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Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer Pays VIPS a Visit

The Louisville Downtown Lions Club created a Thanksgiving dinner that VIPS staff attended, filled with gratitude for all the blessings that the Lions have bestowed upon VIPS for the children and families we serve. Special guests included the West End Lions Club, making nearly a hundred people filling the large Kosair Charities Kidstown open space.

All the guests were absolutely thrilled when the Mayor of Louisville, Greg Fischer, made his very first visit to VIPS. The mayor toured the building accompanied by his Deputy Chief of Staff, Mary Ellen Wiederwohl, a long-time VIPS supporter. The Lions made a donation to Lions International in the mayor's honor.

Twelve of the 17 VIPS preschoolers and their families also attended and kicked off the evening with a musical program of three songs to the perfect delight of all the guests.



Mayor Greg Fischer and his Deputy Chief of Staff Mary Ellen Wiederwohl (center) are welcomed to VIPS by Executive Director Diane Nelson.

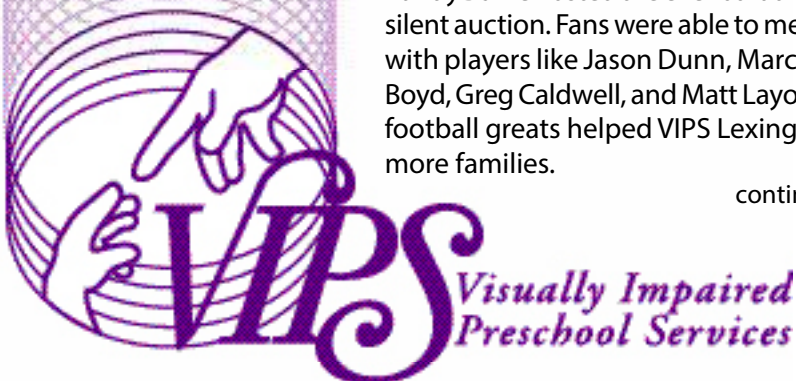
VIPS Lexington Parties with the Pros on Super Bowl Sunday

Hundreds of football fans came out to root for their team in the 7th Annual Party with the Pros at the Embassy Suites on Sunday February 3rd. Former NFL players Frank Minnifield, Marty Moore and Randy Burke hosted the event that featured a large silent auction. Fans were able to meet and mingle with players like Jason Dunn, Marc Logan, Shane Boyd, Greg Caldwell, and Matt Layow as Kentucky football greats helped VIPS Lexington help even more families.

continued on page 2



Former Cleveland Browns Frank Minnifield visits with VIPS-Lexington Board Member Chad Robinson and family.



Party with the Pros

continued from front page

Special thanks to the following companies for their support: Ale 8 One, Blue Bell Creameries, Bluegrass Home Entertainment, Hilliard Lyons and PNC Bank and to WKYT and Clear Channel Radio for their media sponsorship. We had great volunteers from the UK Chapter of Delta Gamma and also want to acknowledge Lynn Carney-Quinn, Julie Fritsche, Wendy Moore, Julie Pash, and Mindy Sexton for their help in securing auction items.



Rebecca & Darren Maas and family enjoyed the festivities.



VIPS Lexington Board Member J.T. Fritsch and wife Julie and children had a great time.



New Arrivals

VIPS is pleased to welcome the following new children and their families into the VIPS Program:

VIPS LOUISVILLE

- Brooklynn -- 7 months, Harned, KY
- Catherine -- 6 months, Corydon, IN
- Eli -- 8 months, Louisville, KY
- Hunter -- 8 months, Fisherville, KY
- James -- 10 months, Albany, KY
- Laney -- 27 months, Henderson, KY
- Layla -- 20 months, Louisville, KY
- Lucas -- 2 months, Louisville, KY
- Pyper -- 7 months, Louisville, KY
- Shelby -- 8 months, Bowling Green, KY

VIPS LEXINGTON

- Adriana -- 21 months, Bulan, KY
- Elaijah -- 12 months, Lexington, KY
- George -- 10 months, Lexington, KY
- Kynley -- 32 months, Somerset, KY
- Michael -- 19 months, Flemingsburg, KY

VIPS BLOOMINGTON

- Jersey -- 35 months, Carmel, IN
- Jason -- 15 months, Noblesville, IN
- Kyler -- 21 months, Anderson, IN
- Levi -- 6 months, Greenfield, IN
- Lilly -- 17 months, Noblesville, IN
- Madison -- 35 months, Anderson, IN
- Nevaeh -- 12 months, Avon, IN



New VIPS Bloomington children, Madison & Jersey, look closely at the toys Miss Annie has brought them.

KidsTown Preschool at VIPS

Announcing 2013-2014 Programs



VIPS Louisville is pleased to announce the following programs and services available through the KidsTown Preschool for the 2013-2014 school year.

Two-Day 2's Preschool Class in KidsTown Preschool at VIPS – for VIPS children and community friends (sighted peers) who are two years old. The classes run Monday-Tuesday and Wednesday-Thursday from 9 a.m. – noon. A masters-level preschool teacher leads the class and is supported by a full-time instructional assistant and classroom volunteers. Enrollment is limited to six children per class. The 2's class follows the JCPS calendar. Tuition for the Two-Day 2's class is \$1850 per school year; \$205.55 monthly payments, August 2013 – April 2014. ** Wrap-around childcare (Before-school and After-school care 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) included = \$3470 per school year; \$385.55 monthly payments, August 2013 – April 2014.**

Four Day 3-4's Preschool Class in KidsTown Preschool at VIPS – for VIPS children and community friends (sighted peers) who are three to four years old. VIPS children, living in Jefferson County, attend at no cost to their family under a contract with Jefferson County Public Schools. Arrangements may be made for other VIPS children through the use of other funding sources available to children with visual impairments. Tuition is paid by all other students. The 3-4's Preschool Class runs Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. The class is limited to 16 students; it is team-taught by two credentialed teachers, one IECE-certified and one TVI (Teacher of the Visually Impaired) and three full-time instructional assistants. The 3-4's class follows the JCPS calendar. Tuition for the Four-day 3-4's class is \$4140 per school year; \$460 monthly payment, August 2013 – April 2014. ** Wrap-around childcare (Before-School and After-School Care, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) included = \$7100 per school year; \$788.90 monthly payments, August 2013 – April 2014.**

Before- and After-School Care – is a fee-based service offered to all students in the KidsTown Preschool at VIPS. The hours run 8 - 9 a.m. and 12 - 5 p.m. (for 2's class) and 1-5:00 p.m. (for 3-4's class). The drop-in rate for this service is \$5 per hour. Wrap-around care packages are included in the tuition rates above. Parents may access this service on an as-needed basis as well, space permitting.

