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October Was Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear proclaimed October to be Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month again this year. Thanks to Mary Smyth, Office Manager for VIPS Central KY, who worked on behalf of the Blind Services Coalition of KY to get needed information to the governor to support his proclamation. The Coalition was formed through partnerships that were forged last year during B&VI Awareness Month. The following letters from VIPS parents help build awareness of the challenges and unexpected joys that can come when "seeing the world in a new way."

Addy

I could spend days telling you about my daughter's diagnosis. I could tell you how horrific it was to hear the word "blind" come out of a doctor's mouth. I could rant about the specialists, the therapists, the board of education meetings, the growth hormone shots, and all the other struggles that come along with raising a child without vision, but what I would like to do is tell you of the victories, the miracles and the joy that this journey has brought us.

I feel when I share my daughter's diagnosis with others, people are in tears and they are sad and understandably so. There was a time when I also felt this way, but what I want people to know is that my child is not limited by her lack of vision.

Beyond the blindness is just a normal three year old girl, a girl who loves



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Vance

To have a whole month dedicated to educating and celebrating the Blind and Visually Impaired community is very special to my family because of Vance. Last year I shared the story of Vance, how he was born with a genetic disease, Norrie Disease, which caused him to be blind from birth. This year I feel that I should share an experience that I fear will become common place in our lives.

Vance has had both his eyes removed and had implants placed to ensure that his facial structure would grow symmetrically. This in itself was and still is a long and painful road for everyone who walks with Vance. Although his eyes did not function to begin with, it was still a loss that we had to grieve. I don't see my son any different than I did before. He is still beautiful and when he smiles his whole face still lights up a room. His older brother and sisters do not see him any differently either.

A few weeks ago we were playing outside in our front yard and my daughter's best friend



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to chit chat and sing. To play pretend with her dolls and boss everyone around. When in doubt that she is a normal 3 year old, an all too familiar temper tantrum is quick to remind me that she is in fact a typical toddler princess.

Beyond the struggles, we have celebrated many milestones. From her first words to her first cane, everything she does is a miracle to us. There is not a day that goes by that she doesn't amaze me. She can count in Spanish, talk in sentences, sing the national anthem, and make you smile when you want to cry.

I am truly overwhelmed by the support and help we have from our community. Our family and friends, teachers and therapists, everyone at VIPS, and so many more have played such a vital role in Addy's success. Thank you all for your faith and patience that Addy would blossom into the brilliant and brave little girl that she is today.

I am honored to be mommy to such an astonishing little girl, and cannot wait to see what God has in store for her. "While we try to teach our children all about life, our children end up teaching us what life is all about."

~Brittany, Addy's Mom

Vance continued from front page

was with us. Vance liked the way the toy she had sounded and went after it, as any three year old would. Since he keeps his head down most of the time, the little friend had never seen his lack of eyes. She was quite startled. She exclaimed "What's wrong with his eyes?!" I explained the circumstances as best I could. Her response was "He's gross looking".

Now, my gut reaction was sadness and anger. No one wants to hear these statements about their children. We want to protect them and defend them. So I took a deep breath and before I could say anything, my daughter, Adyson, replied "He is not gross, he is my brother!" I smiled and felt relieved. I didn't have to say anything. And after thinking it over, I wasn't mad or sad. What we do not understand, we fear. And this is a completely normal reaction for a child. Being blunt and honest is also completely normal for a child. The little friend didn't mean any harm.

But it also made me realize something else. As much as people fear the unknown, I also fear them and their lack of knowledge. I also fear that Vance will not have an identity outside of his disability. But I am wrong...Vance is a brother, a son, a nephew, a grandson, a cousin, a student, a friend, a comedian, and by no purpose of his own, a teacher. I am sure he will become much more throughout his life, but for now his identity is safe with us and I do not stand alone when it comes to teaching, explaining, or protecting my little guy.

I hope that by continuing Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month we can educate our community about conditions that go along with being blind or visually impaired, but also we can teach tolerance and understanding and eliminate fear for everyone.

~Emily, Vance's Mom

Anthony

Until the age of two Anthony was a mostly typical little boy, a little underweight but we had done everything the pediatrician and the nutritionist told us. At his two year check up the pediatrician took a picture of his eyes to check his vision. Unfortunately the results came back unclear and the doctor recommended we take him to an ophthalmologist.

In August of 2013 we went to see Dr. Ikram and she told us she was concerned about Anthony's nystagmus so she ordered an MRI. Two weeks later at KCMC on Brownsboro Road we went in for the test. Two hours later our lives completely changed. We were told by Dr. Ikram that Anthony had a very large brain tumor and needed immediate surgery. We were rushed to Kosair (Hospital) downtown where he had a craniotomy the next day. After surgery we were in Kosair for four weeks and then transferred to Frazier Rehab for an additional month.

During this time we noticed a change in Anthony's response to visual cues and stimulation. By the time we left Frazier we had a follow up appointment with Dr. Ikram where she told us that as far as she could tell Anthony was completely blind. He did not respond to light and dark or movement. The only way to know if he can see or what he can see is to wait and see if he tells us. The whole two months after surgery we asked for several consultations regarding Anthony's vision and each time they were afraid to give us the bad news. They would beat around the bush or be as vague as possible instead of just being honest. I am so thankful for Dr. Ikram and her care for our son. She saved his life by diagnosing the tumor and she bit the bullet when it came to his follow up. She is also the one who steered us toward VIPS for Anthony. She is our hero.

~Cierra, Anthony's Mom

Eliza

My daughter, Eliza, turned 8 in June. She and her sister are the light of our lives.

Eliza is a complicated kid. Over the years, there have been many challenges for all of us. Fortunately, there have been extraordinary teachers and therapists along the way to help us understand her and to help her understand the world. And, I cannot imagine my life without her smile, her ferocious hugs, and her laughter.

You wouldn't believe the things that people say to moms like me about children like Eliza. Some words buoyed my spirits when I despaired. Some words shocked me into action. The very best words readjusted my perspective. The very best words led me to truly appreciate my girl and our imperfect, messy, utterly fantastic life.

Once when Eliza was an infant, I remember talking to an Early Interventionist about taking her out with her older sister. We had just gotten a series of diagnoses including Cortical Visual Impairment, blindness, and Cerebral Palsy. I was nervous because I didn't know if going anywhere was the right thing to do. I think I was afraid she would break or something.



The teacher smiled at me and very gently said, "Eliza needs to see the world. And, the world needs to see her." Just like that I received a permanent perspective adjustment.

In her own way, she needs to see the world. The world needs to see her.

And so it goes.

~Rebecca, Eliza's Mom (& Development Director for VIPS-Indiana)

Evie

We brought our daughter Evie home from Ethiopia on Nov. 7, 2013. She was on a list of waiting children that could not easily be matched with a family due to medical condition. Along with a long list of other issues, she had been diagnosed with nystagmus.

One of the first visits we made after coming home was to Dr. Douglas. After his exam he sat me down and asked me if we knew how near-sighted she was. I said no, and he told me then that in addition to the nystagmus and strabismus, she was extremely near sighted. We had her fitted for glasses and it was amazing! A whole new world had literally opened up to her! I have a video of the moment the optometrist fit the glasses on her face and she saw me for the first time!

We love being Evie's family. She is a joy to our lives! It's thrilling to watch her learn and grow and experience the world around her for the first time!

