

Virginia A. Jacko

President & CEO, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc.
President, Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC
Founding President, Miami Lighthouse Academy, LLC
601 SW 8th Avenue, Miami, FL 33130 ▪ 305-856-4176
vjacko@miamilighthouse.org | mobile: 786-897-7022

Summary Statement

As President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, Virginia Jacko is committed to ensuring the blind and visually impaired, low vision seniors and financially disadvantaged schoolchildren without resources for eye care, regardless of age, socio-economic status or ethnicity, have equitable access to education, blindness prevention programs, and vision rehabilitation training. She conceived and implemented a 50/50 pre-kindergarten for blind and sighted children, which was showcased in the *Active Learner, HighScope Journal for Early Educators*, "Seeing without Sight," by Betsy Evans, pp. 14-27, Spring 2019. She has been featured in national publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Ability Magazine*, is the author and principal investigator of numerous peer-reviewed archival journal publications, including "Bringing Low Vision Assessments and Interventions to Underserved Seniors Affected by Age-Related Eye Disease," *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, December 2019, Volume 38, Number 1, pp. 15-23, and was named Distinguished Alumni by the College of Health and Human Sciences and the HHS Alumni Association, Purdue University. She is a national expert in website and distance learning accessibility for people with vision impairment, having been quoted by *The Wall Street Journal*, *TIME*, NPR, *Forbes* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Before relocating to Miami for her vision rehabilitation in 2001, she was a successful financial executive at Purdue University where she served for 22 years, including 12 years directing financial affairs for the President and Provost. She applies her acumen in financial and program development, governmental and donor relations, accreditation and compliance arenas as President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc., President of the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC, and President of Miami Lighthouse Academy, LLC. During her 17-year tenure as President and CEO at Miami Lighthouse, the number of program participants increased fiftyfold, net assets increased fivefold and contributions increased sevenfold. During her term as CEO Miami Lighthouse has gained recognition as a national Center of Excellence through professional publications and presentations.

Education

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

Master of Science, College of Health and Human Sciences

M.S. Thesis: *A Study to Determine the Role of Financial Counseling in Therapy for Emotionally Disturbed Adults.*

Honors: First recipient of the A. A. Potter Graduate Fellowship, Phi Kappa Phi, national academic honorary society

Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois

Bachelor of Business Administration, Major: Finance; Minor: Accounting

Awarded a four-year debate scholarship

Harvard Business School Executive Education Program

"Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management" Certificate of Completion

Past Experience

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

Senior Business Manager for the President and Provost (currently titled Assistant Provost for Financial Affairs), 1987-2000 responsible for a budget of approximately \$250 million with 40 direct reports

Marine National Exchange Bank (acquired by Chase Bank), Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Financial Analyst

Current Experience

Accomplishments in Services for Visually Impaired Children

- Founded in 2016 Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™; raised \$10 million in 14 months and in incorporated in 2020 The New Miami Lighthouse Learning Center with a \$9 million classroom expansion by providing the executive leadership and relationships with the City and County so that both new facilities could be permitted and opened within 10 months. In 2021, the Learning Center was renamed the Miami Lighthouse Academy, LLC, and a 30,000 sq. ft. expansion to the existing 115,000 sq. ft. facility was made possible by private donations in response to challenge grants from local philanthropists.
- Recruited licensed teachers and enrolled early learners (ages one through four) for Pre-Kindergarten in 2016, added kindergarten 2019, first grade 2020 and second grade 2021.
- Established sister school relationship with ELYIA Association for Blind and Visually Impaired Children School in Petah Tikva, Israel, and launched a professional consortium to exchange curricula and share pedagogy.
- Contracted with the University of Miami to conduct two, sequential, four-year studies of the Miami Lighthouse Academy Early Learners. Final-year results showed that overall, the Miami Lighthouse Academy displayed high quality teacher-child interactions and instructional practices exceeding national averages.
- Obtained Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) accreditation for the Miami Lighthouse Academy.
- Initiated contracts with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to provide learning and media assessments by our Licensed Teachers of the Visually Impaired and to provide Literary Braille and Braille Music transcription.
- Initiated a merger in 2007 with the Dade County Optometric Association Heiken Fund to create Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC, initially providing eye health services only to schoolchildren in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.
- Expanded eye care to needy children throughout the State of Florida by winning a competitive bid from the Florida Department of Health resulting in state-wide funding for the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program. In total, this Heiken Vision Program has provided approximately 155,000 financially disadvantaged schoolchildren (75% ethnic minorities) throughout Florida a comprehensive eye examination, dispensed 115,000 prescription eyeglasses, and referred more than 4,500 children for medical follow up to prevent blindness.
- Established in conjunction with the Nicklaus Children's Brain Institute and the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in 2021 the Miami Lighthouse Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center to provide early intervention therapy, and educational support to help children diagnosed with CVI develop and learn. Recently, an anonymous donor made a substantial contribution to the \$1 million matching challenge for the CVI Center specifying that it be named the Virginia Jacko Cortical Visual Impairment Collaborative Center; this new initiative was featured in the December 29, 2021 issue of *Forbes*.

