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Congratulations, Graduates!!

*"Get ready, get set 'cause here I go! I'm going to show them all I know.
I've graduated Preschool and now I'm done. I've laughed and learned and it's been fun.
Kindergarten...I'm on my way. I'm a VIPS graduate. Hip hip hooray!"*
(adapted by LaRhonda Locke-Daniels, VIPS Kids Town Preschool Instructional Assistant-Red Room)

Thursday, May 28 was an evening of barely contained excitement as the procession of ten preschoolers wearing purple gowns and mortar board caps filed onto the stage in VIPS Kids Town. After a short address by Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education, each graduate was presented with a print/braille edition of the Dr. Seuss book "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" by the Dartmouth Club of Louisville. Dr. Seuss was a Dartmouth grad, and Louisville Dartmouth grads have made a tradition of giving the books to all VIPS grads each year.



Left: The children assemble on the stage in their caps and gowns. Below: Ahmed (L) and Noah (R) can't wait to look at their new books.

The Fincastle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution then presented Braille flags to each graduate as the group recited the Pledge to Allegiance. (The flags are brightly colored with words to the Pledge in print and braille.) A video homage to each graduate was shown, followed by an original musical presentation created and directed by Greta Gilmeister, Music Therapist.

Cake and punch provided a sweet ending to an evening of overwhelming emotions -- pride and joy in jobs well done, but also sadness at those who would be moving onward and out of our VIPS' lives.





Top Row,
L-R: Maxson,
Ahmed, Hailey,
Madi, and
Mason.

Bottom Row,
L-R: Noah,
Bronson,
Grace, Lainie,
and Lola.

Special thanks are due to LaRhonda Locke-Daniels for producing the video and program and to Greta Gilmeister for producing the musical program. We greatly appreciate their skills, creativity and gifts. We also appreciate Vicki May for her donation of the sheet cake that everyone enjoyed.

Our graduates included: Ahmed Abbas, Noah Bennett, Bronson Damron, Madi Davis, Mason Davis, Hailey Hitner, Grace Renner, Lola Rosenbaum, Maxson Schuster and Alaina "Lainie" Talbott. Best wishes for a wonderful academic career and a fulfilling life to all our graduates! May your dreams all come true!

Learning Never Stops

By Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education

In May we celebrated with the Kids Town Preschool graduates and their families for all the goals met and outcomes accomplished while they were students at VIPS. It is safe to say there were no dry eyes to be found as parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and a plethora of friends watched the video of the children showing them as newborns all the way to preschool graduates.

In my "address" to the students, I acknowledged that on this night they would be receiving a tassel on their cap. While many would judge that as overkill for preschool, Kids Town teachers knew it symbolized much, much more. I told the children to be sure to tell their parents that the tassel they received on that night needed to be put in a very special place when they got home. Why? Because that little gold tassel from preschool was only the first of many tassels they would be earning throughout their educational career.

I hope I made my point. This is what we believe at VIPS. This is what brings us to work each morning at VIPS ready for a new day – whether we start our day in a classroom in Kids Town, hearing stories in a family's home, sitting at a desk crunching numbers to update a progress report,

attending a fundraising meeting, or -- you name it! -- we are motivated by our belief in education.

That value of education does not leave with the child when the family passes through the doors of VIPS for the last time. Our teachers, assistants, administrators and support staff continue the cycle of education, valuing the time spent learning so they can do their jobs better in order to better serve others.

This spring we celebrated several graduations here at VIPS. Ms. Ashley (Emmons) of the Green Room completed her certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) at the University of Kentucky. Ashley's newest certification is a wonderful compliment to her Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) certification received two years ago. Never to be accused of being a slacker, Ashley is also a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). Ashley has lots of tassels to keep in her special place!