~Sarah, Evie's Mom

Pyper

Today is October 31 and yes, I really did wait until the last day of the month to write this. I have been thinking all month what I want to say to other parents of children who are visually impaired. Where do I start -- we can all relate in so many ways to each other -- what can I say that other parents don't already know? Well the truth is there is not much, so instead I will take the time to encourage you.

You are the only one who speaks for your child; be their advocate, get them what they need -- it is hard work but so worth it in the end. If you don't speak for them then who will? I am in the process of getting a sign on my street that says visually impaired child at play. I took this to my councilman and he asked if Pyper's vision would ever get better and I told him no. His response was "I'm sorry." I responded there is nothing to be sorry about; she is a bright, happy, energetic little girl that needs no apologies. I am in no way sad for her or feel sorry for her and I don't want anyone else to feel sorry for her either. Instead we take each thing one day at a time and face it at full force to get the best results -- therapies, patching, training her to use her eyes, teaching her to be the best she can be -- and as long as she tries that is all that matters. Who has time to be sorry?

Next piece of advice is sleep! Sleep when that baby or two year old sleeps...haha yeah right, because my child does not sleep. We have tried everything. She sleeps when she sleeps. I have decided to stop trying to fix this problem and embrace it. Embrace it with love and cuddles, for it will only last for a moment, then she will be off to school and getting married. Life is too short to try to fix every little thing. Instead, enjoy moments, for they are all too short!



VIPS has been so good to us that sometimes I wonder will there be life after VIPS? What will we do when she has to go to school and is no longer protected under my wing? I will fight for her just as I fight for her now, I will just be more prepared and educated to do this, because of how well VIPS has prepared us and equipped us to adapt our lives to meet the needs of our visually impaired child. They have truly been a blessing to us. They have not only taught my daughter to see and use the vision that she does have, but they have opened my eyes as well and taught me to use the vision I have to open doors for her, to fight for her, to never take NO for an answer. I am her biggest advocate... I am her Mama and I am proud to say that she is my daughter. She has opened my eyes and heart in so many ways from the moment she was born. I love you, Pyper Arianna!

~Ashley, Pyper's Mom

Lola

To the parent or caregiver of a child with a new diagnosis of blindness or severe vision loss:

Let me start by saying it will be OK. Perhaps life won't be as you had originally envisioned, but eventually you'll be OK. I can say that to you because I've been in your shoes. My daughter, Lola was diagnosed with cortical visual impairment (CVI) when she was seven months old (along with other 'different-abilities'). Although, I always knew there was something wrong with her eyesight, hearing the vision loss diagnosis rocked me to the core. It was tough, but I remember someone telling me that there would be a day when I would wake up and the first thing on my mind wouldn't be CVI. And they were right.

I'm three and a half years into this special needs world and the thoughts aren't as consuming as they were in the beginning. I won't lie and say it's easy because it's not. Not only are you trying to be the best parent, grandparent or caregiver to this child, you are doing it without having an inkling as to what is right and what is wrong. How can one prepare herself for raising a child with such a profound sensory loss? There are no books like *What to Expect – Raising a Blind Child*. And even if there were, each child is so different. My daughter is legally blind, but she can see. She doesn't always understand what she sees, but she can see. How can you know how to help your child if you don't understand the complexities around the diagnosis? You go on instinct most of the time. That's why they are there, right? But when those instincts are just as confused, you need help solidifying the steps to take to be the best parent or caregiver you can be.

VIPS came into our lives when we were at the lowest point in the journey. Prior to our VIPS visits, everything we learned about CVI came from the internet. We felt isolated, alone and desperate for help. None of our friends had kids with vision loss or even special needs. None of our family members could give insight as to what we should be doing for Lola. But the dark cloud that hung so closely over our heads began to shine tidbits of sunlight when VIPS and TVI, Ms. Annie, came into our lives. We asked for help and thankfully, we received it.

Do you remember how you felt after your first visit with VIPS? While our first visit with Miss Annie was over two years ago, I still remember it as if it were yesterday. I can remember the relief I felt because I was finally talking to someone with expertise in vision loss. I remember feeling empowered because I was gaining insight, knowledge and guidance on how to be a mother of a child with a vision impairment. I felt appreciative because I was talking with someone who could help me understand my child and all of the idiosyncrasies that came along with her vision loss. I know I felt inspired when I went to Play and Learn groups, where I saw other children with similar diagnoses and

other parents who understood what it was like to raise a visually impaired child. While I would never assume I know how any of you feel, I would imagine that at least some of you can relate to many of the feelings I've shared.

Because we have children with blindness, severe vision loss or other different-abilities, we take on many more roles than just being parents or caregivers. We are cheerleaders, advocates, therapists, insurance fighters, and much more. I don't particularly like when people say "I don't know how you do it" because we do what any other parent or caregiver would do – we take care of our kids. It's Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month and in honor of this month, I'd like to recognize YOU as the parents and caregivers of children with blindness or severe vision loss. By spreading awareness about blindness and visual impairments, we are honoring our children. We are telling other families that they are not alone. We are giving hope that help is indeed out there. We are saying it will be OK.

I celebrate your roles as parents and caregivers. Thank you for letting VIPS be a part of your life.

~Meredith, Lola's Mom & VIPS-Indiana Family Services Coordinator

A Fabulous Family Retreat

The annual VIPS Family Retreat was held September 27 in Louisville with 17 families from two states attending. This all day experience was filled with fascinating speakers, stimulating ideas and exciting resources for parents, grandparents and other caretakers. Even breaks were interesting as participants "corralled" each other and the speakers to continue the discussion!

Knowledge is such a powerful tool and in the hands of a parent seeking answers, it can lead to all sorts of wonderful outcomes. Faces were filled with passion as information was exchanged; one or the other participant in a



The Turpin Family moved from Texas so their son could attend VIPS. They enjoyed their first VIPS Family Retreat.



conversation quickly scribbling down information was evidence that knowledge was indeed being shared. (Participants had a hard time ending conversations so the next speaker to be introduced!!)

Many thanks to the excellent speakers who gave of their talents and part of their Saturday to enlighten VIPS families. *Dr. Michelle Curtin* spoke on eating and sleep patterns; *Dr. Kara Mohr* spoke on family nutrition; *Meredith Howell* and *Kathy Mullen* discussed transition to school; *Meloday Prinkleton, PT*, and *Akim Nyormoi, OT*, worked with VIPS grandparents on PT and OT issues; *Keith Hass* discussed stress reduction and mindfulness; *Annie Hughes (with Kathy Mullen)* discussed VIPS and VI information; *Dr. Ashima Gupta* answered ophthalmological questions; *Jamie Weedman* and *Paige Maynard* worked on braille basics; *Pauletta Feldman* offered make-and-take projects; and *Maury Weedman* and *Barbara Merrick* discussed Orientation and Mobility.

Again this year, parents were treated to chair massages by *Sarah Flick Peters* and to Reiki treatments by *Kathy Jones*, *Carla McMillin* and *Jan Moseley*. Extra credit goes to *Martha Hack*, VIPS-Louisville Family Services Coordinator, for planning, organizing and surviving such a fantastic learning opportunity for parents!

Trick-or-Treat Fun at VIPS

VIPS-Central Kentucky Halloween Party

By Jill Haas, Family Services Coordinator

On October 24, The VIPS Central Kentucky annual Halloween Party was held. It was so much fun this year!!! The Delta Gamma Sorority from University of Kentucky collaborated with us to plan and supply the event complete with 12 activity stations, food, music, and even a pumpkin carving contest. There were over 60 Delta Gammas who came to treat our 40 VIPS family participants.

