



# LIGHT LINE™

A MONTHLY BLOG FROM MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

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## Miami Lighthouse is Collaborating with Bascom Palmer on Retinal Prosthesis System

Ask Carol Brady-Simmons, our Chief Program Officer, about MLB's new collaboration with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute on the Argus II artificial retina, and you'll quickly understand why we are so excited about this recent rehabilitation development by Second Sight. Basically, the Argus II System includes a retinal implant and body-worn equipment that provides electrical stimulation of the retina to induce visual perception in blind individuals who previously had vision, but lost it through progressive disease such as Retinitis Pigmentosa.

Miami Lighthouse is one of a select few rehab facilities in the nation to be chosen to work with this new system, says Brady-Simmons, who recently celebrated 26 years of service at our Agency. As a recognized Orientation & Mobility Specialist, she is currently working on rehabilitation services with one of the first patients to ever receive the new implant which is intended to restore some visual function. In the context of Orientation & Mobility, Argus II can be effective for detecting the location of windows, determining if the lights are on in a room, and for identifying the location of crosswalk lines at a street cross, all of which can greatly improve the user's abilities to perform the activities of daily living.

## NAC Holds Semi-annual Meeting at Miami Lighthouse

Miami Lighthouse was honored to host the semi-annual meeting of the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC) on January 9 and 10, 2015. The NAC Board of Directors is composed of heads of vision rehabilitation agencies, academics, and representatives of consumer agencies from throughout the United States and Canada. Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko serves on the Board of Directors of the NAC while Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons serves as an on-site reviewer of other vision rehabilitation agencies.

NAC was born in the mid-1960s from the efforts of the American Foundation for the Blind to bring structure and best practices to agencies serving the blind. Miami Lighthouse is proud to have been continuously accredited by the NAC since 1978, and has just received its five-year accreditation renewal through 2019. This accreditation demonstrates our continuing leadership in the field of vision rehabilitation and dedication to improving the quality of life for people with vision loss.



NAC board members left to right, front: **John Kelly**, MEd, CAS, Representative, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Chester, NY; **Al Avina**, Executive Director, Blinded Veterans Association, Washington, DC; **Virginia A. Jacko**, President & CEO, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired; **Lytas G. Mogk**, MD, Director, Center for Vision Rehabilitation and Research, Henry Ford Health System, Grosse Pointe/Livonia, MI.

Rear: **Ann Plotkin**, Director, Centre for Sight Enhancement, Clinical Professor, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada; **J. Graham Strong**, O.D., Board Vice-President, Professor Emeritus, Center for Sight Enhancement, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada; **J. Elton Moore**, PhD, Associate Dean, Research & Assessment Mississippi State University College of Education; **Laura Bozeman**, PhD, COMS, CLVT, Associate Professor & Program Director of Vision Studies, College of Education and Human Development, The University of Massachusetts-Boston, Boston, MA; **Bill Robinson**, Executive Director, NAC; **Tom Miller**, Retired Executive Director of Blinded Veterans Association; **Tara A. Cortes**, PhD, RN, FAAN, Executive Director, The Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing, Professor of Geriatric Nursing, New York University College of Nursing; **Lee Robinson**, EdD, Secretary/Historian, Pleasant View, UT; **R. Tracy Williams**, O.D., Board President, Executive Director Spectros Institute for Low Vision at the Deicke House, Wheaton, IL; **Denny Moyer**, BS, COTA, SCLV, Representing the American Occupational Therapy Association, Executive Director, Ensign Skill Center, Fort Collins, CO.

## iPhone Technology Making a Major Difference for the Blind & Visually Impaired

"The new Apple apps for the blind and the visually impaired are easy to use and very reliable. Using them can make a huge difference in your independence," says Oseas DeLeon, Braille and Technology Literacy Coordinator at Miami Lighthouse. Oseas definitely knows what he is talking about. As a visually impaired person himself, he makes good use of all the apps, every day. He works with students at the Lighthouse on how to take full advantage of the exciting new technology.



Oseas DeLeon (left) teaching a Miami Lighthouse client how to use the iPhone.

"The iPhone has a "voice over" action that provides instant feedback," says Oseas.

While many of the apps are free, some have a minimal cost. He highly recommends three of the programs:

**"Blind Square"** is a GPS app that provides three categories of information: food, businesses and addresses. It costs \$30, but makes it possible to locate restaurants and places of business, as well as providing constant information on exactly where you are at a given moment. The app can be set to identify an area up to 100 meters.

**"Look Tell"** identifies dollar amounts on bills, quickly and reliably. It costs \$10 for the app, but does not work with coins. Oseas says that students and adults at the Miami Lighthouse are quickly taught to determine the value of a coin with the information that the penny and nickel have smooth edges and the dime and quarter have rough edges. This means that the coins can be easily differentiated by their size and feel using the blind person's tactile sense. Since all currency feels the same, the new app is very helpful.

**"Cam Find"** sees colors and can actually read labels out loud, identifying what might be in a can or box that you are considering opening and want to know its contents. It is a free app and very useful.

"The many advances in digital technology have gone a long way towards leveling the playing field for the visually impaired," says Miami Lighthouse CEO Virginia Jacko, blind herself and a user of several of the apps. "More than ever, *it's possible to see without sight*™."

## Our Teens Celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day in a Unique Manner

How did 80 of Miami Lighthouse's teens celebrate the Martin Luther King Holiday? They celebrated it by joining with 60 underprivileged youngsters from the Chapman Partnership by conducting a clothing drive, demonstrating arts and crafts projects, and offering music by student musicians from our Miami Lighthouse Better Chance Music Production Program™. Through our Miami Lighthouse Heikens Children's Vision Program we were able to provide the Chapman children vision screenings to detect eye abnormalities such as early onset of glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy.

"This unique collaboration empowers these children and teaches them that nothing is impossible when it comes to fulfilling their dreams, just like the example set by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," said Trish Bell, Chair Emeritus of Chapman Partnership.



## Miami Lighthouse Elects New Board Chair



Left to right: Incoming Chair Ray Casas (who also served as chair 1999-2000), outgoing chair Agustin Arellano, Jr., and Chair-Elect Louis Nostro. Board chairs serve for two year periods. Nostro will assume the chair in 2017.

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Contributed by Joan Spector



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