Fantastic Fridays – is a fee-based educational childcare program opened to VIPS children and their sighted peers on Fridays from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Childcare is provided by VIPS instructional assistants, supported by an IECE-certified teacher and TVI. The fee for childcare services is \$5/hour; VIPS offers a family rate of \$10/hour for up to three children. Fantastic Fridays is offered on all JCPS holidays as well, with the exception of winter and spring breaks and national holidays.

Childcare Services – are open to all students enrolled in KidsTown Preschool at VIPS on days when JCPS is not in session during the school year, with the exception of winter and spring breaks and national holidays. Childcare is provided by VIPS instructional assistants. Childcare is provided 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. at a rate of \$5/hour.

Family Events are scheduled each month for students attending KidsTown Preschool at VIPS and their families. Events include family holiday parties, dinners, and parent speakers and presentations. All monthly events are provided free to our students and families.

Please contact Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education, at 498-2927 or kmullen@vips.org if you are interested in any of these services or if you have questions about any of the above information.

**Individual tuition payment schedules may be arranged with the VIPS controller, Kim Shippey, 502-498-2922, or kshippey@vips.org.



VIPS Executive Director Diane Nelson is shown with Sam Moseley in the new loft bedroom in Kosair Kidstown donated by the A.J. Schneider Company.

VIPS Louisville Family Events

Thanksgiving Dinner

A heavenly scent wafted through the VIPS office as turkeys and a multitude of desserts cooked in preparation for the annual family Thanksgiving Dinner. Eleven families brought side dishes and desserts to share, including the Whelan family who graciously brought a cooked ham for all to share. After enjoying the lovely meal, the families departed for Lights Under Louisville at the Louisville MegaCaverns where it was reported that everyone enjoyed the fabulous bright lights of the holiday displays.

Christmas Party

On December 2, fifteen families celebrated the annual Christmas Party at the Kosair Charities Kidstown. The families enjoyed wonderfully tasty cookies prepared by Edie Greenberg and Cameron Brown as the magical appearances of Santa Claus (Bobby Otis), Mrs. Claus (Tonya Otis) and their elf (Clint Otis) brought joy to the faces of the younger participants. Each child received a small gift and as a special treat, the eighth graders from St. Patrick's Youth Ministry donated children's books to the VIPS children and their siblings.



Layla Grottenthaler's family poses with Santa and his helpers. Layla is on Santa's lap.

Comedy Caravan

Thanks to the generosity of Darrell Holliday of the Comedy Caravan, VIPS Louisville hosted a January fund-raiser, "Lift Your Spirits for the New Year", for VIPS families and friends. Supporters enjoyed dinner with a slice of humor added.

VIPS Lexington News

Holiday Party

The children and families had a wonderful time at this year's Holiday Party made possible by these gracious volunteers: Emmaline Atwell, Jane Dolan, Anna Harris, Ally Hartter, Tracy Liu, Shannon Newberry, Rooshil Patel, Whitney Shipman, and Rebecca Smyth. VIPS is very appreciative to The Soup Kitchen who donated a delicious meal served to each of our families, and to the Gardenside Christian Church congregation who amiably allowed us to host the party at their facility. A big red and white thank you to Jack Pattie for playing Santa at our Holiday Party.



Braydon Stamper wore reindeer antlers.



Top right: George Allen O'Kuly sees Santa for the first time. Center: By the time Carter Underwood got to Santa, they were both needing a nap. Right: Emerson Foster played with her Dad.



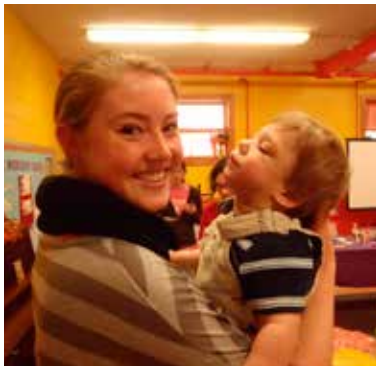
Save Sight Saturday

VIPS participated in the Foundation Fighting Blindness' Save Sight Saturday at the Cincinnati Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired, March 9th, 10am-12pm. Non-profits related to vision loss in the Tri-State area had informational tables along with small discussion groups related to particular eye diseases. Two physicians were available to answer questions.

VIPS Bloomington New

Play and Learn (PAL)

VIPS Bloomington hosted its second holiday Play and Learn (PAL) on November 29 at the First Presbyterian Church in Bloomington. Our theme was "Gratitude". Families from Bloomington and Indianapolis enjoyed circle time with musical instruments with Miss Annie. Children "made thunder" with a parachute and got to explore many musical instruments. Parents socialized over snacks and made picture frames for photos of their children that were taken at the event.



William and volunteer, Kelsey Pagham, enjoyed PAL.



On December 20, VIPS Bloomington held another family playgroup for some of the families that missed the holiday Play & Learn. Families from Columbus and Bloomington attended and discussed holding playgroups once a month.

Top: Yulia and Lola, both of Indianapolis, enjoy playing in the ball pit together. Center: Children explore musical instruments with Miss Annie. Right: Juri is so proud! She put all three balls at the top of the Busy Ball Drop, and they made a lot of noise going down!



If you are a VIPS Bloomington family and would like more information about a VIPS Family Playgroup, please contact Rebecca Davis at 888-824-2197. Families interested in starting a monthly playgroup for VIPS Bloomington kids can contact Judy Singleton (Maya's grandma) at jsingleton@nwcable.net.