Some of the activities were Ghost Bowling, Face Painting, Spider Lollipop Grab and several fun Sensory Tubs including one full of pumpkin innards. This year we invited families from the Lexington Hearing and Speech program to join our families in the fun. Thanks to all that helped make the night so fun and spooky, including Gardenside Christian Church for the use of their giant gym.

Right: Our great volunteers from Delta Gamma at U of K.



Left: The Vail Family enjoyed all the festivities.

Below: Gabby plays a game with her brother.



Below: Miss Dixie shares a tender moment with Michelle.



KSB Family Weekend

The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Family Retreat was held on September 19-21 at the Center for Courageous Kids in Scottsville, KY. Several VIPS families were in attendance. The focus of this year's retreat was music. Guest presentations were made by Bobby Falk, percussion; Wade Honey, piano; and Lee Puckett, guitar. The families not only got involved in hands-on activities in experiencing, making and moving/dancing to music but also participated in the many leisure activities offered at the Center.



Brooklyn prepares to ride a pony.

VIPS-Louisville Trunk-n-Treat

The annual VIPS-Louisville Halloween party was filled with 13 families and hordes of assorted scary and not-so-scary costumed characters. The little ghouls and boys were treated to lunch and to making edible witch's hats out of ice cream cones and cookies. The biggest treat of all was to load up their bags with assorted treats from the 15 or so trunks of cars as they enjoyed the beautiful weather! A special speaker from the American Printing House for the Blind briefly outlined Braille Tales, a way for families to obtain print books with Braille overlays, for their VIPS children under six. (Visit www.aph.org for more info.)



Left: Pyper, Sarah, and Addison made a darling threesome.

Right: Vivi, with mom Kaycie (center), got some treats from Ms. Paige.



Playing and Learning with Friends at PAL

Play and Learn (PAL) Class is held each Friday at VIPS-Louisville. It is designed for VIPS families with children birth to five years old, who would like to have time to play together in a safe and supportive environment and to meet other VIPS families. Though most children come with mom or grandma, dads, siblings and grandpas are welcome.

We generally have some play time in a classroom, the sensory room, and Kids Town or the playground as well as opportunities for art and music. The children have a lot of fun playing together,

learning to explore the world around them, and creating their own projects that will add to the world. The adults enjoy time socializing with other families with whom they can relate. The group meets on Friday from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. For more info contact Staci Maynard at 502-498-2923. PAL will not meet on the following dates:

- Friday, December 12
- Friday, December 26
- Friday, January 2

VIPS-Indiana Hosts First PAL Class ...

VIPS-Indiana hosted a Play and Learn (PAL) class on Monday, September 8 at the Indiana Interchurch Center, the home of the new VIPS Indiana office! It was the first PAL for every family in attendance! They enjoyed subs generously donated by Jersey Mike's Subs in Indianapolis, created a fall-themed make-and-take book, participated in circle time with Annie Hughes and received Orientation & Mobility (O&M) tips from our O&M Specialist, Debby Eades.

OT and VIISA participant Lisa Pearcy engages Breanna with rhythm instruments after a group sing-along.



Families took turns at the make-and-take table to work on a tactile book for their child called "Fun Feeling Leaves."

... Celebrates Our Third Birthday ...

We also celebrated our 3rd birthday as VIPS-Indiana. We would like to thank those who attended our celebration: our VIPS-Indiana families; three Project VIISA training participants, including Lisa Pearcy, Kelly Johnson and Shannon West (who is also a VIPS Indiana Advisory Board member); and additional

Indiana Advisory Board member, Julia Slaymaker, for making it such a special afternoon. We would also like to thank Tim Fleischmann of Jersey Mike's Subs as well as the Meijer Corporation for donating a gift card that helped pay for refreshments. VIPS-Indiana has come a long way and grown so much in three short years!

VIPS-Indiana Advisory Board member Julia Slaymaker holds up a birthday cake made by Meredith Howell, Family Services Coordinator, that celebrates the 3rd Anniversary of the Indiana office.



... And Reaches Children Through Home Visits.



Left: Sisters Callie and Kaylee LOVE playing in the bean tub. Callie enjoys the sensory aspects of the experience while Kaylee works on pouring.

At right: Trevor's favorite page in this tactile book is the "sticky bug" page!



Left: Bella sat up very nicely for a long time because she loved playing with things on the play frame.

VIPS-Louisville Classroom News

Two Day 2s

The Two Day 2s celebrated fall by learning their shapes as they placed cut-out shapes on a tree, simulating leaves of the tree. They decorated jack-o-lanterns as they practiced trick or treating in the classroom and then went trick or treating in the VIPS administrative offices. They made "turkey jars" filled with trail mix and made handprints of friendship. All in all, they had a very busy fall!

Active Hands and Active Minds at Kids Town Preschool

By Staci Maynard, Kids Town Preschool Teacher

The 2014-2015 school year at Kids Town preschool got off to a kinetic start. Each of the three classes had a beginning enrollment of six or seven with more students expected to enroll by mid-year. We are excited to be one of the sites selected to pre-test the American Printing House for the Blind Building on Patterns preschool curriculum which is currently in development. The classes have also shared some valuable experiences at school and off-site.

Rachel Schmitt and Megan Wilson, two dental hygiene students from the University of Louisville, visited Kids Town on Wednesday, September 17, to discuss children's dental habits with all of the preschool students. They made a follow-up visit on Wednesday, October 22 to help the children take better care of their teeth. Some of the classrooms carried the topic of hygiene over into the classroom, leading to my class discovering their favorite new song about brushing teeth: Sesame Street's "Brushy Brush" song. We also practiced the proper circular brushing motion using stained hardboiled eggs.



And they're off at the Bill Robey Track & Field Games at KSBI!

On Wednesday, October 1, the preschool classes ventured out on their first field trip of the year to Kentucky School for the Blind's annual Bill Roby Track and Field Games. Prior to the start of the games, the students were able to explore the track and long jump pit. They participated in the thirty-meter dash and the standing long jump. Everyone enjoyed a picnic lunch, exploring the police helicopter, running, and playing in the long jump's sand pit.



Top left: Ahmed and Maxson prepare to jump as a team. Top right: Lainie is caught in mid air. Left: Caden checks out the police helicopter.



Kids Town Preschool was given the opportunity to participate in the White Cane Day celebration at the Louisville Zoo on Wednesday, October 15. White Cane Day is a day set aside to celebrate the achievements and independence of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Though the weather was gloomy, the children's spirits were bright as they explored different animal pelts and shells, petted animals such as a wallaby and a chinchilla, and sang along to Frozen songs.



White Cane Day at the Louisville Zoo.

We would like to extend our thanks to staff members and parents whose participation in field trips allows us to give each child a richer and safer experience. A special thank you goes out to Mr. Maury (Weedman), who faithfully drives the van for us to go on our trips. The preschoolers enjoyed Trick or Treating around the VIPS Louisville office on October 30.



Princesses Sarah and Vivi, pretty fairy Layla, and Ninja Turtle Mason enjoyed trick or treating around the VIPS-Louisville Office.



Apart from our special guests and field trips, the classrooms have been doing "their own thing," promoting learning in the manner that best fits each individual teacher and group of students. The Orange Room explored the parking lot and learned how to be safe there. They also learned about quiet and loud sounds, made their own instruments, and read "Quiet Loud" by Leslie Patricelli.