Ms. Ashley's next door neighbor in the Red Room, Ms. Staci (Maynard), was a classmate in UK's certification program for TVIs. Ms. Staci will earn her next tassel in the spring of 2016. It will join a few more special tassels in their special place, as Staci has already earned undergraduate and Master's degrees in Children's Ministry. Her work at VIPS was respected so highly, as were her earlier studies, that UK welcomed her into their TVI certification program

without a degree in education, one of their documented prerequisites.

Moving on down the hall, we find *Ms. Paige (Maynard)* in the Orange Room. Ms. Paige has been burning the midnight oil as well as she has worked on her TVI certification through the University of Missouri. When Paige joined VIPS after graduation from the University of Louisville, she brought with her an IECE certification, permitting her to provide early intervention services under the VIPS contract with First Steps. Paige claims that it was within about the first five days at VIPS -- maybe the first five minutes -- that she knew in her heart she was destined to become a TVI. Paige's tassel will be waiting for her upon completion of her thesis in the fall of this year.

Across the hall, *Ms. Tracy (Webb)* is celebrating her newly earned IECE certification through the University of Kentucky INCREAS program. This program recognizes professionals working in the field of early childhood education and supports them in earning IECE certification through distance learning. Tracy uses her certification to provide community services through our First Steps contract and as our wonderful teacher of the Two Day 2s. She's worked hard for her tassel!

The other spring graduation found *Martha Hack*, Event Manager and Family Services Coordinator, earning her Associate's Degree tassel from Jefferson Community and Technical College. Martha managed to find time to earn her tassel while coordinating a heavy volume of development events as well as keeping families in the loop of activities, retreats and holiday events.

Our teaching assistants have been busy earning "tassels" of their own. Though their tassels may come in the form of certificates, they are actively involved in trainings to meet requirements for state regulated childcare centers, including the eleven steps on how to correctly change a diaper! Our teaching assistants clock over 150 hours of training annually -- and then we start piling on the additional hours required by VIPS on effective strategies for teaching young children with visual impairments. All those certificates earned by our assistants are also kept in a very special place!

The TVIs and Developmental Interventionists serving VIPS children through First Steps are required to complete their own set of trainings. So are those who serve students enrolled in public school systems with whom VIPS contracts. Just this summer, seven members of our education team spent three days at Kentucky School for the Blind attending trainings on developmental assessments and learning the new braille code introduced across the country. Our entire education team, numbering

more than 20, began the new school year in a specially designed daylong training to meet needs we have identified as a team. The morning was spent learning about new research, practices, and resources for serving children with a diagnosis of Cortical Visual Impairment; the afternoon session addressed Meeting the Sensory Needs of Children with Visual Impairments. That's right. More "tassels!"

But wait! The learning continues. More "tassels" will be earned this school year as *Beth Krebs*, assistant preschool director, attends the Kids Are Worth It! Conference on the prevention of child abuse. I will attend a two day conference on administrative strategies for running an empowering school; this follows three June days in Utah being trained to be a trainer for a nationally recognized program for teaching birth to five-year-olds who are blind or visually impaired. The information received there will help us to spread the word on effective ways to work with the population served by VIPS.

Our administrative team is not to be out-tasseled! VIPS attendance at workshops on grant writing skills, launching fundraising campaigns, new data collection systems, human resource practices, how to work with families in flux and grief, effective PR strategies, and much, much more is a regular occurrence. The administrative team in all three offices is the backbone of VIPS. Without their support, the services we provide in the community and in preschool classrooms would be but a shadow of what we enjoy today.

VIPS recognizes that to continue providing the best services to our VIPS children and families, we need to continue the learning cycle within the walls of VIPS. We earn our tassels through hard work. We proudly keep them in our own special places. And when needed, we dust off some old tassels now and then. How about you?

Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month

By Mary Smyth, Office Manager, VIPS-Central KY

October is Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month and it is almost here! Once again VIPS is asking you to help us celebrate the lives of VIPS children by sharing a story about your child. This is a great opportunity to bring awareness and understanding to the community about children who are blind and visually impaired and their families!

