

# THE VISIONARY



**LIGHTHOUSE**  
OF BROWARD

## I Like My Independence

Marion's life converged with the Lighthouse in January 2005. She says, "My friend Ida Kotowitz started attending the Lighthouse back in 2003. She kept telling me to come, how much it helped her." But Marion's husband was homebound and on a feeding tube, so Marion stayed home to care for him. "I knew my vision was failing but I couldn't leave him, and he was my eyes."

Marion and her husband were married for 59 years. They raised two sons to be accomplished in their fields, and Marion received numerous awards

for her service in the finance department of the Broward Clerk of Courts. "I was good in math, but also with people."

Then her husband died, and for the first time in her whole life, Marion was living alone. "I was lost."

She vividly remembers her first interview with Lighthouse Case Manager Eunice Jackman. "She told me, 'You will be able to do everything but drive,' and it was true!" Learning to label her appliances and to travel safely down the steps from her second floor apartment and across streets put Marion back on track. "I learned you can do a lot of things even though you can't see." She uses her sense of touch to manage her microwave and find her keys. Her electronic magnification aid, called a

CCTV, lets her write checks and read her mail.

Today, Marion is very active on the board of directors of her long-time charitable interests, chairing both the "Big Gift Luncheon" of Hadassah, where she is a past-president, and the Nominating Committee of her Democratic Club. She keeps Tuesdays solely to come to the Lighthouse, where she has volunteered at the reception desk for years. "It makes me feel youthful," she says. Marion was recognized for her excellent work again, when she received the Lighthouse's Volunteer of the Year Award in 2012.

She is extremely proud of her sons Peter and Albert, who recently gathered the whole family to surprise her with a beautiful 90th birthday bash. And she is proud that, in lieu of gifts, all her friends donated to the Lighthouse in her honor knowing that this is what she would want. "I always talk to my friends about the Lighthouse."

Marion is thankful that she is still living in her own home. "If I hadn't come to the Lighthouse, I wouldn't be living alone in my condo. I like my independence. I can eat when I want, do what I want. The Lighthouse is a very important part of my life now."



*Marion Vale answers questions of callers on the phone and visitors who come to the Lighthouse.*

# Message from the Executive Director

October has been a big month for the Lighthouse. We held five events to celebrate our 40th Anniversary. I hope you were able to join us at the Ruby Luncheon on October 2nd where we honored our first recipient of the Courage Award, former board member Celia Chacon. She served as the Secretary of the Board for two years and Vice President for one year.

Celia began her relationship with the Lighthouse as a client. After years as a working wife and mother raising her two children, Celia became blind as a result of diabetes. Finding that her para-legal career was no longer an option, she drew on her considerable skills as a cook and applied her Lighthouse training to a new pursuit—she ended up being a co-host on a nationally televised show, *Cooking Without Looking*, which is still seen in South Florida on WXEL.

She was also a strong advocate for others facing visual impairment. She ran a weekly cooking club at the Lighthouse, sharing her dry humor and love for good food with former Lighthouse clients who wanted to cook and have fun. Her recipes are featured prominently in the just published Lighthouse Alumni recipe compilation which they have dedicated to Celia and are now selling in the Florida Reading Vision Store at the Lighthouse and soon to be available for download from the Lighthouse website. Recipes and Memories from the Lighthouse with Love goes on sale October 11.

Celia was kind, tough, demanding, gentle, wise and funny. She was indomitable. She faced illness, adversity and disappointment with grace and never lost her sense of humor, her pursuit of her dreams or her dedication to making life better for other people who are blind. She passed

away earlier this year but we are grateful for our memories and she is a fitting recipient of the first Courage Award.



Our month-long 40th anniversary celebration culminates with a gourmet Dining in the Dark—Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? event at the Hyatt Pier 66 on Friday October 25 at 7 pm. Call for tickets 954-463-4217 ext 115 or buy them at [www.LHOB.org](http://www.LHOB.org). This compelling, blind-folded, dark dining experience offers gourmet fare designed to pique the senses with varying tastes, textures and aromas. And you will use your sense of hearing to guess the celebrity guest at your table. It will be FUN! And you will be more appreciative than you ever imagined of your wonderful brain's ability to use all the senses to know and understand the world around us.

Thank you for your interest and support. The stories you are reading are made possible because someone cared to refer to the Lighthouse of Broward a person whose vision was failing, but whose desire to live independently remained strong.

Elly du Pré, DPA

Executive Director



*What better way to get to know The Lighthouse of Broward than to share a precious moment with a visually impaired child? Ruby Luncheon was a great place to make new friends.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### OCTOBER

Saturday, October 26

Babies & Kids Halloween Party, Welleby Park.  
954-463-4217 ext 130 for more info.

Thursday, October 31

Vets Coffee Talk

### NOVEMBER

Friday, November 1

Trivia Club 10 a.m.

Arts and Crafts Club 12:30 p.m.

Friday November 8

Lifetime Learners

Friday November 15

Alumni Association Meeting 10 a.m.

Arts and Crafts Club 12:30 p.m.

Thursday November 28

Thanksgiving-Lighthouse is CLOSED

Friday November 29

Thanksgiving-Lighthouse is CLOSED

### DECEMBER

Thursday December 5

Trivia Club—NOTE change in date. Also will have different date in January due to holiday.

Saturday December 7

KIDS Holiday Party

Friday December 13

Adult Client Holiday Party

Saturday December 14

Teens Holiday Party

Monday December 23 - Sunday January 5

-LIGHTHOUSE CLOSED TO CLIENTS

(business office open)

### JANUARY 2014

January 6

LIGHTHOUSE OPEN. Happy New Year!

Thursday, January 9

Trivia Club—NOTE change in date

**NEWS YOU CAN USE:** A recorded message of the monthly newsletter including calendar of activities and other announcements is now available at EXT 143. Call the Lighthouse and when you hear the greeting, enter 143.

