

Lighthouse uses Israeli technology that helps the blind read

BY REBECCA SAN JUAN

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired is receiving rave reviews for Israeli OrCam technology.

Mayor Carlos Giménez and his team brought the technology back to Miami-Dade County in November 2017. It allows the visually disabled to read print through a device that can attach to either side of a pair of eyeglasses, depending on whether the user is left-handed or right-handed.

Ziv Aviram and Amnon Shashua, the founders of Mobileye, which sold to Intel that same year for \$15 billion, are behind OrCam. Mr. Aviram told Reuters last year he believes their technology can help the blind and visually impaired as well as those suffering from dyslexia and readers who feel fatigued after consuming text for long periods.

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, based at 601 SW Eighth Ave., is an official distributor of OrCam devices and reports that 20 people have purchased one of two models that they carry since late 2017.

The MyReader model, selling at \$3,500, scans text with a camera at the center and can read it aloud in English, French and Spanish. It uses tiny speakers pointed to the ear of the wearer to communicate the text either only to the reader or aloud to a room.

In addition to reading text, the MyEye device, with a pricetag of \$4,500, has other features, including facial recognition, naming US bank notes, colors and products by their barcodes.

"We work with both versions because some people may want all of the bells and whistles and others may just want to read con-



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Lior Haiat

tracts and documents," said John Garcia, Vision Solutions Center manager at the Miami Lighthouse.

Virginia Jacko, Lighthouse CEO and president, who herself is blind, said that her ability to read on the go is her favorite feature. "This is totally portable. It is a pair of glasses. You have glasses like everybody else," she said.

Most recipients are students who use their gadget to complete homework assignments and readings. "The feedback that I have been hearing is that without the OrCam they cannot be doing what they are doing. The issue was that a lot of books are not on tape and downloadable. For them it opened up their world of education and ad-

vancement; without it they would have felt lost," Mr. Garcia said. "The second thing – it is portable. They do not have to be tied to a desk. They can go to the library, they can be with their friends."

Ms. Jacko also hears positive feedback from students. She said, "A student that recently got his MBA at Duke said, 'I never could have finished that program if I did not have the OrCam. I would go back to the dorm with the OrCam and stay up to speed with the rest of the class.'"

The most popular model continues to be MyEye for its facial recognition feature. Mr. Garcia said, "People like that feature because the one thing that I find that most visually impaired don't like is that they have that eerie feeling that somebody is [in a room] but they are not saying anything. With the OrCam it tells them."

Most recently, the Lighthouse collaborated in November with Israeli Consul General Lior Haiat and the Miami Dolphins to offer OrCam products to four students who otherwise couldn't afford the technology. The four were selected from about 50 students who are part of the agency's transition program for high schoolers about to enter college. They chose students based on those that were severely visually impaired. The Israeli consulate covered the costs for four students.

Marnel Jean, a recipient from Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School, puts his OrCam to good use. He said, "I mostly use it to do school work; it has helped cut down the length of time that it takes me to read."

He said he expects his device to help him work more efficiently and faster as he continues his studies and later when he enters



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the workforce.

Both the Miami Lighthouse and the Embassy of Israel look forward to collaborating on similar efforts in the future, widening opportunities for those with a visual disability.

"We talk about a few projects, [including] how to integrate blind kids into regular schools. Those are things that are being done in Israel and in Miami. We have a lot of experience and hopefully we can learn from one another," Mr. Haiat said. "If we have the opportunity to repeat this event we are gladly going to do it in the future again. This device that we are giving to kids will basically open new opportunities for them."

The OrCam organization, with headquarters in Jerusalem, continues to produce new products. Mr. Garcia says device owners have a lifetime guarantee and receive free upgrades from the company. He said, "As the technology increases or gets better, OrCam clients get free software updates."

Ms. Jacko emphasizes the importance of the upgrades at zero cost. She said, "What some people do not think of is that those people that are hearing impaired do not get upgrades. They have to buy a new hearing aid. If people think about the cost of this in enabling them to see, that is no different than people that invest in a hearing aid so that they can hear."

Ms. Jacko and Mr. Jean have high hopes of other problems that the technology can solve as it evolves. Ms. Jacko predicts models in the near future will have object recognition.

She said, "I do things by habit. I have a mental picture of what Miami Lighthouse looks like because I have been here for many years, but when I go to a meeting to a place I have never been I do not know where is the conference table, how many chairs are around the table. Recognizing objects will be a tremendous asset."

She also wants universal sign recognition. The Israeli company developed technology that allows OrCam wearers to recognize traffic signs and buses and that allows a blind person to know what different buses stop where. Such a feature helps the user to identify what bus to use. She hopes that the organization will soon create a model adapted to the US.

Mr. Jean said, "I have high hopes for technology. There is so much more that we can do with it."

Modular substitute fills in, new Fishermen's hospital on way

BY REBECCA SAN JUAN

Drivers passing Fishermen's Community Hospital see a demolition in progress as Baptist Health makes way for the permanent site. The search for a contractor is underway as the organization sets its sights on an estimated completion date of June 2021.

The gutting of the interior is complete of the old hospital in Marathon. Baptist Health acquired the hospital in the summer of 2017, months before Hurricane Irma devastated the building. The hospital was forced to close and serve the community through various pods delivered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and paid for by the Florida Department of Health during the first 90 days after the storm.

Chief Executive Officer for Mariners and Fishermen's Community Hospital Rick Freeburg says the walls are down, the windows are out and air conditioning has been removed at the 3301 Overseas Highway site.

Mr. Freeburg said, "The preliminary plan is to just start at the back of the hospital because, as you know, it is on the same site as our modular hospital; we are having to be extra careful that we don't interfere with the modular



The old Fishermen's Community Hospital in Marathon, devastated by Hurricane Irma, will be replaced.

hospital with the demolition."

The modular spans 7,000 square feet, can withstand winds of up to 140 miles per hour, and offers a range of services since debuting in late July. The lab is open, and computerized tomography or CT scans and X-rays are available as well as other outpatient treatments. The module is also capable of handling inpatient care. It has welcomed 3,411 patients to date.

"There is just about anything that you would need in terms of anything short of major surgery or surgical procedure," Mr. Freeburg said.

His team is also considering of-

fering chemotherapy on location. "The decision is still out on how soon that will be incorporated into the hospital down there," he said. "Whether it will be still to be determined."

Mr. Freeburg says his team is working on making sure the community knows the hospital is back to business with new signage: "We have been seeing now that the season is here about as many patients in the emergency room as we are at Mariner's Hospital."

The next step on the agenda is to find a contractor. Demolition is expected to wrap in four to six weeks and Mr. Freeburg hopes to

find a contractor by the time the current phase is complete.

He said, "We have a multiple timeline and milestones that we have to meet to make this happen on time. The completion of the entire construction is scheduled to be around June of 2021."

Fundraising for the permanent hospital is going well. Mr. Freeburg said, "We met our goal for 2018. We are working hard on 2019."

Baptist Health raised \$10 million by the end of 2018 through its "Our Community, Your Hospital" campaign. The organization looks to raise another \$5 million by



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Rick Freeburg

spring through more philanthropic efforts. Baptist Health is fronting \$25 million and seeks \$15 million from fundraising to meet the \$40 million budget for the project.

Mr. Freeburg welcomes potential donors to contact Development Director Kim E. Gregory at kime@BaptistHealth.net or call (305) 393-5720. Donors can learn more about the fundraising campaign at BaptistHealth.net/FishermensHospitalCampaign.