Accomplishments in Services to Visually Impaired Adults

- Expanded low vision services by adding to the team a Certified Low Vision Occupational Therapist, a Certified Low Vision Occupational Therapy Assistant, and a Licensed Dispensing Optician to work in collaboration with our consulting low vision optometrist to date having provided 5,000 patients with a low vision functional assessment. Funded with highly-competitive 2017 Innovations in Health Care Florida Blue Foundation three-year grant, an additional 15,200 seniors learned about living with low vision through community outreach at Senior Centers. In 2020 this grant was renewed for four years and will enable Miami Lighthouse to provide low-vision programs for seniors (55+) in vulnerable, low-income neighborhoods in Allapattah, Brownsville, Liberty City, and Overtown, potentially impacting 3,200 low-income, minority seniors.
- Founded Miami Lighthouse Music Program which was launched with a grant from the Knight Foundation and received national recognition including producing a CD that was a Latin Grammy Finalist. The Program trains blind students through an innovative music curriculum for visually impaired teenagers and adults featuring instruction and accessible software that arranges and composes music leading to mainstream music industry employment and post-secondary education. Braille music distance learning was launched in 2012 with students enrolling throughout the world.
- Concerned with the large number of visually impaired adults without a high school diploma (20%), collaborated with Miami-Dade County Public School to provide an on-campus adult basic education, GED Program and English as a Second Language instruction enabling adults to attend college and pursue a career.
- Obtained funding from the State of Florida and Miami-Dade County to develop the Senior Group Health and Activities Program for blind and visually impaired adults. Instituted weekly counseling for seniors about disease management through proper diet led by a Registered Dietitian in collaboration with Elements of Daily Living instructors.
- Added to the Senior Group Health and Activities Program a music component conducted three times a week by instructors in the Miami Lighthouse Music Program that includes group vocal and rhythm sessions and a gospel

choir. Additionally, added tactile arts which resulted in clients obtaining state-wide and national recognition. Program data demonstrates improved self-confidence, a sense of purpose and ability to remain independent.

Institutional Accomplishments

- Moved the agency's national Charity Navigator rating from 2 to 4 stars, the highest rating possible, and subsequently achieved 13 consecutive 4-star ratings placing the agency among the top 1 percent of the 9,000 nation's nonprofits evaluated annually. Miami Lighthouse is among the elite 100 charities that have attained perfect scores from Charity Navigator for Financial Health as well as Accountability & Transparency resulting in an overall perfect score.
- Maintained the agency's accreditation first achieved in 1978 from the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services; 2019 received a five-year accreditation from the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- Co-authored with an 85% success rate, over 500 grant proposals, for children's programs, pre-kindergarten, nutrition, mobile eye care, music, capacity building/facility renovation, job training, GED and adult basic education, Senior Group Health and Activities for art and music, and low vision services for Seniors.
- Initiated website and electronic information accessibility consulting services to assist private and public organizations achieve maximum compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) v2.0; since inception nearly 200 websites have been audited.
- Established collaborations with institutions of higher education throughout the country; collaborative efforts include internships, research, and continuing education.

