of our campus. During her visit to the Miami Lighthouse Academy and Social Group Activities Program, the mayor shared the wonderful news that she will be holding an event that will include one of our Miami Lighthouse artist's tactile art pieces titled "Super Eva." The artwork will be showcased at Miami-Dade Animal Services to raise awareness about the importance of guide dogs and service animals.



*Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and CEO Virginia Jacko with Miami Lighthouse Academy students and teachers*



*"Super Eva"*



Members of the Dr. John T. McDonald Foundation's Board of Directors recently toured Miami Lighthouse. The McDonald Foundation provides funding for children in nine of their target schools to receive comprehensive eye examinations and prescription glasses from our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program.

*Dr. John T. MacDonald Board of Directors Peter Mekras; John Edward Smith, Managing Director; Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko; Aldo C. Busot, Chair; and Dr. Dean H. Rolle*

## PUBLICATIONS

**"Bascom Headen Palmer, M.D. (1889-1954)"** by Eduardo C. Alfonso, M.D., Chair, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; Stephen G. Schwartz, M.D., Bascom Palmer Eye Institute; Virginia A. Jacko, M.S., President and CEO, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and John G. Clarkson, M.D., Bascom Palmer Eye Institute appeared in the December 2024 issue of the *American Journal of Ophthalmology*. The article is a review of the life history of Bascom Headen Palmer, Jr., M.D., for whom the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute is named and who served as the President of the Miami Lighthouse from 1947 to 1952.



*American Journal of Ophthalmology cover*

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind was instrumental in founding the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, which sits on land originally owned and donated by Miami Lighthouse and provided significant funding to build what would become the top-ranked ophthalmology center in the United States. Today, both institutions collaborate on a mission of education and treatment that transform lives through vision-related services and research.



## SAVE THE DATE!

### Music Under the Stars

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

at Miami Lighthouse

### Legislative Luncheon

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

12:00 p.m.

at Miami Lighthouse

### Cars for Charity

Saturday, September 13, 2025

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

at Miami Lighthouse

### See the Light Luncheon

Thursday, November 13, 2025

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

at the Historic Biltmore Hotel



Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Campus  
601 SW 8th Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33130

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U. S. POSTAGE  
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MIAMI, FL  
Permit No. 7487

*Please assure delivery by April 15, 2025*

## CURRENT CHARITY NAVIGATOR SCORES

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has received 14 consecutive 4-star ratings, the highest rating possible, from the nation's premier independent nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator.

Attaining a 4-star rating indicates that our organization adheres to sector best practices, exceeds industry standards and executes its mission in a financially efficient way.

## CHARITY NAVIGATOR ENCOMPASS BEACONS

**June 3, 2024** - Miami Lighthouse is proud to announce that we have successfully completed all four of the new Charity Navigator Encompass Beacons, which provide a comprehensive analysis of our performance across four key domains:

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCE 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of a charity's financial health (financial efficiency, sustainability and trustworthiness) and its commitment to governance practices and policies.

### LEADERSHIP AND ADAPTABILITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's leadership capacity, strategic thinking and planning, and ability to innovate or respond to changes in constituent demand/need or other relevant social and economic conditions to achieve the organization's mission.

### IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT 98%

This beacon estimates the actual impact a charity has on the lives of those it serves and determines whether it is making good use of donor resources to achieve that impact.

### CULTURE AND COMMUNITY 100%

This beacon provides an assessment of the organization's culture and connectedness to the community it serves.

Source: Miami Lighthouse listing on Charity Navigator website:

[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)



**CONTACT US: General Information: 305-856-2288**

**Low Vision or Vision Rehabilitation Services: 786-362-7479 • Senior Case Manager: 786-362-7445**

**Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center: 786-636-6498**

**Visit our website: [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org)**