

# Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month

by Mary Smyth, VIPS-Lexington Office Manager

In Kentucky, October 2013 was officially proclaimed "Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month" by Governor Steve Beshear. Twenty agencies providing services and supports to individuals who are blind or visually impaired throughout Kentucky partnered with VIPS in raising awareness. Each agency provided its information to VIPS for displays at events and community gathering places. In addition, they independently promoted awareness according to their mission and service at their own functions and events throughout the month.

The Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet recognized the collaboration of agencies with a statewide news release.

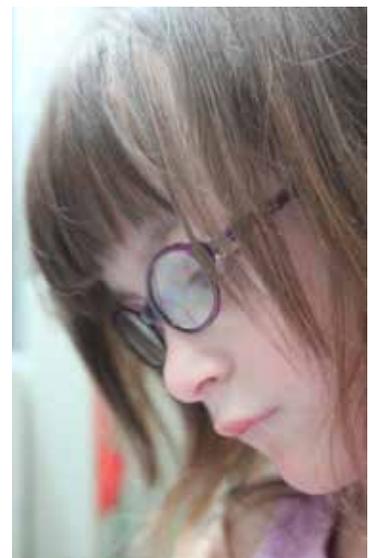
The biggest impact, however, came from our families. Stories about their children were posted on Facebook and were immediately liked and shared at record numbers for VIPS. Heartfelt and honest recollections of their children and different aspects of loving and supporting their child with a visual impairment were powerful and touched many lives. Thousands of people were reached and stirred by their genuineness.

## Betty-Jean

by George & Margaret O'Kuly

Six years ago, we were blessed with a sweet little girl, 1 lb. 5 oz. Betty-Jean Mae. The doctors didn't give her much of a chance to have a full life. She was born at 24 weeks -- so small she could fit in her daddy's shoe. She was born in Eastern Kentucky. They lost her for 15 minutes; her heart stopped. She was in the NICU for five months. We had lots of ups and downs in there, but Betty-Jean came into this world fighting to live. She never gave up and we never gave up on her.

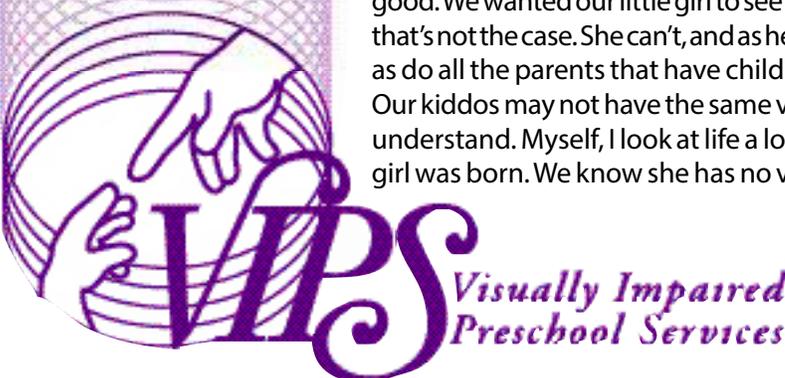
We found out when she was about a month old that she was going to have a visual impairment. As her parents it was very hard to hear. You never think that the doctor will ever tell you your child is going to be blind before they get to live their life outside of the hospital. As one of those parents, I can tell you the feeling I had did not feel very good. We wanted our little girl to see everything just like we do, but that's not the case. She can't, and as her parents we understand that, as do all the parents that have children with a visual impairment. Our kiddos may not have the same visual impairment but they do understand. Myself, I look at life a lot different now after our little girl was born. We know she has no vision at all in her left eye, and



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## Awareness continued

VIPS diligently participated in many activities and events throughout the month, setting up tables with awareness information along with our partners' brochures in order to bring awareness throughout the Commonwealth. We also collaborated with many agencies in the planning and implementation of White Cane Safety Day events in both Louisville and Lexington. We participated in the Kentucky Office for the Blind's Open House. During the Open House, VIPS Executive Director read the Governor's Proclamation. Additionally, information was readily available during the Vision Walks in Louisville and Cincinnati; displays were set up in local libraries; information was included in public school newsletters; articles were written for other agency newsletters; posters were strategically placed on the campus of the University of Kentucky; an awareness video was produced and distributed; and myths vs. facts and blindness basics were posted throughout the month on Facebook.



BVI Month partners with the governor's proclamation at the McDowell Center Open House: (L-R) Steve Deely, Facility Administrator; Allison Flanagan, Executive Director; Beth Brinly, Commissioner; Diane Nelson, VIPS Executive Director; and Cora McNabb, Training and HRD.

The purposes of Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month were threefold: to foster community awareness of children who are blind and visually impaired; to empower their families and communities to provide supports and resources they need to reach their highest potential educationally and developmentally; and, to advocate on the behalf of children and their families. These purposes were achieved, but more can be done for our children as well as adults who are blind and visually impaired.

VIPS will form a coalition with all of the agencies that partnered with us and extend invitations to many more to join us to advocate for all individuals with a visual impairment. The goal for next year's Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month is to have an even bigger impact throughout the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky as more agencies join the coalition.

VIPS would like to graciously thank all of the agencies who partnered with us: American Printing House for the Blind (APH), Beep Baseball, Bluegrass Council of the Blind, C.A.L.E.B.S, Central Kentucky Radio Eye, Foundation Fighting Blindness, Guide Dog Users of Kentucky, Independence Place, ITN Bluegrass, Kentuckiana Regional Group Blinded Veterans Association, Inc.- Lexington Chapter, Kentucky Council of the Blind, Kentucky Office for the Blind, Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), KSB Charitable Foundation, National Federation of the Blind of Lexington, National Federation of the Blind of Greater Louisville, KY NFB – NEWSLINE, Patrick Henry Hughes Family, See the World Low Vision Store, and the University of Kentucky Teacher of the Visually Impaired Training Program. We look forward to our future collaborations.

## Family Stories continued

limited vision in her right eye. We are very thankful for what vision she has.

My husband and I wanted Betty-Jean to have the very best life we could give her no matter what we had to do. We had not been to Lexington very much and we didn't know anyone but we were willing to give up everything we were doing and building just to give Betty-Jean what she needed. We met so many nice people along the way. We worked with First Steps from the time she came home at five months old until she was three years old. We are very thankful for them all and a really big thank you to everyone at VIPS. Miss Dixie was great with Betty-Jean along with everyone else. She helped us understand a lot about having a child with a visual impairment showing us games to play with her and just teaching us. Betty-Jean asks a lot of questions about everything. She has come a long way.

When we had our second child he was born full term and we thought he had vision problems as well, but after a little while in First Steps he was fine. But how does a parent answer the question, "Why can my brother see fine and I can't?" That's a question I think about as a mom: what do I say? I'm sure it will be a long time away, but I still think about it. I think parents with kiddos with visual impairments just think different. We have to because we live that life every day.

We wouldn't change Betty-Jean for anything. She is a loving, caring little girl but no parent wants to see their child deal with a visual impairment. I am thankful that Betty-Jean can see to write her name; the doctor said she may never be able to do that.

I love both of my children with all my heart but just to sit and write about where Betty-Jean came from to now is not easy for me as a mom. It's like going back six years in life, but I hope you enjoy reading this about our little girl and how much a visual impairment in a child can change your life; it did ours.

## Vance

by mother Emily

We found out our son Vance was blind on December 22, 2010. He was three weeks old. It was determined six months later the blindness was caused by a rare X-linked genetic disease, Norrie disease. Throughout that six month period Vance underwent seven eye surgeries in hopes that he would have at least light perception, in at least one of his eyes. Over and over these hopes were dashed. I think for me I never let go of the hope until there was a definite no. I allowed myself to grieve when Vance was about 7 months old. Don't get me wrong, I was devastated initially, but with three other children and impending surgeries, I learned to push it aside.



But when I did finally start to grieve, I grieved for everything that he would never see. His father, his mother, his big brother, his big sisters, his house, his dogs, his best friend, his first love, his children, the beautiful sunsets, Christmas lights, snow, stars, everything. He would never see anything and my heart broke over and over during this time. I punished myself with these negative thoughts for months. But it was during this time that I realized many other things. Vance has made lots of progress. Every time I would see him gain confidence, my hopes for his future would be renewed. I began to see that it was wrong of me to let go of hope. I just needed to channel it in a different direction.

Vance continues to struggle in many areas and some days everything is a battle. The assistance that we have received from VIPS and First Steps was extremely valuable. Every therapy and therapist helped me establish a relationship with my son. Even though I had three other children, I felt like a first-time mother. My biggest fear when we were told that he was blind was that he wouldn't ever know us. How wrong I was. He knows who is coming into the room by their footsteps, he recognizes the way people smell, he knows my voice and my touch. Vance knows each one of his older siblings and has formed a relationship with each of them.

During the initial diagnosis people would tell me that it "was God's plan" and this continues to be one of my biggest pet peeves. God did not make my son blind, a mutation on his genes did. However, God has provided us with the strength, the people, and the path for us to give Vance everything he will need in life. I truly feel that Vance has the ability to teach us all how to truly see what is important in life because he cannot "see". We have received many definitions and titles when professionals describe Vance. Although it is good to know what is wrong, Vance continues to show me that he will not be defined by his disabilities or shortcomings. He does and will continue to be defined by the vast amount of love, laughter, and joy that he brings to our lives.



## Pyper

by mother Ashley

My name is Ashley and I have 2 children: Pyper, who is 14 months, and Addyson, who is 5 years old. Both of my children have benefitted from early intervention. Addyson had a speech delay and received therapy through First Steps, our early intervention program. As for Pyper, she is visually impaired. She is legally blind, has ONH

(Optic Nerve Hypoplasia) and Nystagmus. She has benefitted so much from early intervention; she has received physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and visual therapy through her Developmental Interventionist. We could not have done it without those services. They have helped Pyper and us so much.

## Addyson

by mother Brittany

It's one of those things that you know happens, but you never expect it to happen to you. I never imagined my perfect baby girl would never know the beauty of her own face, never see the splendor of a sunset, or never recognize the face of her own mother. But it did happen to me. Four months after we brought a gorgeous and perfect baby into the world the ophthalmologist told me that my daughter would likely never see anything. She was diagnosed with ONH, optic nerve hypoplasia, in both eyes. Her optic nerves were severely underdeveloped and at best she may have light perception by her toddler years. My world was shattered. I immediately began to think all the hopes and dreams I had imagined for her were now unattainable. All I could think of was all the things she wouldn't be able to do.