This request is open to all current and former families of VIPS. If you are interested in participating, you may write whatever you would like the community to know about your child and your family. Some suggestions to get the creative juices flowing are:

- A sweet or special moment between you and your child;
- Your child's successes, or challenges;
- Your personal thoughts about your child and family;
- Things people may have said or done that have encouraged or discouraged you;
- Any assistance or obstacle that you may have encountered within your community;
- A person or people who have impacted the lives of your child and family; or
- A day-in-the-life-of your child and family.

The length of your story is up to you. It can be a few sentences to a few paragraphs. Please send a picture of your child/family to include with your story, if possible.

We will be highlighting your stories during the month of October on Facebook & Twitter, in our October-November-December parent newsletter and on email. We will be encouraging people to share and forward all of the stories and pictures to their family and friends.

Please email your story and picture to Mary Smyth at vipslex@vips.org or mail it to Mary Smyth, VIPS Central Kentucky, PO Box 23691, Lexington, KY 40523.

VIPS-Louisville “Drive-IN” Movie

On Saturday night, June 27, VIPS-Louisville held our first ever “Drive-IN” movie. Families drove into the VIPS parking lot – that was the DRIVE part -- but came IN-side to the air conditioned and bug-free zone of Kids Town for the family movie “Paddington.” They brought their blankets and lawn chairs and VIPS provided the refreshments. We moved a Smart Board (which became the movie screen) into Kids Town and offered iPads for those who needed close-up viewing, turning Kids Town into a movie theater individualized to accommodate those with low vision! The kitchen became a concession stand with popcorn, hot dogs, cotton candy and other drive-in snacks. Executive Director Diane Nelson surprised all the kids with glow sticks to enjoy in the darkened room.

Thanks to Ashley Buren, Vicki May, Staci Maynard, Ryan Hack, Connor Peoples and Ben Toebe for volunteering their help at the event.



Pyper, Layla and Sarah loved their cotton candy!

VIPS-Central KY Families & Children's Charity Jamboree

VIPS families were invited to attend the annual Children's Charity Jamboree held on Tuesday, June 23 at the Explorium of Lexington children's museum and adjacent Lexington Children's Theatre. This event was part of a week of festivities surrounding the Children's Charity Classic golf tournament benefitting local charities including VIPS (more on pg. 21). Four VIPS families attended and were given free admission to the Explorium. The children loved exploring and playing with all the exciting items. Later, the families were entertained with dinner and a show at the Lexington Children's Theater. Thank you, Children's Charity, for enabling VIPS families to participate in this wonderful event again this year.

Louisville Zoo Has Low Vision Leopard

Did you know the Louisville Zoo has a visually impaired resident? Kimti is a four-year-old snow leopard born with Coloboma, a structural defect in the eye that causes reduced vision, a condition that affects some VIPS children. Apparently this condition is more common in snow leopards than other animal species. Born at the Philadelphia Zoo, Kimti had two surgeries performed by University of Pennsylvania veterinary ophthalmologists. When he arrived at the Louisville Zoo, he was very wary of his new environment due to his decreased vision. He spent a great deal of “quiet time” in his off-exhibit “safe space” with one-on-one time with his keepers as a way to build his trust. He was allowed to explore his new home on his own time schedule and continues to be allowed to retreat to his safe space whenever he chooses to do so.

Anthony's Special Spoon

(Based on a story for UPS by Nicole Cox, 5/28/15)

United Problem Solvers™ is a new initiative for United Parcel Service stores which helps celebrate UPS's passion for helping customers overcome their challenges. A recent UPS solution to a challenge faced by VIPS child, Anthony, demonstrates this creative problem-solving.

Anthony was diagnosed with a brain tumor when he was two. Surgery to remove the tumor unfortunately caused the loss of his vision. It was then that Anthony began receiving services from VIPS and attending the Two Day 2s program. When he turned three, he began attending the Kids Town Preschool at VIPS.

