



**PHILANTHROPIST GIVES \$1 MILLION CHALLENGE IN MEMORY OF  
SASH A. SPENCER AT MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE LUNCHEON**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Miami - November 12, 2008 - Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired accepted the first \$250,000 installment of the ***“One Million Dollar Challenge in Memory of Sash A. Spencer”***, an incentive matching gift from philanthropist Mary M. Spencer at the elegant 4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Share the Vision” fundraising luncheon November 12 at La Gorce Country Club. “Miami Lighthouse is so grateful to Mary for her generous gift, which will transform many lives,” said Miami Lighthouse Board Chairman William R. Roy, Ph.D.

Over 250 of South Florida’s most generous philanthropists and community leaders attended this extraordinary luncheon, generously underwritten by Bessemer Trust, which raised \$350,000 for programs and services offered to blind and visually impaired children and adults. Guests enjoyed great wine from The River Wines and beautiful table centerpieces designed by Epicure Events which incorporated hand-made ceramic pieces created by Miami Lighthouse blind and visually impaired children and adults.

There wasn’t a dry eye in the room when Natalia Sulca, 16 year old current client in the Miami Lighthouse Transition and Music Inclusion Program kicked off the luncheon with a heart wrenching musical debut; and when Helen Mopsick, mother of Colton Mopsick, current client in the Miami Lighthouse Blind Babies Program, spoke of how Miami Lighthouse gave her the skills and frame of mind to enjoy the beauty of her special child.

“In Miami-Dade County 67,000 people suffer from visual impairment,” said Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia A. Jacko. “That’s fifty percent more than the entire

population of Coral Gables, or the capacity of the Dolphin stadium. And the population of people with visual impairment is projected to double by 2020. With the addition of our Children's Mobile Eye Care Program, we serve more than 1,000 people each month, but the need is so much greater. Mary's challenge gift in memory of Sash will help us serve this growing need."

Miami Lighthouse Board Director Alan P. Levitt, O.D., challenged attendees to imagine what vision impairment is like, and also praised Mrs. Spencer's generosity as an example of true philanthropy and pointing out the power of a matching gift. "Wouldn't it be wonderful," he said, "if all of our philanthropic investments had a 100 percent return, as this one in Miami Lighthouse has?"

Miami Lighthouse's mission is to provide vision rehabilitation and eye health services that promote independence, to educate professionals, and to conduct research in related fields. To learn more, please call Dena Willman at 305-856-2288 Ext. 242, or visit our website at [www.miamilighthouse.org](http://www.miamilighthouse.org).