Addyson is now almost three years old and is proving me wrong every day. Although she has no sight at this point, she is reminding me every day just how smart and amazing she is. She could sing her alphabet and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" before her first birthday. She can count to thirty in English and fifteen in Spanish. She has been speaking in full sentences since before she was two. She knows the words to a million songs and recognizes all her favorite dolls and toys by how they feel.

I am not saying it has been easy, because that would be a lie. It has been challenging. Every single day is a challenge. I am challenged to push Addyson to meet her full potential, because it is truly infinite, and it is important that she realize that now. Between all the therapy sessions, all the tantrums and difficulties, is the amazement that she is truly capable of so much more than I had ever dreamed.

Although she may not recognize my face by sight, she recognizes it by touch and also recognizes me by my voice. Though she may never know the splendor of the sunset, her abilities are as big as the horizon, and although she will never see the beauty of her own face, she has touched everyone around her with her beauty from within. I have no doubt she will change the world, because she has already changed mine in three short years.

## Aubrey

by mother Deborah

What kind of impact did early intervention have on Aubrey who is visually impaired? There was a ton of information given to the family about Aubrey's condition. We were linked up with VIPS -- Visually Impaired Preschool Services. The therapist came every two weeks to the home to work on getting Aubrey's attention and stimulating her other senses. This was done through specialty toys that lit up and moved. This helped us with future purchases and how to make choices on stimulating activities for her. Did you know that a black background or surface helps the visually impaired child to see better? How long would we have had to wait to find this out?

Maybe Aubrey was destined to be delayed and without a good sense of vision. I shudder to think how far behind she would have been if she had not received services from VIPS, Head Start, and the preschool program.

Every child can learn, and to ignore using these early intervention programs is dooming a child to a lifetime of failure and insecurities. These programs need funding. Special needs children deserve the attention and emphasis in educational programs that will empower them to reach their full potential. That cannot be a "cookie cutter" approach! Please fund these early intervention programs and other programs to help people with special needs.

## Lola

by parents Rob & Meredith

Our daughter, Lola, was born with a rare seizure disorder and cortical visual impairment (which means her eyes can see but her brain can't interpret the images) due to an undiagnosed genetic condition. She has received early intervention services since she was four months old. When we moved to Indiana, we found that there were no vision early intervention services that could be provided for our daughter. Now knowing a child's development is the most crucial from birth to three, that news was devastating and

simply unacceptable to us. Thankfully we found VIPS (Visually Impaired Preschool Services) – Bloomington. For over a year, VIPS has been coming into our home to provide those crucial early intervention services. They have taught us how to understand Lola's vision impairment and how to provide an environment where Lola can thrive.



We are so thankful for VIPS-Bloomington, and we hope that every family has the same services that we've been provided with.

## Sayla

by mother April

An ultrasound at 35 weeks gestation showed a very large brain tumor in my unborn daughter's brain. My world was turned upside down in that instance. Sayla survived her birth, and at 5 days old, a pediatric neurosurgeon performed a craniotomy and removed the lemon size mass. During the surgery, she experienced an intraventricular hemorrhage (brain bleed/stroke) and suffered extensive brain damage. As a result of this brain injury, she has multiple diagnoses. Some of these include severe global developmental delay, several seizure type disorders, high muscle tone, hydrocephalus, reflux, feeding tube, VP shunt, and cortical vision impairment. After being asked to write this narrative regarding my daughter's loss of vision, I looked back at my journal excerpts from four years ago, and the feeling of sadness returned just as the day we were told she could not see. It was obvious she had a right-sided gaze preference and did not focus on our faces, but we did not understand the reality of this disability until the diagnosis came from her neuro-ophthalmologist.

September 15, 2009:

"Yesterday we saw the neuro-ophthalmologist (eye doctor) who said he does not think she is able to see. Her eyes do not focus or track objects, and she did not grimace or blink to bright lights. He stated that vision usually kicks in between 2-4 months, and she is 4 1/2 months old at this time. He said for us not to give up hope because sometimes children who have been ill early on, will take a while for vision to kick in. Her diagnosis is



cortical vision impairment, meaning the brain part of the 'eye-brain' connection is not working right now. He wants to see us back in 6 months. I am praying God performs another miracle and allows our baby to see our faces and the world He has created."

After getting the diagnosis of cortical vision impairment and sharing the news with my family, I will never forget my mother's response, with tears running down her face, "I just want her to see your face, her beautiful mommy's face!" I felt deprived as I would not be able to have the "en face" bonding with my child by making eye contact with her. I would not be able to show her who her mommy is, without the sense of sight.

November 20, 2009:

"Exciting news: Sayla has some vision! She is responding to light. Her eyes stay fixed to the right, but she turns her head to follow objects that are bright colors or flashing lights. Her vision therapist has been working with her once a week and has confirmed our findings."

This new response to light was a ray of hope.

November 2012:

The following excerpt for Sayla's most recent functional vision assessment reveals her improvement over the past few years. "She has an immediate response to the color purple reflective, but also looked at bright red, yellow, green, and fluorescent orange with some latency. Movement helps her locate objects. She seeks out light sources, and is a significant motivator. Her viewing distance is within arm's length except for large general light sources, such as a window. Her look and touch are separate actions."

It is such a joy to place an object within her vision range, without making a sound, and watch her face light up with a smile! Even though her vision is limited, she can see! We are amazed at how far our angel has come, and with continued therapy, we have hope her vision will continue to advance.

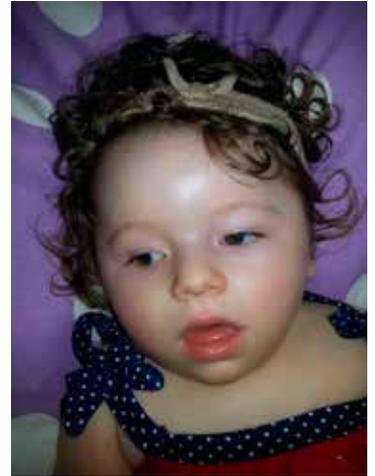
## Sophia

by mother Jaime

My eyesight has always been 20/20. I have never needed contacts or eyeglasses. It is a privilege that I have widely taken for granted. An ability that is forgotten because it seems so natural, so right.

But this ability is not one that was afforded to my daughter. When my little girl first began having seizures at two months of age, that was our big concern and it is why we ended up in the hospital. The neurologist that examined her asked if Sophia tracked things with her eyes or focused on our faces. I knew the reason for the question and also the answer to the question immediately but I looked at her like she was crazy. "Well, no, she doesn't but she's so little. She's just taking her time." I knew by the look on her face that no, my daughter wasn't "taking her time;" my daughter was blind.

A few short weeks later, when in the neurologist's office for our follow up appointment after our hospital stay, we were told that our daughter would never walk or talk or see. The neurologist had to come back in the room twice to repeat those words because though my husband reiterated it to me, I thought surely we must have heard incorrectly.



A few short weeks later, we took her to her first eye doctor appointment and were told that her eyes were perfect, but her brain wouldn't allow her to interpret what she sees; a condition called Cortical Visual Impairment or CVI. Before this instance, I never took time to consider that the brain plays a role in vision. Silly, now when I think of it.

My daughter has many medical issues, one being a terminal illness. She is twenty months old and not expected to live past childhood. Blindness? Big freaking deal. She can't see me? I don't care. Now don't get me wrong, blindness sucks. It makes me sad that my daughter will never recognize my face...but she recognizes my voice. It makes me cry when I think that I will never know my daughter's favorite color.....so I believe that it must be purple like mine. It hurts my heart to know that my daughter will never see her own beautiful reflection in the mirror.....so I tell her every hour, just how perfect she is.

Yes, we adapt. We take blindness and use it for the good. At night, I can sneak in and give medication and my daughter doesn't even know I'm there! I can sneak in and check out the new tooth she sprouted without her getting upset and closing her mouth up tight! I can leave the room and my daughter doesn't cry because she doesn't even know I'm gone! We have to use what we have, and make the best of it. Would I like my daughter to see? ABSOLUTELY! Would I give my vision to her? In a heartbeat. But it is not the end of all things. Because with her loss of vision, my daughter sees no cruelty, no ugliness, no discrimination. And that? That is a blessing.

## Sylvie

by mother Jill

When considering the topic of bringing awareness to the public about blindness and vision impairments, something very specific came to mind. My daughter is now four years old, but her Cortical Vision Impairment has been with her since birth. She is an amazingly beautiful child and always seems to get a lot of attention when we are out in the community.

On a weekly and sometimes daily basis, when we are out I hear the same comment from many people who approach or interact with us. "Oh, is she sleepy?" or "Oh look she is taking a nap" or "Someone is tired today". I have been frustrated by these comments for years! It is not acceptable to comment to a stranger how tired they look, so why does this seem like an OK thing to say to a mom and her child? Most times when they say this, Sylvia is not sleepy. In fact, she is wide awake and pretty alert.

One day after being really frustrated and angry about this, I had a realization. Due to her vision impairment, she does not look someone in the eye when they approach her. In fact, she sometimes will close her eyes or look down to avoid the over-stimulating interaction. Those who don't understand vision impairments are not aware that this is because her vision is cortically impaired, they just think she must be sleepy. I hope that all who read this will learn to not make this comment to a child. It is kind of like saying, "oh look, you have a disability" in a patronizing way. Blindness and visual impairments affect all ages of people, including children. I would much rather hear you comment about my daughter's beautiful face or her snazzy outfit than on her visual impairment.



### Logan

by parents Rebecca & Tyson

My name is Becky. My son Logan is almost 6 months old. We found out that he is visually impaired when he was 3 months old. We felt totally lost. We had no idea what to do to help him. He is also developmentally delayed. Having someone come to our home and teach us how to help him gave me a new hope and a new direction. VIPS is such a valuable resource to parents who are suddenly faced with such hard realities and no resources to help them know what to do. It has been a God-send to our family.