Anthony had chemotherapy for a year and has recently been released from treatment. But, in addition to his physical recovery, he must also re-learn basic life skills that his blindness has made more of a challenge.

One of Anthony's therapists loaned him a spoon with a unique design that enabled him to better feed himself because it was easier to gauge the distance from food to mouth. But when Cierra Brettnacher, his mother, attempted to find the spoon, she discovered that it was one of a kind. After her Facebook post requesting help in locating the spoon, Wayne Whitworth, a former U.S. Marine and friend of Cierra's father, immediately felt called to action. His Facebook post prompted a huge response from many others around the world who were also looking for this spoon.

Many people sent him pictures of various spoons they found but none of them were close enough to the original. He talked to dentists about dental molding, looked at spoons to buy online and had people looking at manufacturing spoons. None of the responses were a match. In desperation, he borrowed the spoon from Anthony's therapist. Wayne measured all aspects of the spoon along with taking multiple photos as he considered the possibility of manufacturing the spoon. When a co-worker asked if he'd considered 3D printing, Wayne contacted his local UPS Store 0830 in Louisville where he met with franchisee Debbie Adams to see if it would be possible to recreate the spoon with his photos and measurements.

Debbie, along with Doug Seelbach, her 3D graphic designer, began the search for FDA-approved food-safe

materials for use with the 3D printer. When no solution presented itself, Debbie and Doug created a removable handle into which a disposable spoon (or fork) could be inserted. Doug even created a tactile way for Anthony to differentiate between the utensils.

Wayne went to pick up Anthony's new 3D printed utensils and it was an emotional moment for him. "I tried to pay her and her designer that day but they refused to take my money."

Debbie and Doug both donated their services to help Anthony and his family, providing the 3D printed handles and disposable utensils to go with them. Anthony can feed himself now when he couldn't before.

Independence for Anthony, particularly being blind and having limited mobility, is a challenge and this spoon is going to make him a little more independent and free. In fact, he even used his new spoon to eat his birthday cake at his recent fourth birthday party.

Kids Town Preschool Pre-Kindergarten Class

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Serving children who are visually impaired has long been recognized as a multi-faceted adventure. As with any preschooler, much of the time in the classroom is spent addressing social skills and personal behaviors so that students learn to make "good choices" and "best decisions." When it comes to a child who is unable to use his peers as role models due to poor vision or no vision, social and behavioral training may take much, much longer. The same can be said about teaching a child to explore using his other senses rather than exploring visually. As a natural result, less time is available for the academics of preschool (number concepts and letter sound awareness, independence, etc.)

With the support of our generous donors, VIPS will launch a new Pre-kindergarten program in Kids Town Preschool during the 2015-16 school year. The design of the program includes a six-hour school day. The Pre-K students will participate in a typical preschool day each morning; their class will be an inclusive one with sighted peers. After an early lunch and short rest, the last two hours of the school day will involve intensive learning in the areas of literacy, math, IEP goals, and the Expanded Core

Curriculum. Ms. Ashley Emmons from the Green Room will be the lead teacher for the Pre-K program; she will be assisted by Ms. LaRhonda Locke-Daniels. Currently, two children have enrolled for the upcoming school year. VIPS anticipates our inaugural year will be followed by an increased enrollment in years to come.

VIPS is extremely excited about this new program offered in Kids Town Preschool. Not only are we giving our students an additional year to prepare for kindergarten in the big leagues, we are giving parents an additional choice in the education of their child – something ALL parents deserve! Please continue to check back with us for updates on the progress of our Pre-K students. If you have questions about the Pre-K class at Kids Town Preschool, please contact Kathy Mullen, Director of Education, at kmullen@vips.org or (502) 498-2927 for additional information.

