

# 'Touch Tour' Lets Blind Students Feel Their Way Through Marlins Park

By [Ebony Joseph](#) • Jul 30, 2015



Marlins catcher J.T. Realmuto describes the equipment to Lighthouse students.  
Ebony Joseph WLRN

A group of students from the [Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) got a hands-on "touch tour" of Miami Marlins Park on Thursday.

The students from Lighthouse's summer music camp got a chance to feel and explore the stadium before the Marlins went head to head against the Washington Nationals.

The summer program gives sighted and visually impaired students a chance to work together and learn about each other.

"We've got extremely talented blind students, but it's a sighted world and these students need to be able to interact," says Virginia Jacko, President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse. "It really

works both ways. It helps the blind students learn to truly function in this sighted world, which they will have to do in their careers and all aspects of their lives."

Jeffrey Zavac is a music history professor at Miami Dade College. He was born blind and first came to Lighthouse in 1994 to take computer classes. Now he volunteers with the music camp, teaching the horn section. Baseball is his favorite sport but he had never been to Marlins game before this tour.

"Oh, I'm so excited to be here, I listen to the games all the time. The sportscasters are great. It takes a special person to describe the games so vividly," Zavac said.

The touch tour was held in partnership with the Marlins Foundation volunteer program, [Marlins Ayudan](#), or Marlins Help. Through the partnership, the foundation has donated over \$50,000 to Lighthouse.



Jeffrey Zavac sitting in the dugout with his | seeing-eye guide, Michelle Fischer.  
Credit Jeffrey Zavac / Miami Lighthouse

Marlins Ayudan manager Adrian Mora led the way, describing every detail. He pointed out distinct smells and warned the students of changes in their surroundings, like steps and railings.

"So you guys are making your way onto the field," he explained. "You'll feel the change of texture as you work your way off the concrete and onto the orange clay."

Students were able to feel the equipment, sit in the dugout and even touch the freshly mowed field. They also had a meet-and-greet with Marlins catcher J.T. Realmuto.

"It's so easy for us as sighted individuals to take everything for granted, so I've learned to use my sight to describe everything so the students get the same experience. The most rewarding part is getting to see the excitement on their faces as they're walking through field," says Mora.

And one person's excitement definitely stood out.

"Jeff... he just walked the entire time with a smile on his face, he was radiating," Mora said about the Miami Dade professor. "Feeling the grass, feeling the rubber. Even though he couldn't see anything, he took in the whole experience with his other senses."

After the tour, the group watched and heard the game from a private suite. For Zavac, it didn't matter who won or lost. He was just happy to be there.

"Oh, I've been a baseball fan since I was a little kid," he said. "My dad was a Cleveland Indians fan, so I grew up with them [but] I'm in Miami so I root for the Marlins."