### Kinsley

by Karen, grandmother

My name is Karen. I live in Pennsylvania, 600 miles from my son and daughter-in-law here in Lexington, KY. They have 3 children.

On April 6, 2011, I was blessed with the birth of their third child, a little girl, Kinsley Elizabeth. She was born 1 month premature and weighed only 3 pounds. To date she only weighs 18 1/2 pounds. She had a few issues at birth. A low birth weight and acid reflux. Because of the acid reflux she had to sleep in an upright position. For the months I was there I did that. We would be on the sofa in the living room covered up. One evening

Nina said, "Mom, move her." I of course asked why and Nina said "There's something wrong with her." To me she seemed normal. That started the doctoring in Kentucky and the hospital stays that continued off and on for several months.

On July 4, while moving from one house to another, Kinsley had her first major seizure where she turned blue and had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. After that we had to have them a few more times. The Doctors did many different tests and tried many seizure meds. On one test they found a growth on her brain stem which meant surgery. She was only 11 months at the time. After many tests they found she has a rare condition called Trisomy 9 Mosaicism. She is 1 of 30 children in the U.S. and 60 in the world known to have this condition. Not two children have the same symptoms so they don't know how to treat it.

Kinsley's condition is such that she has to learn to do everything. Eat, sit, etc. She is also visually impaired but with her VIPS therapist has come a long way with her communication skills. I'm amazed with the progress she's made at each of my visits.



This has been very hard on the family financially, emotionally, and physically. Nina is up at night with Kinsley and when Brian comes home from work at 7 a.m., he takes Kinsley's sister Keeley to school; then he has Kinsley for her various therapies 4 days a week in the morning so Nina can sleep. Then he gets Keeley from school and goes to bed until it's time to get up for work. Some days it's only for a few hours, but they somehow manage. It's hard on the whole family. They need a larger home now mainly due to the equipment needed for Kinsley, but financially it's hard. This month alone they will be in Cincinnati for 7 days of scheduled visits and testing to be done for yet another possible surgery. That doesn't count the 2 ER visits we've made so far this month.

Sometimes you feel overwhelmed and helpless and wish you could do more but, at the end of the day you know you tried to do your best for the whole family.

I thank God every day for giving her to us. She's been a true blessing. She has helped me in so many ways to appreciate what I have. When I look at her smiling face and think about everything she's been through in her young life and how she can have such a pleasant personality, I feel ashamed and wonder to myself, could I handle all of this? She's just amazing and a real little trooper.

I hope and pray that somehow or someday VIPS in Lexington can provide preschool services like they have in Louisville. It would

give my Kinsley and all the other children in this area a chance to continue making progress by getting the much needed services VIPS provides.

From the bottom of my heart I say "Thank you VIPS for all that your organization does, and has done for my family and the community." Your organization is really needed here in Lexington.

## Harper

by mother Sarah

Our baby girl, Harper Gwen, was born on March 20, 2013. We noticed at two months of age that Harper displayed rapid horizontal eye movements; otherwise, known as Nystagmus. After an MRI, Harper was diagnosed with Joubert Syndrome. This is a very rare genetic disorder that is estimated to affect one in every one hundred thousand children. There are many related disorders affiliated with JS including those that affect vision such as ocular motor apraxia (OMA), retinal degeneration, and subsequently, blindness.



After a few months, we began to wonder if Harper had vision because she was not tracking at all. This uncertainty has changed our lives immensely. Because of this, we are very cognizant of Harper's vision-related behaviors: is she smiling because she sees our face, or is it because she simply feels like smiling? At this point, our hope and inclination is that Harper does have vision to some degree, but only time will tell how well she will see and for how long.

As a family we have learned to live life one day at a time and treat our daughter just as we did our unaffected three-year-old son. Harper is a joy and exudes happiness. Her demeanor is infectious and makes juggling therapies, doctor appointments, work and home life much easier for her family.

We are unsure what the future holds but we know we have the VIPS family there to help us along the way.

## Caleb

by Alvin, grandfather

Let me tell you a story of a special little man I know. He came into this world December 13, 2011, and from that day he has had to fight to be here. He quit breathing for 8 minutes on delivery and was given no hope to live. But he proved all the medical specialists wrong. They said he would never be able to move or hear, again they were wrong.

This little man is a special gift from God, not only to my family but to the world, and proves every day that he lives that God is in control of all things. This little bundle of joy is called CALEB and he is my grandson, and he brings more smiles and joy to his family in a day than most can in a lifetime. He does this without saying a word or seeing who he makes smile due to the fact he cannot talk or see. So next time you're having a bad day or have bad things to say about someone think about my grandson CALEB; you do not even have to say a word to bring joy and love to this world, but one bad thing you say can bring a lot of pain. I hope you think of CALEB when you need strength and hope, and do as he does -- bring more love and joy to this crazy world because Lord knows we all need it.

## Jamie

by mother Pauletta

In early November, we traveled to New York City to watch our son Jamie run the 26.2 ING New York City Marathon. It was such an exciting time for us!

When we adopted Jamie at 13 months of age (28 years ago), we worried that we might not be able to meet all of his needs as a blind baby -- he was so delayed without sight. Add to that his extremely premature birth, and he had a lot of catching up to do. And we had so much to learn!

Through VIPS, we soon realized that life can be very bright without sight -- the sun just shines from the inside out instead. And we learned all we needed to know to get started on a bright future for Jamie and our family. By the time we left VIPS, we had learned how to advocate for our son, to find information, to get more answers, and to access more services, so that Jamie could become all he could be.

Fast-forward 25 years (seems like a lifetime!). This journey of child rearing -- one might even say this marathon -- leaves so much to be grateful for and to enjoy. There are hills to climb and slippery spots and pot holes along the road, but with a steady pace and a stubborn heart, we can all go the distance. Our times may vary -- someone has to come in first and others will be last -- but what's important is having the opportunity to compete and staying in the race.



Jamie and his sighted running partner Shay Kirkpatrick after finishing a triathlon in August.

# VIPS Family Retreat Weekend: A Rollicking Round-Up!

The VIPS Family Retreat has changed shape over the last 27 years, but the goal remains the same: to provide informative sessions for the parents, encourage conversations between parents and with speakers, and reassuringly entertain and care for the children. Although the time was short for the 2013 retreat, consisting of only one full day, that time was jam-packed with great speakers and lively conversations. And the Western theme carried throughout all weekend activities!

The retreat was held on September 7<sup>th</sup> and included 23 current and former VIPS families. Break out sessions covered Orientation and Mobility, presented by Maury Weedman; the Michelle P. Waiver, presented by a Seven Counties Services representative; and the Expanded Core Curriculum, by Jan Moseley. Rebecca Davis spoke on "Parents Have Power." Transition issues were addressed by a panel comprised of parent Sarah Flick representing Kentucky School for the Blind, Prestina Bacala of Jefferson County Public Schools, and TVI Monica Tharp from Bullitt County Schools and TVI Beth Gordon from Clark County IN schools. Gordon Holmes shared information on Living Trusts. The afternoon was highlighted by a special appearance from VIPS' most famous graduate, Patrick Henry Hughes and his father Patrick John.

While the parents attended sessions, the children participated in either camp or respite activities. Children participating in the "camp" enjoyed a day of "cowboy" festivities including a "bouncy" with Ashley Emmons leading the way. Children receiving Respite Care were included in all the activities such as enjoying the Sensory Room manned by Mary Lesousky with student nurses from the Galen School of Nursing providing support.

"I attended my 1<sup>st</sup> VIPS Family Retreat last weekend. I saw then that VIPS not only cares about the child being serviced, but for the whole family. I realized that my family wasn't alone. VIPS and the other families there support each other in many ways: sharing their stories and suggestions that may be helpful to make life a little easier now or in the future.

It was a wonderful day for everyone. Keeley, Kinsley's sister, was kept busy with the various structured activities and play during the day with other children her age in similar situations. For a few hours they could forget any problems at home and just be a kid. It also gave the parents a day that for a few hours their

children were cared for by others who you could see really loved each and everyone of the children there. The parents were also given the chance to attend the various seminars which I feel were very informative.

From the bottom of my heart I say "Thank you VIPS for all that your organization does, and has done for my family and the community." Your organization is really needed here in Lexington." Karen, grandmother of Kinsley

As part of the 2013 Family Retreat, former staff and families were invited to attend, with over 50 families and past and current teachers and staff enjoying dinner and catching up on recent news. The highlight was a brief program filled with memories of our earlier years.

Dinner was served with help from volunteer Tim Toebbe and VIPS staff members, Kim Shippey and Carol Dahmke. The food was donated by GFS, Morris' Liquors & Deli, Fresh Market and Kroger.



Above: The Turners of Glasgow, KY, pose under the BIG Cowboy hat.

Families relished getting to talk and enjoy the evening, while the children jumped in the bouncy, were fascinated by a balloon artist, loved the animals in the petting zoo, and participated in a "make and take" with Annie Hughes. Delicious ice cream from Blue Bell completed their evening.

This event could not be possible without help from the wonderful staff at VIPS and all of our terrific volunteers!



Right: Samantha Flick, of Austin, IN, holds daughter Isabella while she looks at the llama.



Our great group of nursing students from Galen.



Left: Mary Lesousky shares some time with Judah Hardin. Right: Our balloon artist was very inventive to the delight of the kids!



Left: VIPS grad Sarah Brown is studying art at Northern KY University. Below: VIPS grads Ashley Reynolds (right) and Aaron Linson (left) are both students at IUS and plan to marry next June.



## From Humble Beginnings

by Mary Ann Reynolds, Teacher of the Visually Impaired  
Former VIPS mom and interventionist

(Editor's Note: Mary Ann Reynolds, her husband Ben, daughter Ashley and Ashley's fiancé Aaron, both former VIPS students and stars of the earliest VIPS videos, all attended the VIPS Family Retreat on Sept. 7. Later in the day, daughter Adriane and her two children came for the Family Reunion.)

Yesterday, our family felt very much a part of something special -- the VIPS Family Retreat. It was amazing to see so many families come together, all because of their visually impaired child. During the session on O&M, my daughter Ashley, her fiancé Aaron, and friend Jamie, all former VIPS students, talked about how they use O&M in their everyday lives. It was almost surreal watching the early O&M videos on a screen so large that even Aaron could see himself as a baby with his parents. He called his dad after the session and said, "I look like you when you had me!" We didn't have big screen TVs back then.