Ms. Paige and her class would like to thank Jamie Weedman for coming to read to them and for brailleing books. The Red and Green Rooms have been using topics such as All About Me and Fall (apples, pumpkins, leaves, etc.) as starting points to work on all types of skills from creating books about each student to counting leaves to expanded core curriculum skills like learning to use a dome magnifier, developing cooking skills, and learning how to recognize and handle emotions appropriately in social situations. Hopefully I'm not just speaking for myself, but we are so excited to be back to school. I have great expectations for what this year holds.



Above: Cannon looks for his name on the Smartboard. Left: Evie draws with scented markers. Right: Ms. Gretchen shows Bronson a Swing Cell, which shows the relationship between the braille cell and keys on the braille writer..





New Arrivals

VIPS is pleased to welcome these new additions to the VIPS family:

VIPS-Louisville

Aubrey – Aubrey, 7 months, Glencoe, KY
 Brettly – 23 months, Orleans, IN
 Brooklyn – 29 months, Harned, KY
 Caleb – 31 months, Louisville, KY
 Jaxon – 15 months, Fairdale, KY
 Kaylee – 15 months, Bowling Green, KY
 Kendall – 6 months, Louisville, KY
 Ian – 13 months, Louisville, KY
 Levi – 27 months Louisville, KY
 Maxwell – 4 months, Louisville, KY
 Samuel – 6 months, Louisville, KY
 Segen – 5 years, Horse Cave, KY
 Trevin – 9 months, Cave City, KY

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Aubrey – 19 months, Glencoe, KY
 Elaijah – 34 months, Lexington, KY
 Ella – 9 months, Williamsburg, KY
 Lorelei – 29 months, Lexington, KY

VIPS-Indiana

Autumn - 21 months, Spencer, IN
 Avett – 32 months, IN
 Bella - 19 months, Terre Haute, IN
 Denise - 25 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Heaven - 15 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Jenna - 11 months, Zionsville, IN
 Maria - 33 months, Bloomington, IN
 Rosemary - 21 months, Danville, IN
 Sophia - 12 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Trevor - 32 months, Linton, IN
 William - 30 months, Bloomington, IN

Help for Santa's Helpers:

Christmas Toy Suggestions from VIPS Teachers



Mary Lesousky, TVI, DD, VIPS-Louisville

I recommended this several years ago however I continue to use these with my kiddos. A set of play dish sets with cutlery are a great item to purchase for your preschooler. They can be used to encourage imaginative pretend play skills. Your child can be encouraged to set a table, put like color dishes together and feed their dolls or pets. When paired with some pretend groceries/food your little one is sure to be set up for a fun filled day of playing. There are several different sets of dishes available at local toy stores for under \$20.00.

Paige Maynard, TVI (in training), VIPS-Louisville

Is Santa bringing your little sugarplum textured books for teaching tactile skills? Maybe his bag holds a toy piano to encourage him to use his hands? What if your child has low vision (a visual acuity between 20/70 and 20/200 or a visual field loss) and you hope for him to learn visual efficiency skills? You might also want Santa's bag to be filled with toys that help your child learn to use the vision he has in the best way possible.

A child with low vision needs to understand how to use tools for looking. **Linking rings** are a great toy to help your child learn to look through an opening, building skills for using a monocular (which can be prescribed by your low vision specialist). The **"Bright Starts Lots of Links"** from amazon.com is a steal, at only \$4.39! When you encourage your child to hold a ring up to his eye to play the "I see you!" game, you'll be helping him begin to develop an understanding of using tools for looking.

Don't hesitate to slip a **magnifier** in your child's stocking, or tie one on a gift in place of a bow. After all, your local dollar

store may carry them for \$3 or less. Exploring a magnifier at a young age can help your child build an understanding that it is used to help her see objects better. After Christmas is through, a magnifier is a great tool to slide in your diaper bag or purse for on-the-spot learning at a doctor's office or in a long line at the grocery.

Word swatters, available from amazon.com, and ranging in price from about \$9-20, can help your child learn to use her vision well when reading. A word swatter can assist your child in searching systematically for letters, words, and pictures. Your child can also use it to visually track a line of text or pictures from left to right.



Red Room's Santa List 2014 **Staci Maynard, TVI (in training), VIPs-Louisville**

It's that time of year again: time to make the ultimate list for Santa. If you're unsure what to get your child or grandchild as a gift, here are a few ideas to hopefully steer you in the right direction. Just remember that no one knows your child better than you, so take these suggestions and alter them as needed to find something that will interest and help your child in a fun way. I have tried to categorize the toys according to certain needs or interests your child might have as well as providing a list of some of my favorite websites for finding toys and products that are appropriate for children with visual impairments. Unless otherwise indicated, most of the toys should be available at major retailers or through various online stores.



If your child needs proprioceptive input, which helps with the sense of one's own place in space, or if he or she just likes to be on the move, your child might like a **Plasma Car**. This riding toy usually retails for between

\$50 and \$70 at retailers like Amazon, Wal-Mart, Target, and Toys R Us. Students at the Kids Town preschool enjoy maneuvering around on this toy.

If your child needs vestibular input to help with a sense of balance, you might want to try a toy like **Rody Inflatable Hopping Horse**, which usually costs between \$40 and \$50 online.

If you would like to develop your child's tactile discrimination to improve the information they can distinguish with their sense of touch, there are many entertaining options. Two of the most economical toys are **play dough with accessories** (many of these sets can be purchased for \$20 or less) and **kinetic sand**,



which is usually about \$20. At VIPs, we regularly use **sensory tables and ball pits**, which can be purchased on a smaller scale for \$50 and up. **"Teachable Touchables"** from Educational Insights (\$20-30) and **"Ruff's House Teaching Tactile Set"** by Learning Resources (\$30) are useful and potentially fun texture matching games.

If your child is an infant or young toddler, look for toys that have high visual contrast, toys that will encourage movement, and toys that promote sensory development. The brands Lamaze and Sassy Baby have a number of high contrast toys available. **"Kids Preferred Amazing Baby Sound Balls"** (around \$16 on Amazon) are colorful, textured, and make different sounds. The **"Wimmer Ferguson Crawl & Discover Mat"** (\$50 on www.manhattantoy.com) is visually friendly as it is mostly black and white. It also has features to explore such as flaps, different textures, a mirror, and teethers.

For the musical child, some of my favorite toys include the **"Melissa and Doug Band in a Box"** (around \$20) and **"Symphony in B"** by B. Toys (around \$40).

The artistic child might like scented markers. (My class likes the **"Washable Scented Dabber Dot Markers"** by Dabscent which are about \$20 for a set of 10. These dabbers can also be used with American Printing House for the Blind's (APH) **"Quick-Draw Paper"** to make raised drawings.) There are scented or tactile stickers like APH's **"Jelly Bean Jungle Scent Sticker Pack"** or **"Feel 'n Peel Stickers"** (\$16-24). Crayola also makes a product called **"Color Me a Song"** (approximately \$30) that plays music only while the child is coloring. Of course, anything that can make 3-dimensional art, such as different kinds of clays, is ideal for children with visual impairments to explore art.

Puzzles and stringing are good activities to promote fine motor development. Some good options include **"Smart Snacks Trail Mix & Match"** by Learning Resources (\$20) and puzzles by Melissa and Doug. Some of my favorite **Melissa and Doug puzzles** include their sound puzzles, some of which can be found with braille (on Amazon or Hearmore.com), their Touch and Feel puzzles, and their latches board. Most of these products can be found for \$12-20.