Making Excellent Use of a Day "Off"

On January 21, VIPS participated in the City of Bloomington's volunteer campaign, "A Day ON! Not a Day Off Day of Service". Bloomington's mayor, Mark Krusan, states, "Martin Luther King day presents an excellent opportunity for us to enhance community collaborations." VIPS benefitted greatly from this day of collaboration.

With the \$500 grant through the City of Bloomington to purchase materials for welcome bags for the families we serve the Girl Scouts of Monroe County came to St. Paul's Church to prepare welcome bags as one of several volunteer projects. Welcome bags are given to new families to give the parents of visually impaired infants and toddlers new ideas about how to play and interact with their children. The toys in the bags stimulate other senses beside vision.

The Girl Scouts decorated 75 bags (donated from Global Gifts) with scratch and sniff stickers, cut and tied fabric for tactile fabric bottles, assembled homemade shakers from recycled water bottles and rice, and typed Braille messages on the nametags of the bags. The grant allowed the purchase of bells, cinnamon scented pinecones, and shakers to put in the bags as well. It was a great learning experience for the many Girl Scouts and their families. We are very grateful for the help!



Community Recognition for VIPS Bloomington

On January 28, the Kiwanis Club of South Central Indiana presented VIPS Bloomington with their Young Children Priority One Community Service Award. Receiving this award for VIPS was Board President, Gen Shelton, Dr. Rowan Candy, and VIPS Bloomington child Maya Kelly and her mom Jenny.

We continue to be so very grateful to the Kiwanis for their support of our mission and the children we serve! Special thanks to Governor Elect Vanessa McClary for her efforts on our behalf.

VIPS Mom Becomes an American Citizen

When VIPS Bloomington's Annie Hughes went to her January 17th visit with Yuliya, she took along some very special items: a full-size embroidered American flag, little flags to wave in the wind, and red, white and blue necklaces. Though Yuliya enjoyed them, they were really for Yuliya's Mom, Tatiana. Tatiana passed her citizenship test and will soon become an American citizen!

Tatiana says, "I am a good student," and she certainly is! The citizenship ceremony will be very special to Tatiana and her family. She plans a visit to her parents and family in her native Russia sometime this coming summer, but Tatiana will be a returning U.S. citizen in the fall when her daughter, who was born in the United States,



Proud new US citizen, Tatiana shows her colors.

will begin attending preschool.

Universal Coincidence?

If you've always been skeptical about the universe putting us each in the place where we are meant to be, whether we understand why or not, consider this most unusual situation that has recently come to the attention of the VIPS staff.

Once upon a time, there were two Jefferson County Public Schools elementary teachers, Susan Blois and June Long, who were assigned to Hartstern Elementary School. They were both second grade teachers and as luck would have it, taught next-door

to each other. As time went by, their professional relationship became a personal one and they became good friends. When they retired about fourteen years later, they couldn't just sit idly by but began volunteering in the Make-A-Wish foundation's office. Their contact at Make-A-Wish was Heather Benson, currently Development Director at VIPS.

When Heather left Make-A-Wish to accept the development position at VIPS, June and Susan decided to give VIPS a go and began volunteering at some VIPS events while continuing their connection with Make-A-Wish. Both teachers also taught with Stephanie Deeley, VIPS board member Steve Deeley's sister-in-law, yet neither had ever worked with a child with a visual loss. The existence of VIPS, let alone our mission, was all new to them.

In the meantime, both June and Susan each had adult children, who in the way of adult children, had married. And also in the way of adult children, both teachers soon became grandmothers. June's daughter and her husband soon brought forth a son, who amazingly enough, was diagnosed with a visual impairment severe enough to qualify him for VIPS' services. And then Susan's son's wife soon produced twins and the boy twin, in keeping with the universe's love of coincidences (ARE there really coincidences?), was diagnosed with a visual impairment severe enough to qualify him, too, for VIPS services.

So to end our story of coincidences and a universe full of surprises, with no prior knowledge of or interest in the field of visual impairment when they began volunteering for VIPS, both teachers now have grandsons receiving VIPS services! And to us, that's nothing short of miraculous!

Creating a Braille Rich Environment

By Paige Maynard, VIPS-Louisville Developmental Interventionist (DI)

Vance begins his day just like any other two year old. As his mom, Emily, brushes his teeth and gets him ready for the day, he reads his toothbrush label. In the living room, he finds one of his favorite toys – his bucket of blocks. He knows that the front of the bucket has words on it as he pulls each block out. Later in the morning he participates in writing and drawing activities, which for him, consist of meaningful scribbling. Emily asks, "Vance, what are you writing? What's happening in your story? Would you like to read us what you wrote?" As he goes to bed that evening, he reads one of his favorite books, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" by

Bill Martin, Jr. and Eric Carle. He loves listening to Emily do a funny voice for each of the animals. Vance may seem like a typical toddler, and, in many ways, he is. However, each of his exposures to written language has been in the form of the Braille code. In his Braille rich environment, Vance is learning that the dots on his toothbrush mean “toothbrush”, the label on his shapes bucket means “bucket”, his scribbling on the Braille writer has meaning, and that the bumps on his favorite book tell his mom which animal to impersonate. Emily has created an environment that helps Vance inch toward developing an understanding of Braille reading and writing.

You might be asking, “Is Braille really that important?” “Why is it so significant that Vance is surrounded by Braille? Does my child need to be exposed to it before school? Why? Why? Why?” The answer lies in the means that a younger child develops literacy skills.

Naturally, a child’s environment is geared toward helping him or her develop print literacy. Though the experience of a sighted child shouting “French fries PUH-LLEEASE!” at even the sight of a McDonald’s sign may seem ordinary, or even annoying for a parent or caregiver who didn’t plan on swinging through the drive-through, it is a vital piece of the milestones he reaches as he learns to become a distinguished reader. The fast food restaurant sign is the symbol that conveys the meaning that the building beside it sells a certain type of food, which is a skill that is learned through experiences with literacy. At birth, he learns that the sight and sound of dad making a bottle represent that he will be eating breakfast soon. As he gets older, he understands that the box with yellow noodles and bubble letter font means macaroni and cheese is going to be for dinner tonight (much like the restaurant sign). In a few months or years, he can pick out the first letter in his name to tell which toys belong to him. Finally, as he begins formal literacy training, the foundation that has been laid in early childhood is built upon as he learns letters and numbers, learns how to sound them out, and becomes so automatic at reading that he no longer needs to think about it.