Reflecting back on Jamie, Ashley and Aaron as VIPS preschoolers, I almost felt as if I was in a dream to look up and to see that they are all grown up and that they are doing just fine -- all on their way to living our dream of "a normal life." Yeah, they may have to do things differently, but for them life is pretty normal. Thank you VIPS!

It was also amazing to see so many VIPS staff, parents and children coming together. I remember when there were just 7 people on staff; Sharon, Pauletta, Melinda, Suze, Shelley, Lisa and me. We had the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the 4 Cs (Community Coordinated Child Care) building. That was it! We did everything in that building. Parent intakes, even some intervention on top of all of the necessary functions of a non-profit organization. We did it all. We all worked together at all the events and we all brought our children. For our children VIPS was a close-knit family of friends who also worked at events like the family retreat.

Then we moved to Garvin Place. It was a wonderful time of growth. We had a really nice kitchen. We had two floors. We had a fax machine and copiers and we all had computers and they added on a beautiful room in the back. This beautiful room became the "everything" room. We used it for parent meetings, board meetings, staff meetings, and of course VIPS classes. We had infant and preschool classes at different days and times. We would store all of the equipment from one class in the bathtub so that the other class could have their materials ready the next day. Then we would have to empty it all out again for the next time and start all over.

VIPS sure has come a long way, baby! Now look at it! A state of the art facility with plenty of classrooms, a bank, a bedroom

where they can learn to make a bed and put away their clothes, a kitchen with real appliances and laundry room, a grocery store, a restaurant, a post office! And the sensory garden and playground- WOW! I tell you... I remember when VIPS had a really nice playground at Garvin but nothing like this one. I was amazed yesterday and look forward to seeing what new things VIPS continues to do in the future!

## VIPS Louisville Family Events

### Sibling Group

Even with the rain on October 19<sup>th</sup>, a great group of families attended the Sibling Group. The siblings, working apart from their families, decorated tactual pumpkins and scarecrows. VIPS kids and their parents had fun decorating the same tactual items and singing songs. Then everyone reunited in Kids Town to show off what they had made and to enjoy cookies and juice. We hope that you will be able to join us Dec. 14 for the next sibling group.

### Trunk & Treat



## VIPS Lexington Family Events

### Ice Cream Social

In August, we held an Ice Cream Social with the help of the Lexington chapter of Altrusa. The wonderful women of Altrusa hosted an ice cream sundae bar for VIPS children and their families on a Friday night after dinner. The kids enjoyed playing with some marshmallow cannons that they made out of plastic cups and balloons.

### Pumpkin Patch

In October, we hosted an afternoon at Happy Jack's Pumpkin Patch in Frankfort. The VIPS children and families fed goats, pigs and ponies on the farm and rode on a wagon out to the patch to pick pumpkins. Some of the kids picked pumpkins that were bigger than them! We had a wonderful time despite the threat of rain; we only had to duck under cover for about two minutes of a passing shower, then it was back to the pumpkins!

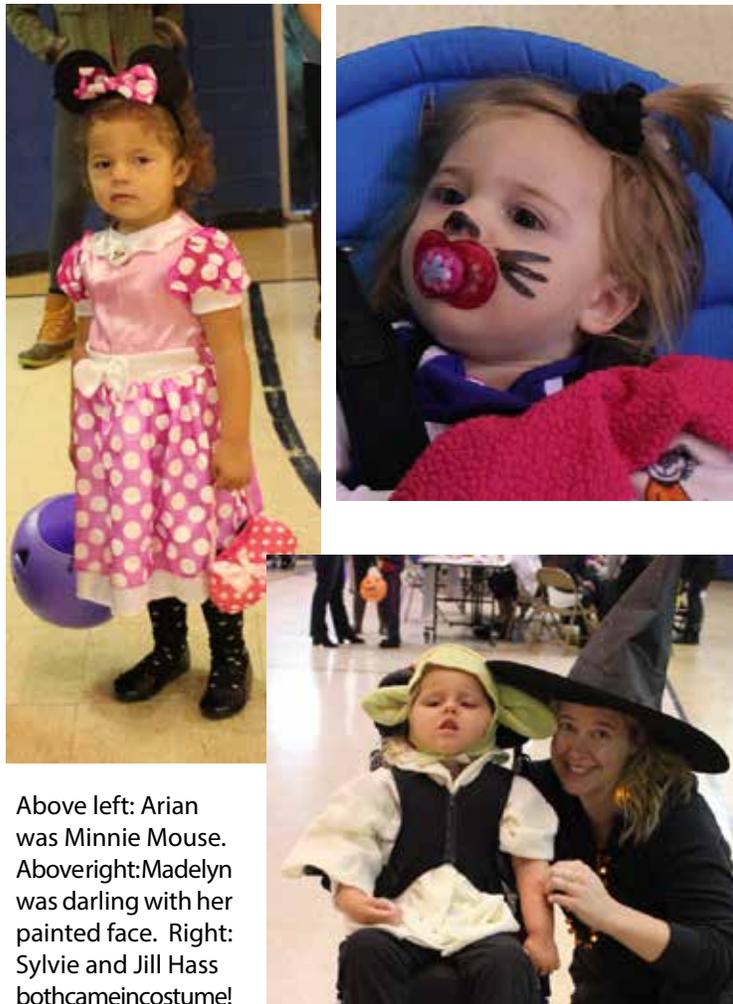


Above: Gabby went to visit a goat. Right: Michelle had a pumpkin painted on her cheek. Below: Emerson liked the feel of the goat's soft mouth.



## Halloween Party

VIPS Lexington also had a Halloween party at the end of October with help from the Delta Gamma Sorority at UK. There were lots of sensory activity stations set up as well as trick or treating, a costume parade and some spooky crafts.



Above left: Arian was Minnie Mouse. Above right: Madelyn was darling with her painted face. Right: Sylvie and Jill Hass both came in costume!

represented by Ann Hughes, Rebecca Davis, and board member, Marcee Wilburn. The legislators thoroughly enjoyed touring the VIPS preschool and watching some students in action. They were particularly impressed by Kids Town, the sensory room and the sensory garden. After the tour, most of the legislators stayed for lunch and more conversation about how to expand VIPS services into Indiana in order to serve more of Indiana's youngest visually impaired children.

Our sincerest thanks to Caitlin Gamble for championing the cause of infants and toddlers who are blind in Indiana. Thank you to the gracious legislators whomadethelongdrive to Louisville to learn more about VIPS!

IN state legislator Gail Reicken talks with VIPS Education Coordinator Kathy Mullen during the visit to Louisville.



## Birth Defects Registry Efforts

In order to improve services for Indiana's infants and toddlers who are blind or have low vision, the data collection system for infants with special needs has to be improved. VIPS-Bloomington has approached state legislators to update the Indiana Birth Defects Registry to include more pediatric visual impairments as well as to update some outdated diagnoses. Once the Indiana Birth Defects Registry is updated, there will need to be a campaign to better educate pediatricians and other medical and early intervention professionals to collect data and submit it to the state. Because data drives funding, we need to make sure the children we serve are identified and counted in order to provide them the best possible start in life.

Indiana State Sen. Mark Stoops has answered VIPS-Bloomington's call. After meeting with Ann Hughes and Rebecca Davis in October, Senator Stoops indicated that he will submit a bill during this legislative session to update the Birth Defects Registry. Caitlin Gamble, from Speaker of the House Bosma's office, has indicated that the legislators will include language to update the Birth Defects Registry. We are optimistically hopeful as the legislative session continues.

Ann presented to the Committee on Developmental Disabilities at the request of Sen. Ron Grooms, continuing our efforts to make inroads with the legislators.

## VIPS Bloomington News

### IN State Legislators Visit

In July, Ann Hughes, Rebecca Davis, and VIPS parent Meredith Howell went to Indianapolis to meet with Caitlin Gamble, Deputy Policy Director for Speaker of the House, Brian Bosma. Ms. Gamble was instrumental in inviting legislators to tour VIPS in Louisville for the first time ever, including Rep. Lloyd Arnold, Rep. Tim Brown, Rep. Ed Clere, Sen. Ron Grooms, and Rep. Gail Riecken who arrived with Caitlin Gamble. VIPS-Bloomington was

## Chili for Children

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Bloomington Kiwanis, Indiana National Guard Family Readiness Group, and Miss IU Organization hosted Chili for Children. Part of the proceeds will benefit VIPS-Bloomington. Over 200 people came to the National Guard Armory to enjoy a chili dinner and to support programs for children. VIPS sponsored a bake sale with goodies provided by board members and VIPS families. Thanks to Lauren Casel and the IU Delta Gammas for helping to staff our table.

## Dining in the Dark

On October 26, VIPS-Bloomington welcomed over 100 guests to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Dining in the Dark at Chapman's Banquet Hall. Guests enjoyed educational stations which varied from learning braille to identifying scents in "smelly jars" to a taste testing table generously donated by Oliver Winery.

VIPS Teacher, Ann Hughes, gave diners tips on how to navigate their plates without the use of vision. Chef Jim Turner provided a delicious and eclectic meal including chicken and waffles and creole shrimp and grits. Many diners wore sleep shades for the entire meal and even used sighted guides to get up from the table. Barbara Salisbury, President of the Heartland Chapter of the American Council of the Blind opened the evening with heartfelt personal perspective. Dr. Rowan Candy graciously served as the evening's emcee.



Diners donned sleep shades.

After the meal, diners watched a video about VIPS made and donated by Janis Bolling and board member, Leanne Ellis. VIPS parents, Meredith Howell, Veronika Bard, and Sarah and Aaron Riddle shared their compelling stories as well. Our thanks to everyone who volunteered or donated time and effort in making Dining in the Dark the wonderful evening it was. Thanks to Tim Shively, Chef Jim Turner, and the staff of Chapman's Restaurant and to Ellen Coe and Oliver Winery. Special thanks to volunteers Lauren Allen, TJ Allen, Elliot Frost, Dr. Scott and Karen Little, Christian Kelly and Shawn Ridinger.

