

# South Florida Hospital News<sup>®</sup> and HEALTHCARE REPORT

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## Camillus Collaboration with Lions Club a 'Beautiful Partnership'

BY LOIS THOMSON

Camillus Health Concern, Inc. (CHC), which provides primary care, behavioral health, oral health, and social services to those experiencing homelessness in Miami-Dade County, has teamed with the Lions Club International to provide vision screening services to its pediatric population.

Dr. Chandra Jennings, Medical Director of CHC and Family Medicine Physician, said that Camillus Health Concern reached out in June to initiate the partnership, and the Lions Club was happy to respond. Since 2002, Johnson and Johnson Vision has partnered with Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) to provide vision grants called "Sight for Kids." The Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, a division of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, has collaborated with LCIF and Lions Clubs in Florida to provide comprehensive vision exams to children enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. This is the first grant in the United States to serve Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie Counties. Lion Jane Colona, RN, President Diabetes Retinopathy Foundation of MD-35, Florida Heiken "Sight for Kids" Miami-Dade County Chair, and Secretary-Treasurer Aventura-North Miami Beach Lions, has been crucial in developing this collaboration with Camillus Health Concern. She explained that the purpose of these programs is to provide no cost eye exams and glasses to students. "The focus is to serve low-income and minority communities. When we had the opportunity to meet with Camillus Health Concern, this was a great way for us to get involved and partner with them."



**Dr. Chandra Jennings**



**Jane Colona**

Dr. Jennings commented further on the importance of the collaboration: "Vision is very significant to the overall quality of life, even more so to children. In the past year they've had to deal with unimaginable challenges related to being out of school and being socially isolated, and now returning to the classroom, they may face barriers related to missed or delayed health screenings." She added that children who have difficulty seeing may not be able to pay attention in school or be able to learn, causing them to fall behind their peers, which can result in considerable emotional stress and delay in academic progression.

Colona said the Lions Club has a Welch Allyn spot vision camera that provides a screening of the client's eyes and gives a "Pass" or "Fail" reading, as well as early detection of vision and eye conditions. All children who fail their screening are referred to community resources, usually the Florida Heiken Program, for full, dilated eye exams and eyeglasses.

Dr. Jennings reiterated, "We've been reaching out for collaborations, and this has been such a beautiful partnership, our patients are ecstatic. The clinics in this community that serve persons who are classified as underserved and low income, really do a great job of thinking strategically to meet the needs of our patients."

Colona agreed. "One thing we learned during the pandemic is that partnerships and collaboration are keeping us all going, and the wave of the future is working together in these wonderful partnerships."

For more information, call 305-577-4840 or visit [www.camillusHEALTH.org](http://www.camillusHEALTH.org).