That is, in a world full of print words and symbols. But, what if a child is unable to see what has been written down? Children with visual impairments thirst for the same literacy experiences as sighted children, and are at a high risk for developing delays in literacy milestones because of limited access to written language. They need just as many, if not more, experiences with Braille as their sighted friends and siblings do with print. Without thoughtful adaptation to the visually impaired child’s

environment, she will have no understanding that words and symbols even exist until she is introduced to letters in preschool or kindergarten, which is just too late if she wants to become an independent and well-rounded student and adult. It is for this reason that creating a Braille rich environment for your baby, toddler, or preschooler is essential to his or her literacy experiences through the rest of his or her life. Right now, these “inchstones” toward reading may not seem significant, but they quickly add up! Not to mention, the more you, the caregiver, are surrounded by and use Braille, the more quickly you will inch along as well!

Consider some of the following ways to encourage your baby, toddler, or preschooler (and yourself!) to begin reading and writing Braille, through the understanding of how to make the dots in the first place, that these dots have a meaning, and that they can be used for communication:

Begin gathering the tools for brailleing! Your DI or TVI can help you locate a Braille writer, slate and stylus, Braille paper, sticky label paper, and anything else you might need. If your child has a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses, visual field of 20 degrees or less, and/or visual



Vance Lovett explores a braille writer.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

performance reduced by brain injury or dysfunction as described by your ophthalmologist or neurologist, and has a current eye report on file at VIPS, he or she may be registered for Federal Quota funds, a program that provides a small set dollar amount of Braille literacy materials for loan to blind and visually impaired children each year. Ask your TVI or DI for more details about the program.

Ask your DI or TVI to work with you on Braille for a period during each visit. A DI is not only a teacher for your child – she is a teacher for you. It may be scary or intimidating at first, but your DI/TVI can help you break Braille down into bite-sized chunks that are easier to learn. Remember that each letter has a Braille symbol that represents it, just like in print. You can also ask your DI/TVI to help you buy or check out the Braille Can-Do Video, “Power at Your Fingertips”, from the VIPS library.

Expose your child and yourself to a slate and stylus and the Braille writer by making them available and within reach at all times. Keep these in your craft or writing area with the crayons and pencils you keep for siblings. Remember that the Braille writer is meant to be touched. Though it looks as if a finger could get lost inside, with supervision, your child won’t harm his or her hands by exploring it. Also remember that your child will not likely have the ability to press the keys the way that they are intended to be pressed, but with time and modeling from you, he or she will develop it as his hands grow and the muscles strengthen. If the slate and stylus are a choking hazard for your tot, you can substitute for anything that will poke a hole in paper. Some of the best tools to use are chopsticks, golf tees, craft sticks, and unsharpened pencils. Just put a piece of paper down on the carpet, and poke away!

Though there are many organizations that sell and give away Braille books, adapting your own is the most cost effective way to fill your bookshelves. Start with buying board books with one word per page. They are easy for you to Braille, and less overwhelming than adapting a standard picture book. At an even cheaperrate, you can create your own books by cutting apart cereal boxes, binding them with yarn, and attaching everyday items to them and Brailleing a story (which makes an especially fun rainy day project for caregiver and child!). As your skills improve, you can adapt and create more complicated books. Be sure to ask your DI for labels and her input. You can also Braille on contact paper if labels are in low supply.

Let your child hear and feel you Braille everything that she comes in contact with. Your child will have no idea what you are doing unless you talk about you Brailleing it, let him or her feel you Brailleing it, sit in your lap when you are Brailleing it, and touch the Braille herself. A good rule of thumb is that if the item has print words on it (or even if it doesn’t), it can be brailled. Some objects to consider adding Braille labels to include puzzle pieces, stroller activity cards, toy piano keys, telephone, toothpaste, diaper rash

cream, microwave buttons, favorite DVD’s (for preschoolers), shampoo bottle, toy bins, bottles and sipper cups, eating utensils, shelves, mailbox, birthday cards, a grocery list, notes to one another or other family members... you get the idea.

The point is that your journey as a caregiver of a child with a visual impairment has likely not been an easy one, as you and every other VIPS parent knows. You also know that many inchstones don’t come without a fight. Give yourself and your child the opportunity to reach as many literacy inchstones as you can. As your child finds the Braille on a book or object for the very first time, turns pages in a Brailled book, “reads” tactile labels to you, or begins moving his or her fingers from left to right when reading, inch by inch, she will be building a foundation for solid reading skills. Each and every piece of Braille you add to your home will help your child inch along, until one day, she will be reading all by herself and you’ll look back to see that all those inches have added up to a mile.

VIPS grad Jamie Weedman is willing to offer braille instruction to parents. If you are interested, please call the VIPS Office and leave a message for Mr. Maury (Jamie’s father) and he will have Jamie call you.

Staff and Board News

It is with sadness that we report that Margaret Vinsel, our wonderful Two Day Twos and PAL teacher, left VIPS Louisville to become a preschool teacher in the Jefferson County Public Schools. Taking over Margaret’s position is our fabulous former teacher assistant, Staci Maynard, who has taken to her new role with the eagerness, energy and zeal of someone who has found her true calling.

We are also sorry to report that Diane Key, Teacher of the Visually Impaired at VIPS Louisville in our preschool classroom, has resigned due to family circumstances. We wish her and her family our best wishes for the future.

Maury Weedman and Ashley Emmons have assumed Diane’s responsibilities along with Angie Paisley and TVI Jan Moseley. Their skills will keep our services at the high level expected of VIPS and more importantly, will provide services delivered by teachers with whom the children are already familiar.

