



# LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Issue 120

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## See the Light Luncheon

On November 14th, we celebrated our annual *See the Light* luncheon at The Historic Biltmore Hotel to a crowd of over 275 donors and supporters. Led by Emcees Marissa and Julia Bagg, NBC-6 Journalists, 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 Miami Lighthouse Program Participant 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 dollar for dollar by the 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. To view World Red Eye photos from our event [click here](#).



*Chair of the Board Steven Solomon welcomes luncheon guests*



*Thomas Abraham, CEO Virginia Jacko and luncheon sponsor Norma Jean Abraham*



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



*Miami Lighthouse Academy second grade class sings "You've Got a Friend in Me"*

## A Record Give Miami Day

Thank you to all our generous donors for participating in Give Miami Day. Thanks to you, our donor community, we raised over \$360,000 with a record 156 donors. With over 1,200 nonprofit organizations to choose from, we thank you for making a donation to Miami Lighthouse for the Blind. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.



*Give Miami Day 2024*

## Our Blind Soccer program is a huge success

The sport of Blind Soccer has become a major excitement here at Miami Lighthouse. The Children's Trust Innovation Grant was awarded so that eighty-five blind students, ranging in age from one to twenty-two, can learn to play the exciting sport using "echo localization" with soccer balls that have ball bearings inside so students, despite their vision disability, can locate the soccer ball.

In addition, twelve Miami Lighthouse staff have been certified as blind soccer coaches receiving their certificates from the U.S Association of Blind Athletes (USABA), a record number thanks to Barry University and USABA. Our own Senior Technology Specialist Oseas DeLeon was selected for the National Men's Blind Soccer Team that played both England and Japan recently in San Diego. With the Innovation Grant support from The Children's Trust, we now have the first comprehensive blind soccer program. It is an opportunity for students with a vision impairment to play on a team, learn the sport and achieve exciting success, just like Oseas.



*Miami Lighthouse Academy students playing soccer*



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

Members of the Miami Dade Optometric Physicians Association (MDOPA) held their November dinner meeting at Miami Lighthouse. Virginia Jacko, President and CEO of Miami Lighthouse, welcomed guests and asked they never tell a patient that "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 Low Vision Optometrist, gave a continuing education presentation on "Remaining Independent with Low Vision". The evening's music was provided by Miami Lighthouse 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.



*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*

## Andrea Bocelli Holiday Concert

We are thrilled to announce our exclusive partnership with this year's Andrea Bocelli Holiday Concert, happening on December 22nd. We have only 10 premium floor seats available, located within the first 20 rows at the Kaseya Center. These special Holiday Tickets include a private Italian dinner before the Bocelli performance, along with complimentary parking. We are kindly asking for a \$1,000 donation per ticket. Don't miss this unforgettable evening of music, dining, and camaraderie to celebrate the holidays.

An invitation card for the Andrea Bocelli Holiday Concert. On the left is a black and white photograph of Andrea Bocelli smiling. The text on the right is in gold and white. It reads: 'YOU ARE INVITED' in gold, 'ANDREA BOCELLI' in large white letters, 'HOLIDAY CONCERT' in blue, 'KASEYA CENTER' in gold, 'SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024' in gold, 'DINNER BEGINS AT 6 PM' in gold, 'CONCERT BEGINS AT 7:30 PM' in gold, 'ITALIAN WINE DINNER' in gold, 'FLOOR SEATING AND PARKING' in gold, '\$1,000 PER GUEST' in gold, and 'INCLUDES CHARITABLE DONATION' in gold. Below this is a gold banner with 'LIMITED AVAILABILITY' in black. Then 'PRESENTED BY' in gold, followed by the Miami Lighthouse logo (a lighthouse with a sun) and the text 'MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE for the BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED' in white. At the bottom, 'TO RSVP' in gold, 'CALL CAMERON SISSER 786-362-7515 OR' in gold, and 'EMAIL CSISSER@MIAMILIGHTHOUSE.ORG' in gold.

YOU ARE INVITED

ANDREA  
BOCELLI

HOLIDAY CONCERT

KASEYA CENTER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024

DINNER BEGINS AT 6 PM

CONCERT BEGINS AT 7:30 PM

ITALIAN WINE DINNER

FLOOR SEATING AND PARKING

\$1,000 PER GUEST

INCLUDES CHARITABLE DONATION

• LIMITED AVAILABILITY •

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*Andrea Bocelli Invitation*



## Have you read our latest LANTERN Newsletter?

The Fall issue of [LANTERN](#), our monthly newsletter, features fascinating articles about recent and current happenings at Miami Lighthouse. And many exciting things are happening!

The Miami Lighthouse Academy began a new year with proud parents, teachers and donors. In collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we offer an inclusion setting for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grade classes for visually impaired students. We are pleased to report that all of our visually impaired students who completed the second grade this school year matriculated to third grade in community schools.

Other exciting happenings included news that the Miami Lighthouse received a two-year, \$2 million gift in support of our project known as "Cortical Visual Impairment Diagnostic Indicators & Educational Best Practices for Affected Children". Since 2020, Miami Lighthouse has completed over 160 children's CVI assessments. These assessments are of utmost importance because functional vision in such children can often be expected to improve with appropriate intervention.

To read more in our [LANTERN](#) Newsletter [click here](#).



### In the News:

- [Forbes, November 1, 2024 – "Disability Access For U.S. Election Critically Lacking According To Latest Data"](#)
- [South Florida Hospital News, October 30, 2024 – "Major gift to enhance Miami Lighthouse for the Blind fight against cortical visual impairment"](#)
- [CBS News, October 30, 2024 – "South Florida man with limited vision casts his vote in Miami-Dade"](#)
- [WPLG Local 10, October 9, 2024 – "Symbol of independence for the blind: 'White Cane Day' to take place Oct. 15"](#)

[Read more!](#)



*Contributed by Joan Spector*



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