Several groups of IU students helped facilitate Dining in the Dark this year. Our thanks to Lauren Casel and IU Theta Chapter of Delta Gamma, Sara Eash and the IU School of Nutrition, Mak Hozo, Brandy Warriner, Thomasina O'Connor and the Circle K organization from IU. We couldn't do Dining in the Dark without you!

Thanks also to the team from Louisville who drove up to help. It is because of these wonderful ladies that we can continue spreading awareness of the needs of visually impaired children and helping families in Indiana. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Our sincerest thanks to Diane Nelson, Heather Benson, Carol Dahmke, Martha Hack and Kathy Mullen! It is a pleasure to be on such a dynamic and supportive team!

Special thanks to our VIP sponsors – Solution Tree, Reach High Consulting, and the IU School of Optometry. Thanks to our Play and Learn (PAL) sponsors: Bloomington Pediatric Dentistry, The Eye Center of Southern Indiana, Internal Medicine Associates, Kiwanis of South Central Indiana, and Dr. Kristina Morris, OD.

## Kids in Bloom!



Left: Brenna can look at and pick up items of every color as long as the background is simplified.

Right: Veronika assists William as he explores sensory balls while his twin, Kenny watches.



Left: Callie is exploring lots of textures in spite of some tactile sensitivity. Go Callie!

# News from Our Classrooms

## VIPS Lexington Two Day 2s

We are thrilled to note that VIPS Lexington has begun its very own Two Day Twos Program, meeting on Mondays and Tuesdays. Dixie Miller is teaching the Twos assisted by new hire Heidi Bigelow (see related story page 19).

## Friendly Faces in VIPS' Louisville Two Day 2s

by Staci Maynard

The new school year began almost seamlessly in our classroom. Yes, we had our share of mishaps and mischief, but all of our friends did extremely well adjusting to beginning school or returning to school. We began the year with four friends from last year and five new friends. It is interesting to see how these unique little personalities interact with one another to create a group dynamic. The Monday-Tuesday class generally has a very peaceful, harmonious atmosphere as they quietly but attentively learn side-by-side. In contrast, the Wednesday-Thursday class is full of boisterous enthusiasm to explore. Both groups find productive ways to discover new knowledge, but they are so distinctive.



Sarah and Layla choose instruments.

Throughout our back-to-school unit in September, the class focused on how to be a good friend, especially at school. The class read books that discussed going to school and friendship. During the first week of school, we learned that we all need each other. Each friend made a puzzle piece according to his or her artistic taste. When all of the pieces were fit together, it showed us that it takes every student to make a whole class. The children also enjoyed practicing cutting or tearing paper and gluing the pieces

on a schoolhouse, pretending to be a teacher leading circle time, and playing in the sensory table that was full of shredded paper and various school supplies.

The next week, students discovered that being a good friend involves being kind to others, especially through sharing and taking turns. They had the opportunity to artistically represent one of their friends with either a paper cutout they could decorate or with Play-Doh. The children had fun matching photos of their friends and putting their individual shape on the attendance board to show their friends that they were present at school. The class also made a friendship tree together, using their painted handprints to make leaves.

In the middle of the month, the class learned about good manners. We counted how many times our group said "please" and "thank you" and kept a chart of the data. The class also talked about good ways we could use our hands instead of using them for "bad" purposes, such as hitting or pushing. To practice our politeness, children painted with another friend on the same picture, each one taking turns with the paintbrush. Students had a good time creating "thank you" cards for people who help them as well as having tea parties together to practice their table manners.



Vance pushes a baby stroller which also helps with his mobility.

From the end of September through most of October, the Twos class learned "All About Me." We explored what made each individual special, the parts of the body, the senses, how to take care of ourselves, and our feelings. Children created an "All About Me" book that talked about their age, eye color, height, weight, and other personal facts. They enjoyed making paper bag puppets of themselves, putting bandages on the part of the body named, and playing with boxes that had rice and mirrors inside them in the sensory table. The children became very good at pointing to the correct body parts during our songs. We also learned to sort boys and girls by gender and to match using our senses of hearing, smell, and touch, instead of sight.

As we finished October and moved into November, the Twos class finished learning about ourselves and began making discoveries about the fall season. All of the children are making great strides, and we look forward to the breakthroughs we will make through learning together.

## PAL Pals

by Staci Maynard

Play and Learn (PAL) play group started back up in September. We have been averaging five families, and it has been great to see the smiling faces, both familiar and new. VIPS families, especially those with children two-years-old and younger, are welcome to come each Friday from 9:30-11:30 for fun and socialization. We meet in the Kids Town Twos classroom. Join us for play-time, art, music, outdoor time, and sensory room play. If anyone has a talent that she or he would like to volunteer to share with the families (storytelling, balloon animal making, infant massage, sign language, etc.), please let Staci Maynard know by calling 502-498-2923 or e-mailing smaynard@vips.org. Also, as a reminder, VIPS follows the JCPS schedule, so PAL will not be in session on JCPS holidays or when JCPS cancels school. PAL will not meet on December 27 or January 3; other dates to be announced.

## VIPS Louisville Preschool News

by Ashley Emmons, Kids Town Preschool Teacher/COMS



We have had a great start to our school year. We began with an "All About Me" theme where the children learned how many letters were in their name, the color of their eyes and hair, their age, height, etc. When we explored an "Animals" theme, the children learned the differences between mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish. A "Friendship" theme found the students learning

what it means to be a "bucket filler," in other words, someone who gives to others. The children participated in a fall leaf hunt and collected a variety of leaves of different shapes, colors, and sizes. They used the leaves they collected to sort as well as to create sun-catchers. Some of our upcoming themes will include the five senses, fruits and vegetables, and holiday fun.

On Thursday, September 26, the students took a field trip to WHAS 11 where the children got the opportunity to tour the facility, and be on camera using a green screen. A fire truck also stopped by the station to allow the students to explore both the inside and the outside of the truck.



Children appear on the weather map with WHAS-11 Meteorologist Ben Pine.

On Wednesday, October 2, the students participated in the Bill Roby Track and Field Games at KSB. Each student participated in the 30 Meter run, Standing Long Jump, and Softball Throw. To their delight, every child brought home at least one medal along with a colorful t-shirt commemorating the event!



Stella, Tabitha, and Megan run like the wind!



Above: Mason admires his medal. Right: Erin models a wonderful message!



Lainie prepares for the long jump.



Ta'veon, Sam and Ahmed show off their medals.

## Expanded Core Curriculum

In our last issue an article introduced the topic of Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC), all of the skills needed by the child who is blind/visually impaired in addition to the core curriculum that all children need. Because of all of our other news this issue, we will hold the continuation of The Expanded Core Curriculum article until the January-March 2014 issue.



## New Arrivals

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

### VIPS LOUISVILLE

Blake – 5 months, Louisville, KY  
 Blake – 32 months, Bowling Green, KY  
 Chelsea – 15 months, Louisville, KY  
 Erin – 42 months, Jeffersonville, IN  
 Joselyn – 5 months, Louisville, KY  
 Kazial – 33 months, Louisville, KY  
 Levi – 37 months, Louisville, KY  
 Litsey – 7 months, Utica, IN  
 Oliver – 8 months, Bardstown, KY

### VIPS LEXINGTON

Audrey - 21 months, Lexington, KY  
 Bret - 13 months, Monticello, KY  
 Brylee - 7 months, Berea, KY  
 Gracie - 26 months, Richmond, KY  
 Harper - 7 months, Lexington, KY  
 Hayes – 13 months, Columbia, KY  
 Jonathan – 29 months, London, KY  
 Katelyn - 18 months, London, KY  
 Keiran – 11 months, Richmond, KY  
 Kirsten – 8 months, Carlisle, KY  
 Levi - 14 months, Lexington, KY  
 Madison - 24 months, Lost Creek, KY  
 Mason - 22 months, Nicholasville, KY  
 McKenziee – 16 months, Vanceburg, KY  
 Pandora – 30 months, Lexington, KY  
 Taelyn – 35 months, Lawrenceburg, KY

### VIPS BLOOMINGTON

Able - 29 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Brenna - 13 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Evelyn - 27 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Hiley - 26 months, Ellettsville, IN  
 Kane - 28 months, Hobart, IN  
 Keiyon - 6 months, Indianapolis, IN

# Help For Santa's Helpers.

## Toy Favorites and Gift Ideas from the VIPS Staff



**Alysia Rue, VIPS Louisville Developmental Interventionist**

Toys to stimulate your child do not have to be bought at a store but can also be found around your home. For example, a cardboard box may seem like trash or something to recycle, but it has many uses to engage your child. A box with a lid makes a fun game of hide-and-seek with toys. Hide your child's favorite toy inside for her to uncover.

Boxes may also be used as blocks to stack, knock down, or as nesting toys. Several boxes might be tied together to create a long train for your child to pull around. You might also cut out pictures from magazines or newspapers and glue them on each side of the box; you can use them to point to as a way to facilitate communication between you and your child.

Small to medium size boxes might also be a great way to store other toys or place objects with different textures for your child to discover. A small narrow slot can be cut out for your child to place "mail" in the mailbox. A larger box might also be a great hiding spot or fort in which your child can feel comfortable and secure. Feel free to paint and decorate the box with your child. These are just a few suggestions of the many possible ways a box can be used as a toy. So remember, save your boxes!



**Paige Maynard, VIPS Louisville Kids Town Preschool Teacher/Developmental Interventionist**

If you're like me, you get just as much joy out of gift giving as you do gift getting! It makes me even happier when I give a handmade gift. I love transforming ordinary materials into unique and personalized presents for my pals. Unfortunately, sometimes holiday busyness keeps me from crafting.

Good news! I have some handmade gift ideas for your child that won't take you from now until Santa Claus comes to put together!

If your child is learning to use his hands to explore and isn't ready to reach outside his body yet, a texture bib may be a great choice. First, you'll need a large bib. If you can't find one large enough, you can convert a hand towel into a bib with some craft glue and ribbon. Just glue two strips of ribbon to two corners of

the towel, and, "Voila!" instant bib! Once you have a bib, start looking for items with interesting textures and temperatures. Some examples are small blocks of wood (watch for splinters!), soft cotton, bubble wrap, Mylar, lace, sandpaper, corduroy, leather, part of a bath loofah, or anything else you think your child may find interesting. Both your home and the remnant section of the craft store are great places to look. Glue each texture in a different place on the bib. Let dry, and you're finished!