On October 29th, the Council of Community Accessibility presented VIPS Bloomington’s Rebecca Davis with the Professional and Community Service Award in recognition of the contributions she has made toward the advancement of opportunities for people with disabilities. Congratulations, Rebecca, for a job well done!

Rebecca Davis, never one for letting an opportunity pass her by when it comes to furthering VIPS Bloomington's cause, recently met with Indiana Governor Mike Pence along with Bloomington Kiwanian Allen Pease. She seized the moment to share a VIPS brochure with the governor and to talk about the lack of services in Indiana.



Rebecca shares a VIPS brochure with IN Governor Pence.

We are thrilled to note that Dr. Mark Lynn, optometrist and owner of Dr. Bizer's Vision World as well as a long-time VIPS supporter, has achieved yet another honor. Dr. Lynn was just named to a one-year term as board chairman of the Kentucky State Fair Board. Congratulations!

After a joint staff meeting in November, staff from all three offices spent a lovely morning visiting the Princess Diana exhibit at the Frazier History Museum in Louisville. A short walk down Main Street resulted in an enticing luncheon at the Bristol Café. The day celebrated our treasured care-givers by visiting a wonderful exhibit celebrating a most famous and treasured care-giver.

Osmondson Fund Visitors

Recent visitors to VIPS Louisville were Farris and Helen Dixon, the stewards of the Karston A. & Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund, a long-time supporter of VIPS. Mr. Dixon is the Osmondsons' nephew (Ethelyn & Farris' mother were sisters). The Osmondsons, immigrants born in 1904, lived in Portland and started a business together at 4th & Winkler. Karston walked to work every day, about 10 miles.

The Osmondsons had no children, treating Farris Dixon as if he were their own. Ethelyn passed away in 1993 at age 89; Karston passed away in 1999 at the age of 94. They were self-made millionaires who left a tremendous legacy. A photograph of the Osmondsons will hang prominently next to the sensory room which their foundation helped to fund. We hope to also hang a picture of Janice Braun, the Dixon's daughter, who passed away in 2010. Janice was the impetus to her parents' and therefore the Osmondson Fund's relationship with VIPS.

VIPS Louisville Classroom News

2-Day Twos Winter 2013

By Staci Maynard, VIPS Louisville 2-Day Twos & PAL Teacher

Hello, VIPS family! I am delighted to be the new 2-day Twos teacher. I previously worked as an instructional assistant in the KidsTown preschool classroom for 10 months. I have volunteered in classrooms for years and have taken educational courses, but I am especially excited about this new teaching opportunity. Our two-year-olds have been learning and growing so much over the past few months!

Before Ms. Margaret left us, the children experienced lots of fun holiday learning experiences. They enjoyed making pumpkin muffins to take home as well as making Play-Doh that smells like pumpkin spice, which the children still like to play with in the



Mason, Madi, Jude, Zane, & Grace dressed up for Trick-or-Treating around the VIPS-Louisville Office.

classroom. The class learned about vegetables in November, and celebrated what they had learned by making vegetable soup. Then, they invited their families to come and eat with the class. They also made Thanksgiving turkeys on which was written something for which they were thankful. Our class even got to sing some special Thanksgiving songs, along with the preschool class, for the Lions Club and the mayor of Louisville!



Jude, Madi, Ms. Beth, & Zane play around with pumpkin spice

December was a special month in that we had two new students join our class, Addyson and Vance. We also got ready for Christmas by creating story bags of the Braille book, Spot's First Christmas. Every child got to take home a copy of the book and one of the story bags so the story could be shared with his/her family. Thanks to Ms. Margaret and Ms. Beth's creativity, the students received a beautiful ornament with their photographs inside.

The class experienced a lot of change in January. We were all sad to see Ms. Margaret go. However, I was excited to get to know all of the two-year-olds and to work with Ms. Beth again. She is always a great help and such a kind-hearted presence to have around. I'm so grateful to Ms. Beth for her assistance in making the teacher transition in the Twos class such a smooth one.

We started the year off by learning about winter: winter weather, what we wear in winter, activities we can do in the winter, and winter opposites (hot & cold, wet & dry, hard & soft). The children enjoyed making their own Play-Doh snowmen, painting matching mittens, making "snow angels" in cotton balls, and singing winter-themed songs while playing bells.

Love is our theme for February. We will be talking about whom we love and ways we can show those people our love, beginning with our friends at school and continuing with different members of our families. Some activities of our friends theme will be making a friendship tree, matching photos of our friends, drawing pictures of our friends, and singing songs that will help us to remember our school friends' names.

We are a busy group as all of us are explorers, learning to use our senses in new ways in order to help us better experience the world around us. It's so great that we get to take this educational journey together, because there is always fun to find, new things to learn, and help from one of our friends to be had when needed. Thank you to everyone involved in VIPS in any way for making programs like the 2-day Twos possible. You may never know the blessing that you have given to the VIPS children and their families, but also to workers like me who are excited to come to a job where they get to work with such precious children. I look forward to many months to come of growing with my 2-Day Twos' families.

Play and Learn (PAL) Winter 2013

By Staci Maynard, VIPS Louisville 2-Day Twos & PAL Teacher

As the Twos teacher, I also get the pleasure of coordinating our PAL family play group on Fridays from 10:00-12:00. Our families always have fun together, singing, dancing, playing instruments, going to the Sensory Room, and playing outside when the weather allows. We also usually make a craft together to take home at the end of our time together.

In the month of January, we enjoyed some fun winter activities. The children made their own winter hats, made snowflakes out of colored salt, and had a "snowball" toss (rolled up socks that they tried to throw in a laundry basket.) Their favorite craft was making their own sensory snowmen. The children first searched the snow (cotton balls) to find the different parts (eyes, nose, arms, scarf, etc.) that they needed to make a snowman. Then, they glued the parts to a snowman outline.

PAL is a great time for parents to get together to talk and get to know other parents to whom they can relate. It is also ideal for the children to have social interaction with other VIPS related kids while having some educational entertainment.

If you are interested in joining either the Two Day Twos or the PAL class, please contact Kathy Mullen, Director of Education, at 498-2027.