If your child is very active or you would like him or her to be more so, try some **sound adapted sports equipment**. Various options exist. The **"Little Tikes Character Sports Talk to Me Soccer"** set (\$69 on <http://babymart.com.sg/>) counts when the child makes a goal and also makes noise when it is bumped. Paired with a ball that beeps or jingles, this could be fun for soccer or to use for goal ball. **"Magic Moves Electronic Wand"** by Educational Insights (around \$15-20) promotes activity by having the child make fun movements that follow the directions given by the wand.

Some *items that might help with practical living skills* include a **vibrating toothbrush** (\$6 and up, some of which also play a song for the appropriate length of time for brushing teeth) and a **Mate Stay-Put Mat & Plate** by Skip Hop (about \$20) to help young children locate everything needed for eating. Also to make bath time more fun and educational, I recommend bath toys by ALEX.

If your child happens to have an American Girl doll, there is now a **white cane available to fit an American Girl doll**. The cane for these dolls can be found on Etsy at <https://www.etsy.com/listing/184993108/blind-cane-for-american-girl-18-doll>.

Two of our favorite toys in the red room are the book **The Sensesational Alphabet** (\$30 online), which incorporates sound, tactile elements, print, and braille, and **Counting Cookies** by Learning Resources (\$16-20). The former is useful for literacy development and the latter is a good toy for practicing counting and one-to-one correspondence.



Some of my favorite places to shop for appropriate toys for children with visual impairments include:

- **American Printing House for the Blind** (shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Home_10001-11051) -- APH sells various books and developmentally appropriate toys under their Early Childhood section. Located at 1839 Frankfort Avenue, 40206 in Louisville, you can also visit this leading resource for materials useful to children and adults who are blind/visually impaired, some of which are sold in a small area off the main lobby.
- **BrailleGifts.com** (www.braillegifts.com/site/881220/page/467986). This company, founded by parents of two children who are blind or visually impaired, specializes in braille embroidery and gifts for people with visual impairments. They sell numerous products including games and toys.
- **Fat Brain Toys** (www.fatbraintoy.com/special_needs/vision_impairment.cfm) has a special page with toys that are appropriate for children with visual impairments.
- **Pinterest** (www.pinterest.com) is not a retail site, but contains numerous great projects you can do for or with your child. If you search under topics like "preschool," "visual impairment," "sensory," etc., you can find ideas for topics such as how to make your own light box, creative ideas for sensory play, ways to make your own play dough, and on and on.
- **Seedlings** (www.seedlings.org) is a great organization that offers reasonably priced braille books as well as a few adapted toys (Braille ABC blocks for \$30; Melissa and Doug Chunk Shapes Puzzle with Braille for \$9).
- **Wonder Baby** (www.wonderbaby.org/articles/really-fun-toys-blind-toddlers) is a site funded by Perkins School for

the Blind which has a wealth of information for parents who have a child with visual impairments. This particular article discusses appropriate toys, but there are many other helpful features you should check out, including a number of do-it-yourself projects you can make for your child.

Annie Hughes, TVI, VIPS-Indiana

For your little drummer boy or girl I recommend musical instruments! Most children love **simple musical instruments**, and for children who are visually impaired and especially tuned in to auditory input, they are a favorite. Playing drums or rhythm instruments is just plain fun, but there are also numerous skills that can be developed including: interacting with others, moving the body, developing rhythm, building listening skills, learning to repeat patterns, improving auditory memory, finger strengthening, using fingers in isolation, using both hands, and learning cause and effect and rotating the wrist.

For very young children and those with multiple impairments, the **Fisher Price Crawl Along Musical Bongo Drums** for around \$10.99 plus shipping and handling and available on eBay and other online sites is a good choice. It is easily activated, (light touch), and includes lights and sounds. The **Little Tykes Tap-a-Tune Play Drum** for \$11.99 is a good, basic drum and has 2 ways to play...as a basic drum or by scraping the drum sticks along textured washboard sounds around the sides.

Want to add a beat to bath-time fun? The **Little Tykes Seaside Bath Band** for \$19.99 will do the trick. It includes 8 waterproof instruments, and everything stores inside the sea turtle drum.

For a complete set of rhythm instruments, here are two choices: 1) the **Toys 'R' Us Drum of Instruments** for \$24.99 which includes 2 cymbals, 2 castanets, a horn, a tambourine, 2 maracas, a whistle, 2 drumsticks, and a large drum, which stores everything inside; and 2) the **First Act Percussion Pack** at \$34.99. It is high end in terms of price, but includes instruments of solid wood including a tambourine, tone block with mallet, castanet with thumb handle, egg Shaker, and bongo drum with a hand strap. And last, but not least, if you have a little girl with low vision who is hooked on the music of "Frozen," the **Disney Frozen Magical Music Parade** at \$14.99 includes a tambourine, a click-klock, and a jingle tap.

Whether you play along to a favorite CD with your child or make your own music, it will be important to initially make this a joint activity so you can model how to use the instruments. And of course, when the concert is over, help your child learn to put the instruments away and return them to a special place on his shelf so he will know where to find his instruments the next time he, (or she), is ready to be your "Little Drummer Boy."

Notes of Interest



Meredith Howell, VIPS-Indiana Family Services Coordinator, found a good **cortical visual impairment (CVI) blog** called CVI Teacher. The blog's author, Ellen Cadigan Mazel, has an extensive background in teaching children with visual impairments, deafblindness and cortical visual impairment. Her blog contains detailed information about CVI for both professionals working with children who have CVI as well as for parents of children with CVI. There are categories ranging from what a child with CVI might see, what a professional should take for a proper CVI assessment, to why kids with CVI have trouble with making eye contact and much more. Meredith's own daughter, Lola, has CVI and she says it has given her insight and perspective on her daughter's vision impairment. Go to <https://cviteacher.wordpress.com/>.

One of our parents sent a link to an informative article about **stem cells used to repair retinas** from NPR. Go to: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/10/14/346174070/embryonic-stem-cells-restore-vision-in-preliminary-human-test>.

National Braille Press has a wonderful **ReadBooks! Program** in which families with young blind children, birth to age 7, can receive a FREE book bag by calling 800-548-7323, x 520. Only one bag per child is allowed so if you have already received yours, this does not apply. There are bags for: birth - 3 years; 4 - 5 years; and 6 - 7 years.

Short **summaries of recently published articles on subjects relevant to anyone interested in blindness and visual impairments** are on the Kentucky Instructional Materials Resource Center (KIMRC) webpage under the Additional Resources subheading -- http://www.ksb.kyschools.us/content_page.aspx?cid=60. The articles are posted as Access to Curriculum Articles and Vision Impairment articles and usually change on a monthly basis. Here is a sampling of some of the articles that were recently posted:

- **Going Screenless with YouTube: How Blind Users Experience the Service**
- **12 Rules of Blind Etiquette**
- **Using iPads with Students Who Have CVI or Multiple Impairments**

Just in time for the major gift-giving season, the Hadley School for the Blind is offering **braille holiday cards and gift tags**. You may view and order online at www.hadley.edu/holidaycard.