The texture bib helps your child develop tactile discrimination skills, understand language (when you talk about the textures and where they are found in your home), express language (what child won't coo with excitement when he finds his favorite texture on this toy?), and develop directionality (as he learns where each texture is located). I would estimate its cost at \$15 or less, and it takes less than one day to create. \*\*\*This bib should never be used without supervision. Items tied around your child's neck can cause suffocation.\*\*\*

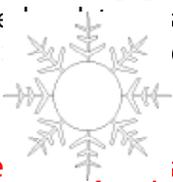


If your child is learning to look at pictures, you can create your own visually appropriate board book online. Take pictures of your child's favorite objects by placing them on solid contrasting backgrounds. You can also take pictures of members of your family standing in front of a solid and contrasting wall. You could even write your own story and take photos of your own visually appropriate artwork. Your DI/TVI would love to consult with you on what may be most appropriate for your child! Upload your pictures to <http://www.pintsizeproductions.com/boardbook-baby.html> or <https://pinholepress.com/products/mini-book-of-names-faces-85-1-0-01/> to create your child's one of a kind gift. This picture book can foster many skills, including developing visual memory and learning visual scanning. Coupled with low vision tools like a magnifier or closed circuit television (CCTV), your book can teach even more! Creating your own book costs between \$25 and \$30, and takes about three hours to finish.

If your child loves to be in the kitchen or you want to encourage more daily living skills, consider putting together a cooking set for him or her. Purchase a cookie jar or other tall container from a department store. Fill it with real cooking utensils, such as a mixing spoon, whisk, measuring spoons, spatula, cookie cutter and an apron (be sure no items have points which may hurt your child). Real tools encourage independence and can make it logistically easier for you to allow her to help, since they will be kept in one place. When you cook, encourage your child to use her special utensils to help you. Encourage her to locate their container and to take them out to look for what she needs to use. Your child's cooking set helps her develop skills across all domains of development. For example, she will understand container play when she takes the tools out of the container and puts them back. She will develop receptive language skills as you describe what you are doing and what you want her to



do while she is helping you. She will be developing motor skills as she walks to the kitchen to help you cook, engages her core when stirring a bowl, and learns to use her hands to hold the tools. The cost of this gift ranges from about \$10 to \$20 and takes about 20 minutes to put together.



### Annie Hughes, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/ Developmental Interventionist for VIPS Bloomington

For very little ones, I think that the Lamaze Soft Chime Garden™ is a wonderful choice. Each flower makes a soft chime sound, and it is easily activated and teaches cause and effect. Though it is harder to find in retail stores, it is easily found online at Amazon or Google for about \$25.

For older children, head to Target for a fun toy called the B. Woofer Hound Dog Guitar™. The settings are; “acoustic, electric, and howl,” and there are strings to strum and buttons to push for music. It is shaped like a puppy (hence the howl setting), and can be yours for \$22.99.



Another toy for children who are around 2 years and older developmentally is the Battat Sound Puzzle Box™. I purchased mine online for under \$20, including shipping. It is a 3-shape sorter, and as each piece falls into its slot it makes a fun sound that reinforces getting the shapes into the slots and “letting go.” They are available online from sources such as Google, Sears, Amazon, and Yoyo.com.

For a stocking stuffer, I like the 3 little musical duos from B.™ Jamboree. One little set is the twister hand drum and the elephant ocarina, another is the set of “shaka-shaka” giraffe maracas, and the third set, for those who are ready for a whistle, is the antelope slide whistle and the warbly hornbill water whistle. (Earplugs are not included... HoHoHo!) These can be found at Target and specialty stores.

### Ashley Emmons, VIPS Louisville Kids Town Preschool Teacher/O&M Specialist

My toy recommendation this year is Just Kidz Electronic Music Mat™ (\$15 at Kmart) or Mickey’s Music Mat™ (\$18.89-\$24.79 on Amazon.com). These music mats are great tools to use with children to work on sound localization skills, as well as body and spatial awareness.

### Mary Lesousky, VIPS Louisville Developmental Interventionist/TVI

One of my favorite toys is Playschool Busy Gear™. This toy is easily activated by pressing the red button at the bottom of the toy. When activated the colorful gears spin around with light and music. The lights and music of the toy encourage visual attention to the action of the toy. The gears can be removed and replaced on the lighted posts. On the newer version of the toy several of the

gears have knobs on them that give little hands something to grasp to remove the gears. This toy can be found in most toy stores for about \$25.

### Mitch Dahmke, Family Support Specialist, KY School for the Blind

WonderBaby.org, a project funded by the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, MA, is a website devoted to resources for families with blind children. The section called Ivan’s Favorite Toys is filled with wonderful gift ideas. The rest of this online resource is equally delightful and helpful!

Also, the following companies sell items useful for older children and adults who have visual challenges. Some send annual catalogs and offer online ordering while the first is an actual store. On-site “pick-up” can be arranged for items available at APH.

- See the World – A store located at 1832 Frankfort Ave., Louisville 40206, across the street from the American Printing House for the Blind and the KY School for the Blind, (502-447-2458).
- American Printing House for the Blind (APH), 1805 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, 40206, (800-223-1839), [www.shopaph.org](http://www.shopaph.org).

### Angie Paisley, VIPS Louisville Kids Town Preschool Teacher

Sensory Water Beads provide a tactile sensory experience that is out of the ordinary. Beads change water into colorful, shiny, gel-like balls. \$8.99 [www.sensoryuniversity.com](http://www.sensoryuniversity.com).

Digiflex Pediatric Hand Exercisor™ is a great tool for improving fine motor skills and hand strength. It also serves an excellent hand fidget. \$29.99 [www.sensoryuniversity.com](http://www.sensoryuniversity.com).

An oldie, but goodie, and a great stocking stuffer -- Bug Out Bob™! Squeezing Bob’s eyes “out of his head” offers enough resistance to challenge and improve grasp and fine motor skills. \$7.99 [www.sensoryuniversity.com](http://www.sensoryuniversity.com).

Matman™! This is from our Handwriting Without Tears Curriculum™ used in the classroom. This is a research-based curriculum that is extremely effective in teaching readiness in writing, letter and number recognition, preschool math and literacy skills. All of the children love this, and would love to be able to use it at home. You will need “Wood Pieces Set for Capital Letters” (\$32.50), and the “Get Set for School Sing-a-Long” (\$13.75) CD. The Matman song is on this CD along with other songs we sing, or you could find the Matman song on youtube. Matman is put together using the song. Examples of other uses for the wooden pieces: creating and identifying shapes, letters, numbers, etc. There is also a HWT’s app for \$5.00. <http://www.hwtears.com>.



## Staci Maynard, VIPS Louisville PAL & Twos Teacher/ Developmental Interventionist

I have been researching about e-readers. I have some thoughts, though not really any conclusions. Hopefully, gift-givers will be able to figure out which to purchase based on the following information combined with knowledge of your child.

- When talking to TVIs, they prefer the i-Pad because of its ability to enlarge print. However, it is one of the more expensive options and the most likely to be used for purposes contrary to the gift-giver's desire.
- The LeapPad™ is an acceptable option, though still expensive. I could not find out if it has adjustable print size, but it should still be okay since it is designed for small children and also has audio options.

~ However, I have read that the apps are expensive. Thus, if the gift-givers could add a few additional apps than what the reader comes with, it could be of more benefit to the child.

~ If he/she wants to get a tablet, I would recommend that the purchaser buy the LeapPad 2 Power Learning Tablet™ which costs \$10-20 more than the next lower model but which has more apps and comes with a rechargeable battery.

- There are other options for pre-reading and writing skills that aren't tablets and aren't as fancy. However, they could be good choices depending on the buyer's objective.

~ The LeapFrog Scribble and Write Tablet™ is around \$22. It allows the child to practice writing letters. The machine can judge the accuracy of the formation. However, it mainly focuses on letters and writing skills not words or reading.

~ The LeapFrog Leap Reader Reading and Writing System™ sells for around \$40-50 not including books. It is supposed to teach reading and writing together and has gotten good reviews.

~ The LeapFrog TAG Reading System™ costs around \$45 not including books. It focuses more on phonics, vocabulary, & reading comprehension.

~ For around \$15-20, you can purchase a set of 6 books that will work with the Reading and Writing System and with TAG. There are other books available from LeapFrog for these systems as well.

- Even age appropriate books with large print and bold pictures would be a great gift. There may be some possibilities on the Lakeshore or the Seedlings websites.



# Resources for Parents & Teachers



The first webinar in the American Foundation for the Blind's (AFB) ongoing series, *Creating Tactile Overlays for the iPad and Tablet Devices*, \$29, is now available in the AFB bookstore at <http://www.afb.org/store/Pages/ShoppingCart/ProductDetails.aspx?ProductId=Etactileoverlays&ruling=Yes>. The webinar series is presented by Dr. Betsy Flener, a teacher and regional consultant for the Kentucky School for the Blind, who has published and presented nationally on various topics concerning technology in the classroom.

In this presentation Dr. Flener provides a rationale for making tactile overlays for tablets and describes the elements of an inexpensive "toolkit" for making tactile overlays. The apps to be used with overlays and various iPad accessories are also described.

The second webinar, just released in August, was *The iPad and Communication for Students with Visual and Multiple Disabilities*, also \$29, <http://www.afb.org/store/Pages/ShoppingCart/ProductDetails.aspx?ProductId=eiPadCommunication&ruling=Yes>. It provides information to those working to develop systems of communication for students with cortical visual impairment, cerebral palsy, autism, and deafblindness. Assessments and iPad accessory use for students with low vision are also described.

For more information about these and other upcoming eLearning webinars, go to [elearn.afb.org](http://elearn.afb.org).



# VIPS Board & Staff News

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VIPS Louisville Board Member Lester Sanders has recently been named President of the Greater Louisville Association of REALTORS. Lester has been instrumental in making VIPS what it is today through his time, talents, and treasure.