KidsTown Preschool

By Angie Paisley, VIPS Louisville KidsTown Preschool Teacher

Our little scientists have been investigating some simple science concepts through hands-on, interactive, sensory and exploratory play. We have learned about Magnetic and Non-Magnetic Forces,

Weight & Force, Color & Light (including Shadows), and Sink & Float. It is so exciting to hear these children use giant words like Transparent and Opaque to explain things they are seeing and feeling.

One of our favorites has definitely been discovering how different colors are created through shaving cream play. We discovered how to blow a balloon up using our mouths, and how to create our own geyser, both indoors and out! We followed up with a visit to the Louisville Science Center to expand our horizons even more. Our little scientists are ready for the world!



Nevaeh makes an edible rainbow.

Braeden checks out the space capsule during a field trip to the Louisville Science Center.



Mr. Maury makes a geyser while fellow scientists Megan, Braeden, Alaina, Stella, Layla, and Zachary look on.



Layla, Ahmed, Nevaeh, Stella and Sam learn about light and shadows with Ms. Ashley.



Field Trip to the KY School for the Blind Library for story time and exploring real animals that have been preserved through taxidermy.



Layla gives the real stuffed goose a hug.



Braeden pets a groundhog while Stella waits her turn.



Mr. Maury shows Christian the goose.

Louisville Downtown Rotary Club Sponsors Fabulous Field Trip to KaLightscope

Students of Kosair Charities KidsTown Preschool were treated to a very special holiday field trip by the Louisville Downtown

Rotary Club who provided tickets to view KaLightscope at the Galt House Hotel and Suites. Members of the club greeted the children, parents and teachers as they alighted from the VIPS van. Thanks to Ed Binford of PNC Bank; Barbara Collins of Kitchen Planning Designs, Etc.; the Healing Place's Jay Davidson, and John Hubbuch of Hubbuch's and Company for their

personal touch and to the Downtown Rotarians for their generous gift.



At top: David meets the Sugar Plum Fairy;

Center Alaina and Alyssa write letters to Santa;

Bottom: Ms. Gretchen and Layla share a hug.

Kind Gifts of Time from Generous People

Thanks to all of the wonderful people who have so freely given of their time and talents to the VIPS Offices.

VIPS Louisville

Santa so appreciates the extra help he got from these big-hearted individuals from Middletown Christian Church who opened their hearts, schedules and wallets to put together a lovely Christmas for some of our VIPS families. Santa promised something extra special for these folks due to their willingness to share his message and tasks: Mike and Jennifer Coffey, Troy and Stephanie Coulter, Dennie Galloway, Bill and Tina Gardener, Neil and Sara Hoover, Dennis and Laura Mauzy, Genevieve and Steve Mullkins, Don and Margie Odom, Brian and Tracy Ullom, Matt and Angela Vance, Jason and Aimee VanderPol, and Bill and Dr. Sarah Wagers.

The ladies from the FAHOLO (FAith, HOpe and LOve) group from Middletown Christian put together a food basket to make a truly memorable Christmas for VIPS families.

There was a great deal of the Christmas spirit in the air. Sixteen VIPS families had an enriched Christmas thanks to the kindness and generosity of several local companies and groups. Special thanks to all of our special Santas: the Hatcher family/ Aguiar Law Office, BB&T Insurance Services (took 3 families!), Delta Gamma Society, Caroline Johnson and her bunco group, Mullen/Spath Family, National Federation of the Blind of Greater Louisville, Norton Healthcare, O'Dea Family, PNC- Newburg branch, Rodman family, That's Dancing, and UPS. The VIPS staff even took on a last minute family that needed help. The Kentucky Eye Care Institute and VIPS Board Member Lester Sanders and his Omega Psi Phi fraternity brothers provided Kroger gift cards for the families. Talk about holiday spirit---these groups had it in spades! We are most appreciative as were the families who benefitted from the holiday largesse.

Thanks to the A.I.J. Schneider Company for the donation of the darling bedroom suite from Pottery Barn for Kids that is on the balcony above the UPS Store and the library in Kosair Charities Kidstown. The two ladies from Pottery Barn for Kids who set up all the furniture in the new bedroom/loft area were Katie Hirst, the general manager, and Carol Bolton. And thanks to Sam Moseley, who selected the furniture and later added a stuffed polar

bear and to Glen Stuckel, VIPS board member, who introduced Sam to VIPS.

Community volunteers Emily and Amy Downs provided information about VIPS at a recent event in Cherokee Park.

The very consistent and helpful Delta Gamma Alumnae who again this year assisted the staff with signing and stuffing the VIPS holiday card included: Lisa Bajorinas, Julie Campbell, Sarah Coty, Angela Feldman-Harkins, Ginny Fuller, Meaghan Goodwin, Cynthia Greene, Danielle Hawks, Elinore Jeffcoat, June King, Mary Frances Pack, Luly Reinhardt, and Kristi Saffer. Thanks ladies for your help-year after year after year!

We appreciate the willingness to help from Miranda Massey, Katherine Meyer, Ava Corwin, & Jared Maneil who volunteered to help us move furniture when the floors in the Louisville building were being re-done.

Lip-smacking thanks to the Whelan family who shared a cooked ham with the families at the Thanksgiving dinner.

Thanks to Edie Greenberg and Cameron Brown for the fantastic cookies the families enjoyed at the annual Christmas party. And it just wouldn't have been a Christmas party without the delightful Otis family: Bobby in his Santa Claus suit, Tonya in Mrs. Claus' attire and their son, Clint, appearing as an elf in Santa's workshop. Additional thanks for encouraging literacy to all the children attending the Christmas party are due to the eighth graders from St. Patrick's Youth Ministry who donated children's books to the VIPS children and their siblings.

We very much appreciate the kindness and generosity of Darrell Holliday of the Comedy Club who allowed VIPS Louisville to host yet another fund-raiser at his Club.