While we're on the subject of the Hadley School for the Blind, a wonderful resource for distance learning relevant to blindness for individuals and family members, they are now offering **webinars on several relevant topics** such as Cooking and Entertaining, Business and Employment and Accessibility and the Latest Technology. They continue to offer interesting classes such as Braille Music Reading, Basic Nemeth Code and Braille and Your Baby or Toddler. Go to www.hadley.edu for more information.

The keynote speaker at the American Printing House for the Blind Annual Meeting was Dr. Joshua Miele, a scientist who has spent over 25 years developing innovative information-accessibility solutions for people who are blind. He invented **YouDescribe, a free website** that allows anyone to describe any YouTube video and instantly share that described video with the world. He also developed **Tactile Map Automated Production (TMAP)** which uses free GIS data and off-the-shelf embossing technology to allow blind people to download and emboss customized tactile street maps of any location in the US.

A new resource in the VIPS office that has created a stir is a new book **Raising a Child with Albinism** published by the National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation. Both the book and the organization are valuable resources for dealing with issues associated with albinism.

As mentioned in the VIPS Louisville Halloween party article, the American Printing House for the Blind will provide **free print-braille books every other month to children** residing in the U.S. who are considered blind or visually impaired and aged five or under. To apply, visit www.aph.org/BrailleTales.

Thank You For Your Service

Brandon Lovett, Vance's Dad, recently was recognized as a Hometown Hero at a Cincinnati Reds game. He has a purple heart for injuries sustained in Iraq and also served in Afghanistan. We greatly appreciate your sacrifices on our behalf.



VIPS Staff News

We are sorry to report that Laura Leigh Logsdon, VIPS Two Day 2s teacher, is no longer in that position due to conflicts with her son's schedule. We miss her smiles!

Marchelle Hampton is the new teacher of the Two Day 2s. She comes to VIPS with years of experience teaching pre-K classes in local churches and working at the Home of the Innocents. She trained in early childhood and elementary education but cut short her formal education to begin her functional one, raising her two children. Marchelle was a long-time supporter of Special Olympics and of the disability community when she and her husband learned of an infant with multiple disabilities at the Home of the Innocents. They decided he was a perfect fit for their family and adopted him, providing her with even more functional education!

Marchelle and her husband of 37 years suffered a great tragedy this summer when their youngest son passed away rather unexpectedly. In the midst of her pain, she realized that she needed to refocus her life. So when her friend Gretchen Cutrer, the JCPS instructional assistant in Ms. Paige's Preschool classroom, mentioned a vacancy at VIPS, Marchelle found it just the comfort she needed.

In addition to their two surviving children, Marchelle and her husband have four grandchildren, three of whom live in China with their daughter, an English teacher. Their other son lives in Louisville, works as a mental health therapist along with his father, and also has a child.



Marchelle with student Alex.

Kind Gifts of Time Treasure and Talent

VIPS-Louisville

A group of high school *students from Kentucky Country Day school (KCD)* volunteered for a morning of service, making materials for classroom use and preparing parent intake folders. Thanks so much to *Zohayr Asad, Connor Caudill, Colin Ferguson, Annie Harrison, Melissa Hong, Kesric Mason, Asher Rosenblatt, Mick Smith, Alisya Solankni, and their teacher Jenni Williams.*

Thanks to volunteer *Emme Metry* from Assumption High School who helped put together packets for the VIISA training.

Amanda Coomer from Indiana University Southeast has been helping with our monthly Friday Friends. She has volunteered with us since her high school days!

The *Beechmont Women's Club* was busy raising funds and awareness for VIPS during the month of October. *Deanna Allen, Ryan Hack* from St. Stephen Martyr School and *Ben Toebe* from Newburg Middle School volunteered at the *Beechmont Women's Club's Carnival* that benefitted VIPS on Saturday, October 18th. Thanks to them and to the wonderful ladies from the BWC for taking such an interest in VIPS!

Speaking of the *Beechmont Women's Club*, their youngest member, *Ashley Buren*, a VIPS mom as well as VIPS Instructional Assistant, sponsored a Bunco night fund-raiser at VIPS Kids Town Preschool, similar to the one the Club sponsored last year. Ashley, along with her mother, *Vicki May*, and her aunt, *Michele Vories*, organized, publicized and ran the actual bunco games with all proceeds going to VIPS! Ashley and Michele donated all of the prizes, set up tables, prepared food and did hours worth of leg-work to pull off this event which raised \$556! Thanks to all who helped but especially to these three wonderful volunteers!

Special thanks to *Julie Geren* who donated toys for the preschool.

We appreciate the donation of a switch from the family of VIPS graduate *Max Cawthon*. *Clint Otis*, a faithful volunteer since he was in high school, donated basketballs to the children in the Kids Town Preschool.

The *Sullivan Exceptional Child Education department* (headed by *Vicke Bowman*) donated school supplies to help the preschoolers begin the school year.

Many, many thanks to the following volunteers for the Family Retreat -- your help is so appreciated! Volunteers included *Deanna Allen, Rachel Ballard, Marissa Burgin, Amanda Coomer, Cindy Costa, Jon Daniels, Sara DeVore, Catherine Dirksen, Sarah Flick, Lauren Garrett, Ryan Hack, Theresa Hall, Kristina Harrison, Kathy Jones, Jessica Kubac, Laura Leigh Logsdon, Carla McMillan, Allison Owen, Nick Owen, Patrick Owen, Haley Schnell, Karen Spath, Angela Tran, Matt Venderpool, Carol Vories, Michele Vories, Joy Wall, Liz Wall, Jamie Weedman, Alyssa Weston, and Emilee Weston.* Thanks to the following VIPS staff members who helped with retreat responsibilities: *Gretchen Cutrer, Carol Dahmke, Ashley Emmons, Pauletta Feldman, Dani Harper, Annie Hughes, Meredith Howell, Mary Lesousky, LaRhonda Locke-Daniels, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Barbara Merrick, Jan Moseley, Kathy Moulden, Kathy Mullen, Diane Nelson, Beth Owens, Alysia Rue, Kim Shippey, and Maury Weedman.*

We have two great classroom volunteers now. The perennially wonderful **Fran Woodward** continues to volunteer once a week with the 2 Day 2s. Thanks for your calming presence! **Deanna Scoggins**, a retired first grade teacher from the KY School for the Blind, is coming once a week to work with children on Braille skills. Thanks to VIPS grad **Jamie Weedman** for brailleing books for our preschoolers to use in the classroom.

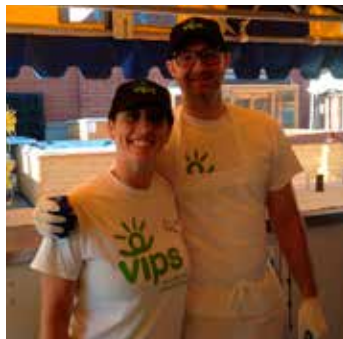
The Dr. Mark Lynn Stampede for VIPS is one of our largest undertakings and requires many volunteers. Thanks so much to the following intrepid souls who were such a help to us: **Mary Bays, Suzann Bays, Bill Brangers, Kathryn Brangers, Steve Deeley, Ashley Erwin, Rob Erwin, Jennifer Greener, Ryan Hack, Terie Harper, Whooper Harper, Brandi Hitzelberger, Katrina Hutchins, Emme Metry, Clint Otis, Rebecca Smyth, Glen Stuckel, Christy Vance, Michael Vance and Mark Webster.** Also the faithful group from **Middletown Christian Church** helped us out by sharing their time and energy with us. Also helping at the Stampede were **VIPS staff members and their families including: Executive Director Diane Nelson, her mother Aggie Nelson, brother Ed Nelson, sister Kathy Birchler and her daughter Shelby, sister Stephanie Dobson and children Josh and Lily, sister Eileen Smith, and sister Valerie Toles; Gretchen Cutrer and husband Ken; LaRhonda Daniels and sons Jon and Michael; Terry DeLuca; Ashley Emmons; Beth Krebs; Mary Lesousky; Paige Maynard and husband Chad; Staci Maynard; Barbara Merrick; Kathy Moulden and husband Brad; Beth Owens; Alysia Rue; Kim Shippey; and Mary Smyth.**

Volunteers with the Halloween Trunk-N-Treat included **Mary Bays and Suzann Bays** both from Presentation Academy, **Ryan Hack, Marissa Burgin and Angela Grant.** Thanks for your help!