Adventures in Summer Enrichment at VIPS-Louisville

by Staci Maynard, VIPS Kids Town Preschool Teacher/TVI in training

Summer programming at Kids Town Preschool, VIPS-Louisville, June 8-July 30, was a great adventure this year. Eighteen students were enrolled, but attendance was flexible as some families chose to come certain days or weeks during the term. This year we talked about the summer season and about activities that are fun to explore during those hot, summer months.

During the month of June, students were able to explore summer weather, summer clothing, and camping activities. They were really engaged with making a class book called “What I Like About Summer.” Each student came up with the text and illustration for one page of the book, describing what he or she enjoyed most about the season whether it be jumping off a diving board or eating ice cream. Children also had the opportunity to practice their fine motor and one-to-one correspondence skills by transferring suns (yellow bouncy balls) into an ice cube tray using tongs. They did an expert job of sorting summer clothes from other types of clothing. Our students’ favorite camping activities included making gluten free trail mix, reading stories by flashlight and making a tent out of a blanket and chairs. They were also able to learn to make and read a list using the screen-reader Window Eyes. The students worked hard to identify the letter “e” and to practice

systematic scanning (looking left to right and top to bottom) when looking for animal tracks.

We pretended to go on a bear hunt, on a picnic in the park, and to the beach during the month of July. The children rolled a die and then put that many bears (pom-poms) in their cave (a cup). This activity was good counting and one-to-one correspondence practice for some while others enjoyed the container play aspect of the game. Students did a great job of identifying the body parts of a bear and comparing them to their own bodies. They enjoyed finding items around the school to create take-home story boxes based on the book “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” as well as bringing a favorite stuffed animal to school and telling their friends about it. One of the favorite



Sarah (left), Sam (right rear), and Stella (front right) boarded the plane for Disneyworld for a summer vacation.

activities all summer was going on a bear hunt in which students were able to go through items that simulated textures from the story (shredded paper for grass, ice cubes for a snowstorm, etc.). The hunt ended in a tunnel that had a stuffed bear inside. Some of the students chose to explore this activity again and again. On picnic week, children went on a real picnic outside. They also examined a watermelon and worked together to create a list of what they would need in order to have the perfect picnic.

Studying about the beach is always one of our favorite topics of the year. There are so many multisensory experiences that teachers can offer on this subject, but for the children they are mainly interested in one thing: water play. This year, we used seashells and starfish to work on making patterns, did sink or float experiments in salt and fresh water, and created tactual ocean collages using items that remind us of the beach (sandpaper, towels, cocktail



Bronson explores the shape and textures of a seashell.

umbrellas, Life Savers for innertubes, etc.). Both classes also read one of my favorite children's books, "Mister Seahorse" by Eric Carle. We used a taxidermied fish, water beads (to imitate fish eggs), and dried seahorses to explore the story with our hands. Our summer enrichment ended on a high note with a day devoted to water play on our playground. Children were able to bring their bathing suits and beach towels, so they could explore our swimming pool, sprinklers, and water games.

Thanks to our student teacher, Miki Tennant, the children were able to participate in their very own VIPS Art Show. Each student had the opportunity to create artwork in the pointillism and abstract art styles. Their pieces were then mounted and put on display for all to see during a special show. Snacks and props for fun photos were also provided.

Paige and I were blessed to have lots of helping hands, including college students Alyssa Lurie, Amanda Landherr and student teacher Miki Tennant. Our teaching assistants, Beth, La Rhonda, Marchelle, and Shelby were wonderful as always. Special thanks go out to Ashley Buren for substituting in the red room the week of July 13 so that teachers could go to training. We also appreciate Elana Berger for coming to introduce our students to the violin, both the instrument that they were able to tactually explore and the music that they were able to hear and enjoy.

The Art Show!



Vance's family came to enjoy the show.



Alex with his art.



Above: Olivia models her artist's mustache (ala Salvador Dali).



Left: Ethan, in artist's smock and cap explains his artwork.



Addy and grandma try on mustaches by Addy's art exhibit.