VIPS Bloomington

IU Students from Dr. Al Lyons' class in nonprofit management at the School of Public Education and Administration assisted in the planning and hosting of the Holiday Play and Learn event. Thanks to Dr. Lyons, Kelsey Padgham, and the SPEA students for their time and effort in helping us put together a fun morning of playing and learning. Special thanks to Cyndi Johnson for introducing us to the First Presbyterian Church, and to Barb Patrick for volunteering at the event.

Thanks to our Monroe County Girl Scout contacts Tana Hellwig and Alice Ostreich for facilitating the scout volunteer event held on MLK Day as part of the City of Bloomington's Day On Not Day Off.

Thanks to the wonderful Girl Scouts for their energy and efforts on behalf of VIPS children and families (story on page 5).

VIPS Lexington

The Halloween party for our families could not have been a success without these selfless acts of four volunteers, and the generous hearts of the Gardenside Christian Church congregation for allowing us to use their facility. Thank you Kala Bourdeaux, Sarah Cameron, Vanessa Janatka, Samantha Murphy, Pooja Reddy, Nancy Reed, Rebecca Smyth, Alex Wade, and the Gardenside Christian Church congregation!

In November, Chelsea Doyle and Janessa Knight were invaluable during the Parents Night Out.

And the Good Giving Guide Challenge that provided new donors along with almost \$3,000 owes a great deal to the time and talents of Jamison Large and Chad Robinson. Great work!

The children and families had a wonderful time at this year's Holiday Party made possible by these gracious volunteers: Emmaline Atwell, Jane Dolan, Anna Harris, Ally Hartter, Tracy Liu, Shannon Newberry, Rooshil Patel, Whitney Shipman, and Rebecca Smyth. VIPS is very appreciative to The Soup Kitchen who donated a delicious meal served to each of our families, and to the Gardenside Christian Church congregation who amiably allowed us to host the party at their facility. A big red and white thank you to Jack Pattie for playing Santa at our Holiday Party.

Party with the Pros

Party with the Pros is a huge undertaking for the small staff in our Lexington office and it relies heavily upon our wonderful volunteers. What would we do without the terrific Delta Gamma alumnae Pam Henderson, Karin Lewis, Liz Mason and Jamie Whitman and of course, the active chapter members including Lauren Alberti, Katie Anderson, Lizzy Bauer, Sarah Beda, Tessa Belding, Kelly Bergmann, Alison Bogen, Bryn Brendamour, Liz Buster, Maggie Casper, Loren Cataldo, Sally Chamness, Kelly Chung, Olivia Clark, Julie Collette, Taylor Creek, Cara Croley, Erika Crouch, Leslie Daly, Catherine Dawahare, Kendra Dean, Haeli Denton, Shelby Detring, Allison Dixon, Elizabeth Dupree, Kate Elbersen, Danielle Endicott, Jessica Feldman, Brigitta Fieldhammer, Amanda Foster, Kelsey Gill, Abby Grooms, Molly Groza, Jocelyn Grueninger, Mackenzie Hailey, Chelsey Harrington, Anna Harris, Ally Hartter, Maddy Heile, Christine Herbe, Casey

Hurst, Kelsey Joseph, Madalyn Kaiser, Stephanie Kamenicky, Libby Kiefaber, Emmi Lambert, Brynn Lehman, Marin Lehman, Molly Lex, Sarah Meyer, Allison Olive, Natalie Olive, Catie O'Neil, Mallory Pope, Lindsay Postlewaite, Kelsie Raines, Kyle Rubini, Erika Russell, Hadley Scruggs, Kelsey Shannon, Lindsey Sharp, Kylie Sheehan, Cassidy Sorrells, Shelby Stein, Chelsea Stewart, Brittney Such, Stephany Thaman, Elle Tolliver, Sydney Tripp, Liz Tulisiak, Ande West, Kelsey Whitford, and Shianne Williams.

We also appreciate the volunteers from Kohl's: Edye Bryant, Robin Hardy and Rebecca Hawthorne. Additional volunteers for PartywiththeProswhodeserveourappreciationare Tootie Denny, Shelly Minor and Mindy Sexton.

Rebecca Smyth was the Volunteer Coordinator for the Party with the Pros along with Brittney Such as her assistant. Rebecca and Brittney were a force to be reckoned with when working together. They did an outstanding job and were given many compliments by numerous people attending our event.

A huge shout-out to all those who helped VIPS Lexington serve children with severe visual challenges. THANK YOU ONE AND ALL!

Recent Grants & Donations

Thanks to all the individuals, funds and foundations that have invested in our children's futures.

VIPS Louisville

If you thought Kosair Charities KidsTown provided fabulous learning opportunities before, you should see our newest learning tool! Just climb the stairs to the brand new child sized bedroom donated by the A. J. Schneider Company, Galt House Hotel and Suites, and Crowne Plaza. The bedroom features a bed that children can learn how to make (they already know how to un-make one!), a fuzzy chair in which to read a favorite book, and a bedside table and a dressing table, both of which feature bookcases containing children's books in large print and Braille. And to cap it all off, a white faux bearskin rug provides the perfect "flop" spot

for enjoying a book or a nap. This is truly the destination of choice of learning stations!

The Irvin F. & Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation provided \$10,000 for building improvements and a swing set sunshade, making the Louisville playground much easier to appreciate on those steamy summer days.

Thanks to the Karston A. & Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund which recently funded \$30,131 for the Orientation and Mobility and 2-Day-2s programs.

\$10,000 towards a 2-year \$20,000 pledge was awarded by the Owsley Brown Frazier Family Foundation in response to the 2011 Matching Grant Challenge.

The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana presented VIPS with \$3,000 to help fund the Indiana Outreach Program.

Family Services and Continuing Education programs were recently provided with \$23,000 from the Fred B. & Opal S. Woosley Foundation.

VIPS Lexington

The Lexington Clinic Foundation graciously awarded VIPS Lexington a grant of \$1525 in November 2012 to help us with our Welcome Bags and to purchase items for our summer program. For many of our families the Welcome Bag is the first tangible way they have of transforming their fear into a solid plan of action that will help their child succeed. This is the second time in nearly three years the Foundation has supported VIPS' very important mission.