Publications and Professional Presentations

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

- Jacko, Virginia A., Jenna N. Futterer, Rebecca J. Bulotsky-Shearer, Mary Anne Ullery, Astrid Pena, and Liana De Angelis, "Associations between Peer Play Interactions and Empathy within an Early Childhood Inclusion Program for Children with Visual Impairment," *Early Childhood Education Journal*, submitted following peer review
- Jacko, Virginia A., MS, Isabel Chica, MS, Sandra Lewis, EdD and Rebecca Shearer, PhD, "Innovative Inclusion Program for Early Learners Offered by the Miami Lighthouse Learning Center for Children™," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, March-April 2021, Volume 115, Number 2
- Jacko, Virginia A., MS, Carol Brady-Simmons, COMS, Nihusa Dias, MPA, Raquel Van Der Biest, OTR/L, CLVT, Alma Abdel-Moty, DrOT, MS, OTR/L, and Lynne Richard, PhD, OT/L, "Bringing Low Vision Assessments and Interventions to Underserved Seniors Affected by Age-Related Eye Disease," *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, December 2019, Volume 38, Number 1, pp. 15-23
- Jacko, Virginia A., Jin Ho Choi, Audrey Carballo, Brian Charlson and J. Elton Moore, "A New Synthesis of Sound and Tactile Music Code Instruction: Implementation Issues of a Pilot Online Braille Music Curriculum," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, March-April 2015, pp. 153-157
- Jacko, Virginia A., Roxann Mayros, Carol Brady-Simmons, Isabel Chica, and J. Elton Moore, "Blind Babies Play Program: A Model for Affordable, Sustainable Early Childhood Literacy Intervention through Play and Socialization," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, May-June 2013, pp. 238-242
- Jacko, Virginia A., Alan P. Levitt, Steven E. Marcus and Alfred A. Rosenbloom, "The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program," *Optometry: Journal of the American Optometric Association*, Volume 83, Issue 1, January 2012, pages 43-46
- Jacko, Virginia, Harold Cobo, Antonio Cobo, Rachelle Fleming, and J. Elton Moore, "Mainstream Employment for Visually Impaired Individuals in Music Production: Development of a Model Training Program," *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, pp. 519-521, September, 2010
- Jacko, Virginia, Amy McKenzie and Tatiana Palma, "Intervention through Art for Adults Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired," *Journal of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired*, Volume 2, Number 1, Winter 2009, pp. 9-11

Book Chapters and Books

- Jacko, Virginia A., "Psychological and Cognitive Adjustment to Vision Loss," chapter in *Anophthalmia: The Experts Guide to Medical and Surgical Management*, edited by Thomas E. Johnson, M.D., Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Springer International Publishing AG, Cham, December, 2019

Jacko, Virginia, and Doug Eadie, *The Blind Visionary*, Governance Edge, LLC, 2010, with a foreword by José Feliciano. *The Blind Visionary* was named one of four finalists in the Motivational Category of the 2010 Next Generation Indie Book Awards

Potter, H.C. and Jacko, V. A., "Money Therapy Through Financial Counseling", *The Psychotherapy Handbook*, ed., Herink, R., Meridian Press, 1980, pp 388-391

Web Accessibility and Distance Learning

Jacko, Virginia, "Publix Scores High for Online Accessibility," interview, 17 June 2020, available at progressivegrocer.com/publix-scores-high-online-accessibility

Jacko, Virginia A., "Visually Impaired Adapt to Distance Learning," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, March 29, 2020

Jacko, Virginia A., "Accessible Websites Make Good Legal and Business Sense," *Association of Corporate Counsels of South Florida Newsletter*, June, 2017, p. 9

Jacko, Virginia A., "Give Visually Impaired Better Internet Access," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, September 13, 2016

Jacko, Virginia, "Don't Leave Blind Students Out," *Miami Herald*, Reader's Forum, July 23, 2011

Jacko, Virginia, "Let's Give the Blind Better Access to Online Learning," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 8, 2011

Board Governance

Jacko, Virginia and Eadie, Doug, "Building a Rock-Solid Partnership with Your Board," www.snpo.org Webinar, June 10, 2009

Eadie, Doug, "Building a Rock-Solid Board/CEO Partnership: Talking with CEO Virginia Jacko," *Nonprofit World*, May/June 2009

Jacko, Virginia, William Roy, William, and Doug Eadie, "Leading and Managing Governance Change," *Nonprofit World*, May/June 2008

Jacko, Virginia A., "I think of myself as a CEO who happens to be blind," Miami Lighthouse CEO honored globally, *Miami Herald*, December 11, 2019

Other Articles

Jacko, Virginia A., "Get your child's eyes checked for impairments," *Miami Herald*, Open Mic, September, 8, 2021

Jacko, Virginia A., "Finally, Common Sense About Service Dogs," *The Wall Street Journal*, Opinion, February 25, 2021

Jacko, Virginia A., "Miami Lighthouse Owes Helen Keller," *Miami Herald*, Open Mic, June 24, 2020