# Lighthouse of Broward Celebrates 40<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary with Ruby Luncheon and First Annual Courage Award



*Celia Chacon, recipient of first Courage Award*

of the support and guidance her family has received over the past 8½ years as they rear daughter Gaby, now 9 years old.

The event also debuted a new video featuring interviews with successful graduates of the program and several staff and board members. Our website home page, [www.LHOB.org](http://www.LHOB.org), has a link to the YouTube site to view the video.



*Executive Director Elly du Pré with Victor and Richard Chacon*

volunteer and Board member Celia Chacon. The award was inscribed in her honor with the following words in print and braille: *“All the world is full of suffering. It is also full of overcoming.” Helen Keller. In honor of our many clients who continue to succeed in life after vision loss, the Lighthouse of Broward recognizes our friend and supporter, Celia Chacon. October 2013.* Celia’s husband Victor and son Richard accepted the award on her behalf.

Two hundred guests gathered in downtown Fort Lauderdale’s Global Dish event venue on Wednesday, October 2, 2013 to share in the celebration of the Lighthouse of Broward’s 40th Anniversary. Over 25 alumni, Lighthouse Board members and staff joined representatives of 60 sponsoring organizations and raised over \$60,000 to support services for babies, youth, working age adults and seniors.

A highlight of the event was a presentation of the first annual Courage Award to the family of the late alumna,

John Greene, recent graduate of the program reflected on how the Lighthouse had “saved his life” and allowed him to prepare for a new career as a caterer establishing his own business (and continuing to serve as president of his motorcycle club). Ruth Umer spoke



*Richard and Victor Chacon (Celia’s son and husband) accept Courage Award from Elly du Pré and LHOB Board President Carmen Miller.*

## Ann Fox— Natural Born Leader

Ann Fox, also known as Cookie, says she has found the need for letting everyone know about the Lighthouse of Broward. “We need the Lighthouse. It can be hard to keep motivating yourself. These doors need to keep open.” Not content to let others do what needs to be done, Cookie recently started a “Social Club” for people who have completed

training and still want to enjoy the camaraderie of new friends made during the training program, and opportunities to use their new living skills. To her, the club is a



*With LHOB Case Manager Olga Idrissi (left) discussing plans for the support group.*

*continued on page 4*

## Ann Fox—Natural Born Leader *(continued from page 3)*

“forever group” that plans outings—they are raising money so all participants can go on a boat trip to Bimini—and they regularly go to restaurants. They meet every Tuesday at the Lighthouse for mutual support and socialization.

Before she came to the Lighthouse, she says “I was feeling down. I was feeling out.” She was 51 years old and had just been diagnosed with Diabetic Retinopathy and Glaucoma. The double whammy left her legally blind in both eyes. She had lost most of her friends. An educator in her native Bahamas for 32 years and a gregarious entrepreneur, she was very motivated to return to work and make new friends. Through the classes and group support meetings she “learned how to do the same everyday things differently, by using visual aids specifically for people like myself with low vision.” She switched from two-finger hunting and pecking to proper touch keyboarding on the computer and is “better now than when she was sighted.” She has an exercise regimen to help control her diabetes.

Fortunately, Cookie had a lot of experience in “getting up, brushing herself off, and getting going.” At the age of 5, she already was making purses and necklaces and selling them to tourist boats. She put herself through high school. “I know what it is to hustle. I take that to making things happen at the Lighthouse. I ‘start small—finish big!’” Cookie has found a way to share her many thanks to the caring staff and teachers at the Lighthouse of Broward.

## In Their Own Words

Four years ago, the Lighthouse established an innovative monthly Interfaith Support Group, under the leadership of Dolores Hanley McDiarmid, a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist for over 30 years and more recently a graduate with a Masters degree in Pastoral Ministries. The group is part of the Job Preparation Program at the Lighthouse, based on research which gives ample evidence that being involved in volunteer work and one’s faith community has positive results on job acquisition through the development of natural networking connections to employers. The participants in this group regained motivation to search for jobs, re-entered school to prepare for jobs and have become fully employed.

Representing the Saturday Interfaith group, John Greene presented a beautiful 40th Anniversary book expressing their accomplishments and thanks to Lighthouse Executive Director Elly du Pré at the Ruby Luncheon. Here are some of their quotes:

*“Lighthouse of Broward allowed me to live the way I want to live. I am able to do almost everything I used to do when I was sighted and learned that I am not a blind person trying to use a computer, but a computer user who happens to be blind. The Lighthouse of Broward gave me back my freedom and I would be lost had it not been for Lighthouse of Broward and their dedicated staff.”* Michael A. Age: 36

*“First and foremost, The Lighthouse of Broward has put together a team of people that want to see you excel in all areas of life. For me, it is the little things like being able to pick out my own clothes, to be able to put on a pot of food. Lighthouse of Broward gave me the tools for my independence and changed a lot of my I can’ts into I CAN! At this time I am studying to become a minister and enjoy sharing God’s word with others to help them in their daily life.”* Anthony A. Age: 26

*“My first experience with the Lighthouse of Broward was in 1993, as part of the summer program. As a child, this was my first experience with other children with low vision and blindness. It was so much fun! ... All the counselors, volunteers and support staff were amazing. They knew how to serve us, how to make us feel loved, and gave us many great memories. In 2000-2001, I took Orientation and Mobility and learned how to use my white cane. I also learned some computer and communication skills. These months were such an important time in my life, as I slowly and finally began to accept my decreased eyesight. In the Fall of 2010, my life as a low vision person changed forever... Because of the Saturday Interfaith Group I am completely at peace with my disability. I am forever grateful.”* Chris C. Age: 32