VIPS was one of 58 nonprofits in the Lexington area that participated in the GoodGiving Guide Challenge during the months of November and December 2012. By placing flyers in area businesses, posting and sharing on Facebook, tweeting on Twitter, emailing supporters, and having a benefit concert VIPS increased public awareness and received \$2,811.09 in donations. The Challenge, itself, generated a grand total of \$429,842! Thank you to Sammy's Left Eye for dedicating and promoting their November 24th show to VIPS for the Challenge. And much appreciation is also due to Chad Robinson and Jamison Large for their work on this project.

VIPS Bloomington

The Kiwanis Indiana Foundation, Inc awarded VIPS Bloomington a grant for \$1,000 to go towards the purchase of light boxes and other educational materials used in home

visits. Many thanks to Governor Elect Vanessa McClary and the Bloomington Kiwanis for their assistance with this grant.



Governor Elect Vanessa McClary presents the check to Bloomington board members Gen Shelton and Dr. Rowan Candy.

In December, VIPS Bloomington received word that we received a Community Impact Grant for \$10,000 from the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County and the Smithville Charitable Foundation. The Community Impact Grant will help us fund home visits to the families we serve in Monroe County. Thanks to the Community Foundation for their support of our mission. And, thanks to Tina Peterson and Renee Chambers of the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County for their guidance and support.

And, we are excited to announce that the grants committee of the Monroe County Council awarded VIPS Bloomington \$4,000 as part of the 2013 Community Service Grants. This grant will also help us fund home visits to the families in Monroe County who need specialized early intervention from our Teacher of the Visually Impaired. Thanks to Jim and Gen Shelton, Geoff McKim and the grants committee for their support!

VIPS Bloomington received a \$500 grant through the City of Bloomington to purchase materials for welcome bags for the families we serve. Thanks to this support, we were able to prepare welcome bags for new families. (See related article in News from Bloomington.)

On Nov. 29, Global Gifts, a fair trade nonprofit in Indianapolis and Bloomington, donated 10% of all sales between 5 and 8 at all 3 stores to VIPS-Bloomington. We gratefully received \$250 from our Community Night. Thanks to Dave Debikey, Tana Hellwig, and Global Gifts for your continued support. Thanks to everyone who shopped for VIPS that night! We are very glad to have Global Gifts on our team!

Chili for Children Benefit

Members of four South Central Indiana civic organizations who co-sponsored last month's Operation Chili for Children recently gathered to hear the results of the fund raiser. The

event was held to benefit Visually Impaired Preschool Services' (VIPS) Bloomington office. Current Bloomington Kiwanis president, Diana Fellure, joined with Hal Hanes, Kiwanis Club of Bloomington's president elect, along with Indiana National Guard Family Readiness Group President Jenny Tracy, Circle K President Misha Wee and Miss IU Student Organization Vice President Erika Burghardt announced that the event raised \$1,730.



Pictured from left to right are: Jenny Tracy, President of the Indiana National Guard Family Readiness Group, Kiwanis Club of Bloomington's President-Elect, Hal Hanes, Gen Shelton, Dr. Rowan Candy, Miss IU Organization Vice President Erika Burghardt, Miss IU Service Chair Amber Hammond, Circle K President Misha Wee, and Kiwanis Treasurer Bob Nelson.

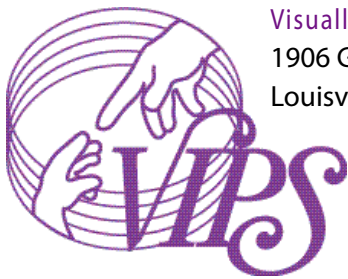
Wishlist of Consumables Needed for the Preschool Classrooms

URGENT CRAFT NEEDS

- Puffy paint, especially black
- Poster board
- Contact paper
- Card stock paper
- Liquid glue
- "Tacky Glue" in the gold bottle
- Dry Beans-black beans
- Dry Rice
- Tactual stickers
- Non-toxic stamp pads (all colors)
- Food coloring
- Adult scissors
- Easel paper

URGENT MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES

- Paper towels
- Liquid hand soap
- 5-oz. Dixie cups



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Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 17, 3 - 5 p.m.

The March VIPS Louisville family event will be a chili cook-off for VIPS children and their families at the Louisville Office. Bring your best pot of chili and win a prize if yours is voted the winner! VIPS will provide cheese, crackers and beverages.

Saturday, March 30, 10 a.m.

The annual VIPS Louisville Easter Party will be held for VIPS children and their families at the Louisville Office. Come have Breakfast with the Bunny! Watch for additional information.

April

Play and Learn (PAL) playgroups at VIPS Lexington will resume in March/April. Dates/times TBA. Call the office for more information.

VIPS Lexington will host our Annual Easter Party. Watch for flyers and e-mails with more information.

Saturday, April 13

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired will host its annual Spring Conference for parents and professionals. Information on growth and development, age appropriate modifications and adaptations, programming and assistance programs, assistive technology, and social networking are presented on this day of great information and fun!

Professionals who attend will receive a certificate of training. Registration information will be available in late February on the ISBVI website, www.isbvik12.org.

Friday, April 19, 1 - 3 p.m.

The UK Human Development Institute Spring Seminar Series will host Transition and Beyond for Youth and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder for parents, professionals and educators. Co-sponsored by the KY Office of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Coldstream Research Campus in the Human Development Training Room, 1525 Bull Lea Road, Lexington KY 40511, it will also be available at other live, interactive video-conference sites around the city/state. Register online at <http://www.hdi.uky.edu/news/eventsandselectyourattendance> site. Other Lexington and KY videoconference sites are available.

May

VIPS Lexington will be at Central KY Riding for Hope located at the Kentucky Horse Park for a hands-on experience learning about horses. Watch for flyers and e-mails with more information.

June

Let the summer fun begin with VIPS Lexington's Summer Sensations Camp and Summer Preschool Program! Watch for flyers and e-mails with more information about these two opportunities for fun and learning in the summer.

VISability is a bi-monthly publication of Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Inc., Jan Moseley, Editor.

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