Jacko, Virginia A., "Bird Box Challenge' is foolish, dangerous." *Miami Herald*, January 6, 2019

Jacko, Virginia A., "Brake for Florida's White Cane Traffic Law," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, March 13, 2018

Jacko, Virginia A. and Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, "We're giving Visually Impaired Students Lessons to Succeed," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, May 2, 2017

Jacko, Virginia, interview: "Out of the Dark," in the Reinvention section of the *Saturday Evening Post*, September/October 2012, p. 24

Jacko, Virginia, "Lighthouse Students Excel," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, June 4, 2012

Jacko, Virginia, letter to the editor about the importance of Braille literacy, *Optometry: Journal of the American Optometric Association*, December 2011, p. 723

Jacko, Virginia, interview: The Blind Visionary, *Ability Magazine*, October/November 2011, pp. 22-25

Jacko, Virginia, "Bogus 'service animals' hurt the real thing," *Miami Herald*, Letter to the Editor, March 5, 2011

Presentations and Participation in Professional Meetings

Jacko, Virginia, Educating All Learners Alliance Podcast, "Achieving ADA Compliance on a National Level," 2021

Jacko, Virginia, Panelist on Accessible Websites and Distance Learning for the Visually Impaired, 2020 VisionServe Alliance Annual Leadership Meeting

Jacko, Virginia, Presentation to the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce regarding website accessibility for businesses, 2019

Jacko, Virginia, Ann Keil Dux, Mario Artecona and Gail Nelson, panel discussion on Corporate Social Responsibility, December 9, 2019

Jacko, Virginia, William Rivera, Robert S. Fine, Esq., AIA, Daniel F. Benavides, Esq., and Jorge Hernandez, Website Accessibility Seminar, cosponsored by Miami Lighthouse, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association, August 8, 2018

Jacko, Virginia, "Innovative Education and Training Provided to Miami-Dade County schoolchildren by Miami Lighthouse for the Blind," State of Florida Board of Education invited guest speaker, 2016

Jacko, Virginia, MS, Alma Abdel-Moty, DrOT, MS, OTR/L, and Kinsuk Maitra, Ph.D., OTR/L "A Community and Academic Research Partnership: Serving Individuals with Vision Impairments," presentation at the annual Florida Occupational Therapy Association meeting, November 3, 2012

Jacko, Virginia, Alma Abdel-Moty, Dr. OT, MS, OTR/L, Hector Huerta, and Tara Riley, Short Course: "A Community and Academic Partnership: Serving Individuals with Vision Impairments," presentation at the Florida Occupational Therapy Association Conference, November 2-3, 2012, Tampa, FL

Jacko, Virginia, Harold Cobo and Omar Banegas, "Miami Lighthouse Music Production Program: A Live Demonstration of Composing, Recording and Arranging Music by the Blind and Visually Impaired," paper presented at The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired International Conference 2010, July 20-25, Little Rock, Arkansas

Jacko, Virginia, John Clapp, Carol-Brady-Simmons, and Hilda Flores, "Orientation and Mobility Internships at Miami Lighthouse: Building a Bridge from the University to the Practice of the Profession," paper presented at the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired regional conference, Cleveland, Ohio, November 13-15, 2009

Jacko, Virginia, Harold Cobo, Antonio Cobo, Gail Shivel, Brenda Williamson and Rachelle Fleming, "Miami Lighthouse Music Program: Creating Independence through Musical Collaboration," paper presented at the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired regional conference in Cleveland, Ohio, November 13-15, 2009

Highlights and Awards

2021 Featured in *New York Magazine's* The Cut, "When the Job Finds You, Take It: After Losing Her Eyesight, Virginia Jacko Sought Rehabilitation at Miami Lighthouse. Now She's the CEO," December 14, 2021

2021 Quoted in "Mastercard Introduces Accessible Card Design for Blind Users," *Wall Street Journal*, October 26

2021 Featured in *Purdue University News*, "Purdue College of Health and Human Sciences alumna Virginia Jacko exemplifies blindness isn't a barrier," September 30

2020 *PRWeek* national media Award for Best in the Nonprofit Category

2019 Henry Viscardi Distinguished International Achievement Award

2019 South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Women's Society Network Advocacy Award

2019 Dr. Ramiro Collazo Outstanding Service Award, Miami Cuban Lions Club

2018 Plaza Health Network Foundation Women of Distinction and Caring

2018 Harvard Business School Executive Education Program "Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management" Certificate of Completion