## Meet Heidi!

VIPS Lexington is thrilled to welcome our very first Instructional Assistant, Heidi Bigelow, with the beginning of its first group of Two Day Twos. Heidi writes:

"I am very glad to be part of the VIPS team. I have worked in daycares as an assistant multiple times, and was also a substitute teacher for a while, until my daughter's health took a downward spiral. I want to tell you about this because she is the real reason I am here. My daughter Sophia is autistic, but she also has a rare progressive, neurodegenerative disease known as Batten's Disease. Through her, I have learned more patience, more knowledge of complex medical issues, knowledge of all types of therapy, and profound love, than I ever thought possible. Sophia has in her own way brought us into the special needs community, where I quickly realized that the kids I want to work with are the kiddos who need the most. I look forward to assisting Dixie in the classroom and planning fun and engaging activities for kids of ALL abilities!"



## VIPS Provides JCPS In-Service

by Kathy Mullen, VIPS Education Coordinator

On Tuesday afternoon, August 6<sup>th</sup>, VIPS strengthened their partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools by welcoming 24 early childhood teachers to Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. These professionals serve three- to five-year-old students in a variety of settings – as classroom teachers, resource teachers, teaching assistants and early childhood diagnosticians.

The participants first heard the remarkable statistics that 90% of all learning comes through a person's vision and that 80-90% of all

brain development occurs before a child reaches the age of six. The teachers then went on a tour of Kids Town Preschool to see and hear firsthand how services are delivered to young children with low or no vision. The similarities between our preschool programming for our VIPS children and sighted peers were emphasized. To say the least, the JCPS teachers were quite impressed.

Following the tour, everyone gathered in the VIPS board room to engage in a simulation of visual impairments while completing tasks commonly assigned to young learners. Next, the teachers participated in a presentation on common diagnoses of vision loss in young children. Characteristics and needs were discussed, followed by proven strategies for addressing the needs of a child with a vision loss. The message was reinforced with a viewing of the VIPS Can Do! DVD, "Successfully Adapting the Preschool Environment".

At the end of the in-service, the teachers expressed great satisfaction with their time, considering it well-spent. A few of the teachers even asked if there were openings for some of their younger family members!

VIPS is always happy to host this type of in-service for other professionals serving young children. It's a wonderful way for us to share our mission of providing appropriate educational services to children with vision loss, as well as strengthen our relationship with community partners.

## Kind Gifts of Time from Generous People

### VIPS Louisville

For her wonderful and loving help with the Twos class each week, thanks to the very dedicated Fran Woodward.

For giving so generously of themselves to make the VIPS Family Retreat on Sept. 7 such a wonderful event, we have many volunteers to thank. For sharing information and insight with families, thanks to our speakers and panelists: Josh Alvey, Prestina Bacala, Sarah Flick, Beth Gordon, Gordon Holmes, Patrick Henry and Patrick John Hughes, Aaron Linson, Jan Moseley, Ashley Reynolds, Monica Tharp, Jamie Weedman and Maury Weedman. We had many great people caring for the children, including: Galen Nursing Students Becki Bise, Melissa Clifford, Linda Cook, Kelly Hardman, Renee Kinnard, Ashley Lamkin, Charlestine Lindsey, Kelli Marlatt, Victoria Stieben, Amanda Toney, Esther Theodore, and Lizzie Tretter. Other helpers included Amanda Coomer, Clint & Tonya Otis, Ashley Rakes, Haley Schnell, Robin

Steinhulber, Leon Totten. For bringing his huge grill and grilling hamburgers and hotdogs to feed a crowd, thanks to Tim Toebbe. For assisting throughout the day as needed, thanks to Ryan Hack and Don Weedman. For being in charge of VIPS Camp and Respite Care, thanks to Ashley Emmons and Mary Lesousky. For preparing and serving meals, thanks to Carol Dahmke and Kim Shippey. And thanks to the many other VIPS staff who participated in so many ways throughout the day.

For help getting the Larkmoor house ready to sell, thanks to volunteers from Horsehoe Heroes, including Scott Flehr, Norris Hamilton, Motako Harkless, Dana Jones, Heather Lafferre, Brian Marshall, Tandra Miller, Stacy Olvey, and Rutha Stone-Stallworth.



Louisville Downtown Lions

For assisting during Friday Friends, thanks to Amanda Coomer.

For putting the sensory garden to bed for the winter, thanks to members of the Louisville Downtown Lions, including Karen Abraham, Sharon Bensinger, Joe Billie, and Leon Thomas.

The Stampede for VIPS is a huge undertaking and would not be possible without a whole host of volunteers. We are so grateful to all of those who helped this year, including Jeanie Adkins, Heather Benson, Shelby Birchler, Faith Bolton, Jennifer Coffey, Gretchen Cutrer, Ken Cutrer, Carol Dahmke, Mitch Dahmke, John Daniels, LaRhonda Daniels, Michael Daniels, Stephen Deeley, Ashley Emmons, Ashley Erwin, Robert Erwin, Pauletta Feldman, Tina Gardner, Nora Glenn, Martha Hack, Ryan Hack, Brandi Hitzelberger, Katrina Hutchins, Mary Kokladas, Beth Krebs, Payton Kruer, Tammy Kruer, Charlie LeBoeuf, Mary Lesousky, Austin Marshall, Staci Maynard, Aggie Nelson, Diane Nelson, Ed Nelson, Clint Otis, Tonya Otis, Angie Paisley, Cristy Plank, Rich Plank, Ellen Prizant, Joe Riordan, Haley Schnell, Erik Seibt, Kim Shippey, Mary Smyth, Glen Stuckel, Katie Tyler, Maury Weedman, Teri Wing, Aimee VanderPol, Jamie Vannatte, Tiffany Yates and Rebecca York. UPS volunteers included: VIPS Board Member Amy Sitterly assisted

by Jim Bolton, Michael Bolton, Michelle Hannington, Mike Nepaul, Diana Bullen Sumner and Anthony Sumner. Members of the U of L Soccer Team helping out included: Louis Berra, Daniel Brennan, Robin Dray, Kegan Harkenrider, David Horne, Joey Kumkel, Austin Ladd and Ben Strong. Thank you one and all!

For making very personalized books for one of Kids Town Preschool children with cortical visual impairment, thanks to Paige Maynard's cousin, Bullitt East High School student Rachel Grant.

Lauren Berryman, Natalie Burton, and Sarah Schubert from Sacred Heart Academy helped accomplish office tasks, put together activities for teachers, prepared crafts for the Halloween party, and then came back to volunteer for the Halloween Trunk N' Treat.

Many, many thanks to the following alumnae of Delta Gamma (shown below) who help every year with preparing holiday letters for mailing. This year's group included Lisa Bajorinas, Julie Campbell, Elizabeth Dallenbach, Dawn Diehl, Lisa Dorns, Katherine Dyke, Laura Fisher, Ginny Fuller, Danielle Hawks, Geri Huff, Cara Joynt, June King, Mary Frances Pack, and Luly Reinhardt. We appreciate your continuing support!



Above, Louisville Delta Gamma Alumnae work on Holiday mailing. Below, Lexington Delta Gamma's at Halloween Party.



## VIPS Lexington

Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month was a huge undertaking and couldn't have been done without the assistance, energy, and input from Jessica Griffitt, Mara Hafer, Rachel Lindner and Rebecca Goggin from the University of Kentucky Social Work program. The poster and logo couldn't have been done without the very talented Steve Clark and Sarah Brown. And a huge thanks goes to long time supporter, Julie Pash, for the Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for White Cane Safety Day. It should also be noted that without the support and guidance of VIPS Louisville staff members, Kathy Mullen, Pauletta Feldman, and Diane Nelson, this endeavor would not have been as successful.

There's always a lot to do to prep for our Halloween party, but this year the University of Kentucky Delta Gammas chipped in and took a lot of the load upon their own shoulders. We want to thank each one of them for their hard work with each of the activity stations, partnering with our children, and for helping afterwards with the clean up: Alizabeth Bean, Becca Bishop, Haley Boyd, Bryn Brendamar, Elle Brown, Rachel Browne, Alyssa Browne, Ivy Bruce, Michelle Carny, Victoria Cherolis, Michelle Cornejo, Erika Crouch, Kelsey Daly, Gina Dawson, Haeli Denton, Chandler Dickinson, Jenna Dupree, Lynley Durbin, Lacey Garvin, Jenna Gradinjan, Alexandra Hays, Kate Johnson, Carly Kaelin, Brooke Kielbasad, Molly Kitchen, Macey Koeppen, Emelia Lambert, Tracy Langefeld, Hannah Leahey, Emily Ledford, Marin Lehman, Lenae Lesiow, Molly Lex, Morgan Manning, Madeline McCall, Carly Moulden, Julia Murray, Olivia Rebella, Lizzie Rhoton, Cara Ryan, Audrey Sandknop, Jenna Spenlau, Shelby Stein, Madelyn Super, Ava Tagliaferro, Tori Thaman, Paige Theobald, Olivia VanSteenbergh, Julie VanYahres, and Erin Weber. Thanks ever so much ladies!

## VIPS Bloomington

Thanks to Caitlin Gamble, Deputy Policy Director for IN House Speaker Brian Bosma, for setting up a visit to VIPS Louisville by IN Legislators.

Thanks to Lauren Casel and IU Delta Gammas for helping during the Chili for Children event.

For assisting with Dining in the Dark, thanks to Lauren Allen, TJ Allen, Veronika Bard, Janis Bolling, Dr. Rowan Candy, Leanne Ellis, Elliot Frost, Meredith Howell, Christian Kelly, Dr. Scott and Karen Little, Sarah & Aaron Riddle, Shawn Ridinger and Barbara Salisbury. Thanks to our IU helpers including Lauren Casel and IU Theta Chapter of Delta Gamma, Sara Eash and the IU School of Nutrition, Mak Hozo, Thomasina O'Connor, Brandy Warriner, and the Circle K organization from IU. Thanks to VIPS Louisville staff Diane Nelson, Heather Benson, Carol Dahmke, Martha Hack and Kathy Mullen!