What PAL Class (Play and Learn) Has Meant to Me

Written by Rachael Davis, VIPS-Louisville mom

On the eve of our very last PAL group, I wanted to take the time to let everyone know what it has meant to my family to be able to participate in the Friday PAL group at VIPS.

A little background: we discovered that Jude was visually impaired in 2012 when he was 16 months old. Combined with a significant speech delay, we entered First Steps that summer and began receiving Developmental Intervention services through VIPS. Jude was also poised to begin the 2-Day Twos class and we were invited to participate in the PAL group on the Friday before he was to begin school so that I could see what it would be like for Jude in class.

I didn't know it then but we would become rabid PAL group consumers. Jude loved everything about it. We couldn't ask him why but he showed it by cooperating during activities (if you know Jude, you might know that he's JUST A LITTLE BIT stubborn!), making overtures of friendship to other children in the group, and being excited every time the words PAL or VIPS were mentioned in his presence.

Being a fairly introverted person, PAL is something that I would never have attempted on my own, were I not attending in an effort to help my child.

I made connections with other moms who could understand my life and why I sometimes did the (outwardly) weird things I did to help Jude. In this setting while playing with our children, we moms talked, knowing that we completely understood one another and our lives and I felt a level of comfort in it that I don't find in many places outside my home. I soon started being as disappointed as Jude when we had to miss PAL! In fact, one of my best friends is also a PAL mom!

As Jude grew older, I began to dread (as much for me as for him!) our eventual leaving of the PAL group when he turned 4, as the group was supposed to be for those who were 3 and under. We tried to attend other, larger playgroups but those ended in meltdowns without fail; Jude was always overwhelmed in the bigger, noisier settings. I asked if we could continue to attend a little longer and we

were allowed. Since then, we have faithfully attended PAL when we could. After we are gone and you are there with your child, know that Jude started the tradition of ending PAL every Friday with Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. He adored that song and video!

Jude is starting kindergarten this year and will no longer be able to attend. I recently learned that because of Jude, the PAL age guidelines were extended because VIPS saw a need. I will be forever grateful for both Jude and myself that they saw his need. He needed a place that fit him and PAL was that place. They love him like their own and he won't admit it, but he loves them like they were his own.



Jude playing during PAL.

VIPS-Louisville Friday Friends

Friday Friends is a Parent-Child playtime held the first Friday of the month at VIPS-Louisville in Kids Town, 10:30 a.m. - noon. It is for VIPS and community children 0-6 who must be accompanied by a caregiver. VIPS children are free; there is a suggested \$5 donation for community children, up to \$10 maximum per family. The remaining 2015 dates for Friday Friends are:

September 4
October 2

November 6
December 4



Zach has a ball in the ball pit in the sensory room.

VIPS-Central KY Summer Enrichment Program at UK

By Dixie Miller, TVI/Developmental Interventionist

This summer, VIPS Central-KY provided a three-hour program for children who have visual impairments two days a week. This program not only helped get the children ready for the preschool, it allowed us to get the necessary adaptations and devices in their hands early. The program has a low staff to child ratio. The teachers had a lot of one-on-one time with the children and were able to work on their individual goals. The children loved the new facility at the UK Early Childhood Lab. The facility is equipped with a sensory room where the children loved to play.



Harper (left) and Molly (below) enjoyed playing in the ball pit that is in the Sensory Room during Summer Enrichment.



Rory loved the huge light-up and vibrating push-buttons.

On the Road With VIPS-Indiana Teachers

The dedicated teachers of VIPS who do early intervention put many, many miles on their cars. Everyday they are on the road visiting children in their homes throughout the states of Kentucky and Indiana. These home visits bring hope and comfort to families of young children with visual impairments. VIPS teachers -- armed with knowledge, tools, and magical tricks to spark children's interests -- show families of young children who are blind or visually impaired how to help their children at home and make every moment a learning moment.