2018 Lions International 2018 100th Anniversary President's Leadership Award

2017 Dr. George L. Spelios 2017 Florida Leadership Award, The Able Trust

- 2017 *South Florida Business and Wealth* Apogee Award Miami CEO of the Year
- 2017 *Miami Herald Indulge*, November 2017 "Miami Movers" Visionary Leader
- 2017 American Cancer Society Inner Circle of 12 Honoree
- 2017 Miami Lighthouse recognized by *Miami New Times* as "Best of Miami" 2017 Charity.
- 2017 Comcast Newsmaker of the Week Interview
- 2016 Lions Clubs International Foundation Melvin Jones Fellowship Award for dedication to
- 2016 Lions Clubs International Foundation Melvin Jones Fellowship Award for dedication to Humanitarian Services
- 2016 Miami Lighthouse Early Intervention Blind Babies Program named Children's Program of the Year by The Children's Trust
- 2016 Division of Blind Services 75th Anniversary, "Successful 75" Award" in recognition of accomplishments as former DBS vision rehabilitation client at Miami Lighthouse
- 2016 Fifty Shades of Pink Women's Breast Health Initiative, Miami Women Who Rock Award Recipient
- 2016 *South Florida Business Journal* Influential Business Women
- 2016 Miami Lighthouse recipient of Silver Medal in *Miami Today's* Gold Medal Awards
- 2015 Miami Lighthouse recognized as an organization, whose work is distinguished by leadership, innovation and achievement in community health in Florida at the Florida Blue Foundation's Sapphire Awards luncheon
- 2015 Beacon Council Award in the education service category
- 2014 Molina Health Care Community Champion Award
- 2014 AXA Advisors Businesswoman of the Year, Public Service/Non-Profit Professional category
- 2013 One of ten distinguished alums honored by Purdue University as an "Old Master"
- 2013 Most Valuable Non-Profit Award, Switchboard of Miami
- 2013 Special Recognition Award for Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program from Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Dade Counseling Association & Division of Student Services.
- 2013 Featured in Spotlight on Excellence, "Lighthouse Slogan: It's possible to see without sight™," *Miami Today*, Week of Thursday, July 11, 2013
- 2013 Junior League of Miami "Women Who Make a Difference" Honoree
- 2012 Claude Pepper Memorial Award: Thelma Gibson Community Service Award
- 2012 Florida Women of Achievement Honoree
- 2012 Named Distinguished Alumni by the College of Health and Human Sciences and the HHS Alumni Association, Purdue University
- 2012 Featured in "Best of Committed Nonprofit Leaders Achieve Tangible Results," Best of Miami Section, *Miami Today*, week of Thursday, May 31, 2012
- 2011 Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program selected as winner of the *South Florida Business Journal's* Excellence in Healthcare Award in the community outreach and service to the poor and uninsured category
- 2011 Comcast Newsmaker of the Week Interview
- 2010 Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit Business Diamond Award
- 2009 Finalist, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Health Care Heroes Award in the category of Community, Government and Organizational Collaborations
- 2009 Women of Leadership Award, South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- 2008 Health Foundation of South Florida Concern Award
- 2008 AXA Advisory Business Woman of the Year, Public Service/Non-Profit category
- 2008 Quiet Storm Achiever Award, Women's Power Caucus, Not-for-Profit category
- 2007 *South Florida Business Journal* Woman of the Year in the Non-Profit Leader Category
- 2007 Comcast Newsmaker of the Week interview
- 2006 American Red Cross Sarah Hopkins Woodruff Spectrum Award
- 2006 Horizon Award, Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLN)
- 2005 Apollo Award Recipient, "In recognition of extraordinary commitment and devotion to Guiding Eyes for the Blind and guide dog users everywhere," Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Inc., Yorktown Heights, NY
- 2005 Featured Newsmaker, *Miami Today*, September 8, 2005
- 2005 Metro & State feature, *Miami Herald*: "Lighthouse for Blind Gets Sightless Chief," April 4, 2005

Professional and Community Organizations

- Henry Viscardi International Achievement Award Selection Committee 2020 and 2021
- Charity Navigator Nonprofit Advisor
- Florida Council on Aging
- Educating All Learners Alliance (an initiative of the National Center for Learning Disabilities)
- VisionServe Alliance
- Ex officio Trustee of the American Printing House for the Blind (APH); APH Legislative Advocate for Federal Funding of Classroom Materials