## Larkmoor House On the Market

By the time you read this newsletter, the house on Larkmoor Avenue, that was donated to VIPS by Ralph and Dennis Ash, will be on the market! We are so grateful to the wonderful companies and generous individuals who have helped us renovate the house to get it ready to sell. We owe many thanks to VIPS long-time Board member Jennifer O'Dea who provided the appliances. Thanks also to Tom Olympia of Wycliffe Construction who donated the labor of Steve Palmeri and Fred Greenwell, father of VIPS child Christian, to lay flooring. We are grateful to Sam Kinnaird Flooring for offering VIPS a discounted rate. Horseshoe Casino provided volunteers to paint the house -- thanks to them as well! We hope to report in the next newsletter that it has been sold! If you or someone you know might like a showing, please contact VIPS (502-636-3207).

## Stampede for VIPS a Great Success!!

What a great year and great weather we enjoyed for the 2013 Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS! Our biggest crowd in many years came out to Papa John's Cardinal Stadium on Saturday morning, September 28<sup>th</sup> to run or walk our 5K course, the only local race that features a special division for athletes who are blind and visually impaired. At the end of the day, the Stampede raised over \$67,000 plus an additional \$30,000 donation from Kosair Charities!



Stampede sponsors Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn.

Afterwards, the children raced each other in a Kids' Fun Run and enjoyed a special area that featured bouncies, face painting and a balloon artist. Everyone enjoyed the bluegrass band at the finish line and the River City Drum Corp, who provided beats out on the course.

Congratulations to our 1<sup>st</sup> place finishers in the Blind/VI division, Amy McDonaugh of South Carolina and VIPS graduate Jamie Weedman of Louisville! We also applaud all who placed in the Overall and Age Divisions and thank everyone who participated in the run/walk.

We would like to express gratitude to all of the VIPS families who brought droves of supporters to the Stampede. And, of course, we graciously thank our major sponsors, including Ford Motor Company, Texas Roadhouse, Louisville Downtown Lions Club, Print Tex, American Printing House for the Blind (APH), Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation (KSBCF), Greater Louisville Association of Realtors, Louisville Metro Government, Boxcar PR and all of our in-kind supporters for making this a great event!



Blind runner Amy McDonaugh won the women's VI division. She is accompanied by her sighted partner Lee Kelley.



Above: Pyper Buren (whose team was Pyper's Peeps) was Grand Marshal. Below: Team Addy won the prize for biggest group of supporters.



## Innovative Tax Benefit with Donation to VIPS!

Between now and December 31<sup>st</sup>, you can give a year-end gift to VIPS directly from your IRA without paying an income tax! This option is available for those ages 70-½ or older, and the funds must be transferred directly from your IRA to VIPS. Please note that you will not receive an income tax charitable deduction, but you will avoid an income tax liability. If you would like to explore this option for your 2013 gift to VIPS, please contact Diane Nelson, Executive Director, at 502-636-3207.

## Recent Grants & Donations

### VIPS Louisville

Karston A. & Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund, Inc. has awarded \$32,300 to fund educational programs in Louisville. The Kids Town Preschool at VIPS, the Two Day 2s and continuing education for VIPS staff members are all beneficiaries of this generous fund. We are so blessed!

The GE Employees Community Fund donated \$5,000 to purchase furniture and equipment for a third preschool classroom.

Louisville Metro Government awarded VIPS Louisville \$6,500 to fund Music Therapy.

With the construction of a Subway drive-through next door to VIPS Louisville and adjacent to our playground, we asked VIPS friend and former Board Member Pete Laguens for guidance on additional protection along our property and fence line. (Pete has provided expertise in safety and security at VIPS for many years.) VIPS was connected with Eden Fencing, Inc. (EFI) from Elizabethtown, KY. During a short tour of VIPS, our EFI contact, Beau Hensley, was not only interested in the job, he stated they would do the job at no cost!! One week later the guardrail was in place. Beau and his wife even painted it for us. Thanks so much to Beau and his wife and especially to Rob Hughes, Vice President of EFI, for your awesome work and support!



## VIPS Lexington

The Big Maracas brought the sounds of salsa music to downtown Lexington on August 29th at the Central Bank Thursday Night Live. The large crowd enjoyed live music and sampled food from various vendors. VIPS was the featured charity that evening and received \$683 in tip money. Thanks to our volunteers: George and Kathy Hocker; Daryl Carlson; Tony and Denise Placido; Tootie Denny; Mary Ellen Momeyer; Emma Dennis and Emily Abrams.

The Blue Grass Community Foundation awarded VIPS Lexington \$5000 in funding for its new Two Day 2's playgroup. The playgroup takes place Mondays and Tuesdays, 9 a.m. - noon.

In addition, VIPS will receive \$1480 for specialized equipment from the Lexington Clinic Foundation while the Lexington South Lions Club donated \$500 for other supplies and small equipment.

The members of the Lexington Lions Club are helping children with vision loss in central Kentucky. The club supported our in-home intervention program by donating \$9000. The club hosts the Bluegrass Fair each year to support many programs in addition to VIPS.



Left: Advisory Board Member Catherine Leslie accepting the Lexington Lions Club check.

VIPS Lexington is once again participating in the Good Giving Guide Challenge along with 107 other nonprofits in central Kentucky. Our goal is to raise an estimated \$3500 from this online campaign. The campaign targets younger donors who heavily use social media. The Challenge runs until December 31st. Check out our page at [www.goodgivingguide.net/vips](http://www.goodgivingguide.net/vips). We also want to increase our Twitter following to 1000.

And for the very first time, VIPS Lexington received a grant of \$8,000 from the Karston A. & Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund, Inc. Thanks so much to the fund for helping support the VIPS Lexington Family Services programs, the Summer Enrichment program and laptops for the teachers.

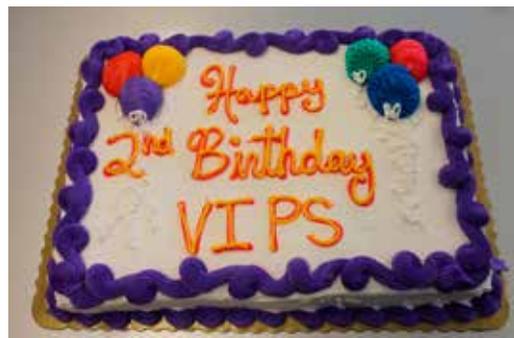
## VIPS Bloomington

VIPS-Bloomington received \$3,000 from the Monroe County Council Sophia Travis Community Service grant. This grant will help fund home visits to VIPS families within Monroe County.

Our sincerest thanks to the Monroe County Council for their continued support.

We are thrilled to announce that The Glick Fund, a Central Indiana Community Foundation Fund, has approved a grant to VIPS-Bloomington in the amount of \$47,000. This grant will be used to support a training program for early interventionists in visual impairment and for operating support. With this funding, VIPS-Bloomington will be able to build capacity to serve more of Indiana's youngest visually impaired children now and in the future. Thank you!!

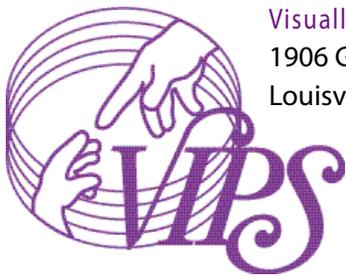
## VIPS Bloomington turned two this fall Aren't we getting big?!



## Kids Town Preschool Wish List

- Paper towels
- Disinfectant wipes
- High efficiency laundry detergent
- Toilet tissue
- Kleenex or other brand tissues
- Black towels of any size
- Double sided tape, 1" wide or less
- Dust Buster or similar hand vacuum
- CD player
- Large (125 oz. or so) washable tempera paints: yellow, black, white and red

And our teachers are still hoping that Santa might be able to bring them a new(er) Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) to magnify objects and letters in the classroom. A color CCTV would be heaven-sent!



Visually Impaired Preschool Services  
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Louisville, KY 40218

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## Upcoming Events

### VIPS Louisville

**Saturday, December 14, 10-11:30 a.m.**  
Sibling Support Group and VIPS Parent Group with VIPS children. Sibling will get special time and attention just for themselves while VIPS kids and parents will make a project.

**Thursday, January 16, 6-7:30 p.m.**  
Family Dinner-Speaker to be announced.

**Saturday, February 8, 10-11:30 a.m.**  
Sibling Support Group and VIPS Parent Group with VIPS child. Sibling will get special time and attention just for themselves while the VIPS kids and parents will make a project.

**Saturday, February 22**  
ReVision, sponsored by Brown-Forman Corporation, will be held at the KY Center for African American Heritage. This exhibit explores the world of art through the eyes of the blind and visually impaired. ReVision reexamines the traditional gallery presentation as a tactile, auditory and spatial experience. All artwork will be available for purchase, benefitting VIPS.

**Wednesday, March 19, 6-7:30 p.m.**  
Family Dinner-Speaker to be announced.

### VIPS Lexington

**December 14, noon-2p.m**  
Join VIPS and Santa for our holiday party at Gardenside Church Gym, 940 Holly Springs Dr. in Lexington. Lunch will be provided for all along with some special items for the kids. There will be a visit from Santa and a chance for parents to take photos. Activities will include crafts, carols, and sensory stations.

**Sunday, February 2, 5-11:30 p.m.**  
Party with the Pros is THE Super Bowl event where you can mingle with pro football greats and help support blind children and their families, all at the same time. Enjoy the Super Bowl with members of the Retired Professional Football Players of KY at the Lexington Embassy Suites. \$45/person.

**Saturday, March 8**  
VIPS will prepare an afternoon tea for moms to enjoy while getting to know each other at Gardenside Church. After tea, there will be relaxation time with yoga for stress relief. While the moms are relaxing, we will offer fun, active games for dads and kids in the gym.

**Saturday, April 26, 6:30-9 p.m.**  
A Parents Night Out will be held at Gardenside Church Gymnasium. VIPS is offering a night out to parents by donating child care to all our families! Drop off your VIPS child and siblings and we will entertain them with games and crafts while you get some much needed self-care time. RSVP in advance is required! We will work to provide a pediatric nurse volunteer if needed for special medical needs.

### VIPS Bloomington

**Saturday, January 4**  
Lions Mid-Winter Conference, Plainfield Middle School, Plainfield, IN.

**Saturday, February 8**  
Children's Expo, Batchelor Middle School, Bloomington, IN.

**Saturday, March 2**  
Baby Fair, Bloomington, IN.

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

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Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects  
Greta Gillmeister, Music Therapist  
Martha Hack, Development Asst./Family Services  
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