For assisting with office work, thanks to **Gayle Block**, Kathy Mullen's aunt, for helping us maintain our donor database and to **Deanna Allen** who has been doing various office tasks.

VIPS-Indiana

Every year the **Washington Township Lions Club** in Indianapolis sells hot, buttery Indiana corn at their Corn Stand at the Indiana State Fair. VIPS was invited to work at the Corn Stand and the hourly wage earned by volunteers would go directly to VIPS. Family Services Coordinator, **Meredith Howell and her husband, Rob,** worked a shift at the Corn Stand. **Washington Township Lions Club President, Ron Bingham** generously donated six of his shifts to VIPS. VIPS received a check for \$331.25 for the Corn Stand efforts. We thank Lion Ron for his support!



Meredith & Rob Howell

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Students from the University of Kentucky participated in the **For Unity and Service In Our Neighborhood**, also known as UK FUSION. It's a one-day event that occurs every year in the month of August. The purpose of UK FUSION is to give back to the community, gain an appreciation for community service, and spend quality time with individuals in the community and fellow students. This year, students involved in UK FUSION visited VIPS – Central Kentucky and helped with various tasks including clipping the hedges, moving heavy furniture, cleaning the windows, administrative tasks, and cleaning the facility. With a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle any task no matter how daunting, they quickly exhausted VIPS' list of projects! Many thanks to **Taylor Tackett, David Fenz, Christina Widrig, Elaine Murner, Sydney Yates, Audrey Burnett, and Brittany Guido.**



Happenings -- VIPS-Indiana Operation Chili for Children

The 3rd Annual Operation Chili for Children fundraiser was held on Friday, October 17, at the National Guard Armory in Bloomington. The event is produced by volunteers from the **Kiwanis Club of Bloomington, Indiana National Guard Family Readiness Group, Circle K at Indiana University (IU) and IU Army ROTC.** We are so appreciative of the hard work that these volunteers put in to help raise funds and awareness. Proceeds from Operation Chili for Children will be divided between VIPS-Indiana, Indiana Operation: Military Kids and Kiwanis Youth Programs.

Over 170 people attended and many others volunteered at the event. The event included a bake sale, silent auction, face painting and a balloon artist. There was a formal presentation

of colors of the United States of America by Indiana University's Army ROTC and the national anthem was sung by IU student Marce Chastain.

VIPS-Indiana hosted the bake sale with the help of **Delta Gamma Sorority Sisters**. The bake sale brought in over \$160! A big thank you to the Delta Gammas and all who donated baked goods for the event! The Silent Auction raised \$257 and there were cash donations of \$126. Although the final numbers for ticket sales and expenses are not yet in, we feel the event was certainly a success!

Julia Slaymaker, Indiana Advisory Board member and retired TVI, shares information about VIPS during Operation Chili for Children.



Federation of the Blind

On October 11th, Annie Hughes and Meredith Howell gave a presentation to the Indiana Federation for the Blind (IFB) at the Indiana State Library. Annie spoke about the past, present and future of VIPS in Indiana and expanded on a potential collaboration between the blind adults in the Federation and the parents of blind children served by VIPS. Meredith elaborated on the impact VIPS had on her family's life and on her daughter Lola, a VIPS child.

23Blast Premiere Was a Blast!

During Terry DeLuca's first week of work as the new VIPS-Central KY Community Relations/Development Director, she received an amazing phone call from a Lexington community leader. He offered to make VIPS the beneficiary of the proceeds of a movie premiere scheduled to take place in Lexington!!

And what a night it turned out to be! The Premiere of 23Blast at the Kentucky Theater on October 23 was a star-studded event. Hollywood was represented by actors **Stephen Lang, Mark Hapka, Bram Hoover and Max Adler**. Also attending were **Director/Producer, Dylan Baker**, who also co-starred; **Producer,**

Gary Donatelli; Screen Writer, Toni Hoover; Executive Producers, Misook Doolittle and Brent Ryan Green; and Producer Chris Bueno.

The inspirational movie tells the story of **Travis Freeman**, the man who was stricken at the age of 12 by a virus that destroyed his optic nerves and left him completely blind. His passion and love for the gridiron was so great that his football coach at Corbin High School, Coach Farris, made Travis the center on the team and he led his Corbin Redhounds to the state playoffs.

The premiere was also attended by UK basketball coach **John Calipari**, UK football coach **Mark Stoops**, and UK Athletic Director **Mitch Barnhart** along with the VIPS Boards of Directors from Louisville and Lexington; VIPS staff; community leaders; and the general public. It was reminiscent of Hollywood's "Oscar night" with green carpet, versus the red carpet, on which the guests could walk and be photographed with the stars before viewing the premiere. The theatre was almost sold out with approximately 760 people in attendance. This was a very successful evening for all – especially for VIPS. The community awareness for the organization was priceless.

Afterwards, corporate sponsors and guests enjoyed entertainment next door at The Livery where they could meet and talk to the real-life star himself, Travis Freeman.

What Travis wanted captured in the movie is very similar to what we hope and aspire to capture in our message to our VIPS parents: to keep their child's hopes alive, to have the spirit of overcoming obstacles in life and not allowing a tragedy or birth defect to hold the child back from living her dream. Helen Keller said it best, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." Travis certainly had a vision. He has told his story in his recently published autobiography, **Lights Out, Living In A Sightless World.**

We hope and dream for all of our VIPS children that they too will have vision and dreams. They deserve the world.



Travis (center) with family and movie crew.

12th Annual Stampede for VIPS



On Saturday, September 13th hundreds of runners and walkers gathered at Papa John's Cardinal Stadium for the 12th annual Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS 5K. This event showcases the ability of blind or visually impaired runners who compete for cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in a men's and women's division. This year, VIPS grad Paul Frazier came in first among the men in the visually impaired division, and former VIPS Music Therapist Cindy Schaffner came in first in the women's VI division. The course began at the stadium, wound through the brand new Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn Soccer Stadium and finished on the Cards' football field to the beats of the River City Drum Corp.

The smallest racers then took to the football field for a Kids Fun Run. Many stuck around for fun times in the Ford Motor Company Kids Corral, where they enjoyed games, a balloon animal artist and live bluegrass music.



Above: VIPS grad Paul Frazier takes first place in the men's VI division, followed by Dave Wilkinson (right) and his sighted guide in second place. Below: Team Addy came out in force!



Nearly 500 participants joined VIPS in raising almost \$68,000! Tremendous thanks to Dr. Mark & Cindy Lynn for supporting both the Stampede and VIPS, our Platinum Sponsor Ford Motor Company, our Presenting Sponsors Papa John's, Louisville Downtown Lions Club and Print Tex and the many other sponsors that made this day a huge success. Also special appreciation goes to everyone who participated, especially the VIPS families that gathered teams, and to all of our race volunteers.