Left: At a recent home visit, Audrey shows off how she is beginning to hold her own bottle!
Below: James eagerly explores items on a play frame during a home visit in southern Indiana.



Above: During a spring-themed home visit, Gracie smells and explores a sensory tub of green grass. Above Right: Hunter and Miss Lisa take some time to get to know each other at a recent home visit. Right: June is eager to use her hands because she loves the crinkle sound of one of the aspects of her home-made texture board.



Getting a Jump On Holiday Shopping: VIPS Teacher's Holiday Gift Recommendations

What we consider our holiday newsletter -- the October-November-December issue -- does not usually arrive in homes until just before Christmas, making this helpful article less than useful. We are taking the bull by the horns and getting it out in plenty of time for holiday shopping.

Toys that Encourage Skill Development

Ashley Emmons, O&M/TVI/Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

Seek a Boo® by Mindware is a great game to play with your little ones to work on memory skills, vocabulary skills, concept development, and visual efficiency skills. Age: 18 months and up. Price: starting at \$20.59 at Target.



Little Tikes Talk-To-Me® Sets: Soccer, Baseball, and Basketball are great interactive games for the children to work on orientation, sound localization skills, and gross motor skills. Age: 18 months and up. Price: starting at \$39.97 at Walmart and Amazon.



Ruff's House Teaching Tactile Set® by Learning Resources is a great game for pre-braille learners to increase tactile skills, social skills, matching skills, etc. Textures used include smooth, silky, scratchy, bumpy, ridges, etc. Age: 3 years and up. Price: starting at \$29.95 at Toys R Us, Amazon, Independent Living Aids, etc.



Making Things Happen with Lights!

Annie Hughes, TVI, VIPS-Indiana

Many children with visual impairment have very low vision, but are not totally blind. They respond very enthusiastically to toys with lights. This year I have selected some toys that will "light up" their play!

The Little Tykes *Lights 'n Sounds Spinning Top*® for \$15.99 allows very young or children with multiple impairments to make things happen! It has a very light touch so children can push the top easily, and they are rewarded with red and yellow lights, music, and bouncing balls inside the spinning top.



Another lighted toy for children who are very young or have multiple impairments is the Baby Einstein *Orchestra and Lights Turtle*® for \$19.99 from Amazon and other retail sources. This toy provides opportunities for your child to explore instrument sounds that are combined to create classical music from Beethoven, Vivaldi, and Mozart. Colorful lights dance along to the music, and there are two ways to play with this toy, so the play can change as your child grows.

Kids love trucks because trucks and things that move are always fun. One fun choice is the CAT *Lighting Load Machine*® for \$14.99, a motorized truck with lights and sounds. The translucent "load" in the bed of the truck lights up when you press the big red button, and then it rolls along the floor allowing a low vision child to follow the movement, and then find the toy and do it again!



And who wouldn't want light-up drums? Funflashingleds.com has a cute *Light-Up Toy Drum*® that has been featured on wonderbaby.org, an excellent website for parents. It has a strap if your child is ready to march while he is drumming. Another drum to consider is the VTech *Kidi Beats Drum Set* for very young children. This toy will reward their taps and slaps with hands or drum sticks and is available from many retail sources for about \$24.99.



The Fisher-Price *Light-Up Lion Stacker*® is the newest version of the classic “star spindle.” When the child places the four textured star shapes onto the spindle, he/she is rewarded by lights and sounds. Because the stars are four different colors and sizes and are translucent, this provides opportunities to teach concepts, and the stars can also be used on a light box such as the APH Mini Lite Box. The Lion Stacker plays one of seven songs when the lion is placed on top, or when the child discovers the button that activates the music.

If your child is older and developing some higher-level hand skills and you no longer have to worry about choking hazards, *Lite Brite*® toys might be a good choice. Lite Brite has a number of options ranging \$14.99 - \$29.99 and available in many stores. This is also a great toy for when your child is playing with sighted peers, as all children love making colorful pictures that shine in the dark.