Left: Levi gets an assist from his mom across the finish line. Right: Grace runs with joy into the waiting arms of her dad. Below: Addy prepares to sing the national anthem.



In Memoriam

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memories of:

Sophia Crawford

daughter of Jamie and Jacob Crawford of Lexington, KY
who passed away on September 17, 2014
at the age of almost three years;

~and~

Dominic Henry

son of Shana Cubert of Frankfort, KY,
who passed away on October 18, 2014
at the age of nine months;

~and~

Isabella Flick*

daughter of Samantha Flick of New Albany, IN
who passed away on November 4, 2014
at the age of two years;

~and~

Erika Johnson

mother of former VIPS child LeEdward,
who passed away on October 12, 2014
at the age of 35;

~and~

Judy Chambers

grandmother of former VIPS child Marissa
and a VIPS volunteer,
who passed away on October 14, 2014 at the age of 73;

Our hearts go out to their loved ones.

**Isabella is shown with mother and father at the Family Retreat on page 5.*

What Your Donation Can Provide

\$55 - provides a child with a hand-held magnification device

\$125 - Provides one hour of Orientation & Mobility training

\$250 - Provides one in-home instructional visit

\$600 - Provides a student with a classroom iPad or other assistive technology

Ways You Can Help VIPS This Holiday Season

Holiday Giving

We encourage you to remember VIPS in your year-end charitable giving. You may designate which office in which you would like your donation to be attributed to (Louisville, Central Kentucky or Indiana) and your gift will help children who live in those areas. You also have the option to establish a monthly gift to VIPS! If you would like to donate to VIPS, visit www.vips.org or return the enclosed donor envelope. Happy holidays and best wishes for a wonderful 2015!



Give the Gift of Education this Holiday Season

Give BHG & Help VIPS!

From now until Dec. 24, you can purchase gift certificates at GiveBHG.com and designate 20% of the purchase amount to go to VIPS. Bluegrass Hospitality Group (BHG) restaurants include Drake's (in Louisville also), Malone's, Sal's Chophouse, Harry's, and the soon-to-open OBC Kitchen in the Lansdowne Shoppes. Simple go to the Give BHG site, purchase a gift card and then select VIPS from the pull-down menu for non-profit donations. Be sure to select Visually Impaired Preschool Services as some organizations have similar names. You will receive your gift cards in the mail within two business days.



Remember Amazon Smile

Don't forget that you can give back to VIPS this holiday season when you purchase your gifts online! VIPS is part of Amazon Smile, a program that donates 0.5% back to the organization of your choice when you make an eligible purchase on the shopping giant's website. Just go to smile.amazon.com, type "Visually Impaired Preschool Services" into the search option and shop till you drop!



Take Advantage of Papa John's Pizza Special Offer

From now through December 31, Papa John's is running a special promotion to benefit VIPS-Louisville! For every online order of 1 medium specialty pizza, 1 medium one-topping pizza and a 2-liter Pepsi product, VIPS will receive \$1. This is a \$27 deal for only \$19!

Participate in #Giving Tuesday

VIPS is participating in a national giving movement on Tuesday, December 2. #Giving Tuesday encourages people to give to their favorite nonprofit organizations online during a 24-hour period. So if VIPS fits that bill, we ask that you please remember us on this day (or any other day for that matter). You can always donate to us online at www.vips.org.

Announcing the Doc Stengel Memorial Fund

VIPS and the Louisville Downtown Lions Club are pleased to announce a very special partnership that will provide the gift of education to children attending Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. The Doc Stengel Memorial Fund honors the late Dr. Ralph Stengel, a long-time champion of VIPS and a long time member of the Louisville Downtown Lions Club, who passed away in July. The Lions Club Board of Directors established the Fund with a \$50,000 gift to VIPS. The agency is so very grateful for this act of generosity and looks forward to utilizing this Fund in "Doc's" honor to provide the very best education for our center-based preschoolers who are blind and visually impaired.



Recent Grants and Donations

VIPS-Louisville

VIPS-Louisville has been blessed with the following donations:

- The Osmondson Charitable fund granted \$44,117 for the VIPS-Louisville Two Day 2s program and Sensory Room.
- The Honorable Order of the Kentucky Colonels has graciously provided \$13,485 for the purchase of three Mountbatten braillewriters for the Kids Town Preschool.

- The GE Elfun Foundation has donated \$10,000 for general operating expenses.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

We are so very thankful for the following donations, so very necessary as we move into our new location:

- Blue Grass Community Foundation has donated \$10,000 for braillewriters, iPad, and direct services.
- Junior League of Lexington has approved an alternative funding measure for grants. VIPS will be recipient of their December Community Basket. Items listed in grant will be donated and delivered to our office, and volunteers will put together Welcome Bag items in December and throughout 2015.
- Lexington Clinic Foundation has given \$4,218 for ball pit in Sensory Room.
- Lexington Lions Club granted \$9,000 for direct services.
- Orphan Society has donated \$3,750 for preschool scholarships.
- Osmondson Foundation has provided \$10,000 for Sensory Room and \$5,000 for direct services.

VIPS Indiana

- Thanks to the Monroe County Council for \$3,000 to provide home visits to VIPS children living in Monroe County.

Wish List

VIPS-Louisville

Gently used clothing in preschool sizes to use when children get wet, messy, etc.

Baby wipes

Paper towel rolls

White cardstock size 8 1/2 x 11"

AA batteries

VIPS-Indiana

Staples gift card

Paper cutter

Coffee maker

Families shown on filmstrips on page 5: Top strip, left to right: 1. The Betz Family; 2. The Forst Family; 3. The Williams Family; 4. The Pangle Family; 5. The Pierce Family. Middle strip, left to right: 1. The Turner Family; 2. The Basham Family; 3. The Flick Family.



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Louisville, KY

Change Service Requested



ViSability is made possible through a grant from the Linda Neville Foundation.

Upcoming Events

VIPS-Louisville

Thursday, January 15

VIPS will hold a family dinner with speaker on Wills and Trusts, Gordon Homes CLU, ChSC, CLTC, CFP (special needs financial planner), 6 p.m.

Saturday, February 7

Come in from the cold with a *Chili dinner for VIPS families*. For details, contact Martha Hack (502) 498-2926 or m.hack@vips.org.

VIPS Office Holiday Closings

All VIPS Offices will be closed for the holidays, Wednesday, Dec. 24 through Friday, Jan. 2.

Happy Holidays from all of us at VIPS!!



Saturday, February 27

ReVision, presented by Brown-Forman Corporation, re-examines the traditional art gallery experience and encourages guests to enjoy pieces in ways other than just sight. The evening will include cocktails, food and live performances throughout. Tickets available now at www.vips.org or by calling at 502-498-2926.

Saturday, March 28

Join us for an *Easter Egg Hunt* and special activities for the family.

VIPS-Central KY

Saturday, December 8

VIPS CK will hold our *Annual Santa Party* at Gardenside Christian Church, 6 p.m.

VIPS-Indiana

Saturday, January 17

Play and Learn Class at VIPS ICC Office.

We hope you like our new look!! Be sure to check out our new & improved website at www.vips.org.

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

VIPS-Louisville

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Staci Maynard, TVI (in training)/PAL/Preschool Teacher
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