All of these toys are very engaging to young children of different developmental ages who respond to light. As a parent, we always want to find toys that our children absolutely love! We also need to think about what our children need to learn, because children learn through play. In addition to electronic toys that light up, sing and dance, and “do something when kids push a button,” make sure your child has a variety of different kinds of toys and materials with which to play and experiment. If the only toys he/she has are “push-button” toys, your child may become very good at pushing buttons, but may not have opportunities to develop important hand skills, concepts, and later, imaginary play. Remember to use favorite toys to foster language and movement, and when the play is finished, help your child participate in cleaning-up and putting away his/her toys.

The Gift of Exploring Together

Paige Maynard, TVI (in training), Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

“We don’t need any more toys!” “Why won’t all these Mr. Potato Head pieces fit in this box?!” “Every time I open the closet, there is an avalanche and we’re buried in Legos!” Have you or any of your family members ever cried out these words? If so, your child, family (and storage system!) might love to receive the gift of exploring together this Christmas!

A membership or admission to the *Newport Aquarium*, located in Newport, KY near Cincinnati, is free for children under two years! If your child is over two, \$29 is the cost for one year of membership, while one day admission for children over two is \$15. Adult membership is also very reasonable. The aquarium is an ideal place for your child if he or she has low vision. The exhibits (especially the tropical fish and jellies) are brightly colored and allow your child to get nose to nose with animals. Go to <http://www.newportaquarium.com> or call 1-800-406-3474 to purchase a pass. If you want to give your child the experience of opening a physical gift on Christmas morning, consider wrapping up some fish shaped crackers. When your child opens them up, explain that he will soon get to see real fish at the aquarium.

The *Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Taxidermy Collection* is an ideal place for your child to visit. If your child is blind or has low vision, you know how important it is to understand animals through extended time exploring them in a safe and accessible way. Your child and family can explore the animals in the taxidermy collection up close and using all senses, including touch. KSB has many specimens, including a chicken, squirrel, water buffalo, and many others. Call 502-897-1583 to schedule an appointment to explore the collection. An appointment **MUST** be made in advance. For gift opening fun, wrap a small piece of fur purchased at a craft store. When your child opens it up, explain that she will soon get to explore real animal bodies.

The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis would make a sensational day trip for your child and family. There are many exhibits that your child may find engaging, including “Playscape,” an open ended play area with lots of opportunity to explore with all the senses (think sand and water, climbing, and learning cause and effect) and “Health House,” where your child can learn about healthy eating and self-care in a hands-on way. A family membership to the museum is \$155, and includes exclusive members’ only hours, which can be beneficial if your child needs time to explore in a quieter environment. \$18.50 per child is the price for a one day ticket. Go to <https://www.childrensmuseum.org/> or call 317-334-4000 to purchase tickets. Depending upon which exhibit you want to focus on while at the museum, wrap up some sand, a toy car, or a toothbrush for your child to open. These items can represent one of the exhibits.

Your family, your child, and your closet may thank you for your thoughtful gift of exploring together this Christmas! The only storage you’ll need will be for the memories you make which you won’t want to forget!

A Pre-Braille Must

Dixie Miller, TVI and Developmental Interventionist, VIPS-Central Kentucky

If you have a child who is going to be a Braille reader in the future, this fun children's book is a must have:

Usborne's Baby's Very First Touchy-feely Fingertrail Play Book. This book provides different textured trails for your child to discover with her hands. It is great for teaching a child to use her fingers to explore and understand differences of textures by tracing the textured path.



Santa's Little Helper

Staci Maynard, TVI (in training), PAL, Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

It's that time again: time to begin thinking about Christmas shopping and what you can get for those people who have everything and for those who do not want anything. The ideas that follow are in no way all-inclusive or guaranteed to be hits. You know the personalities and preferences of the children in your life better than I. However, they may serve to give you some ideas for the types of gifts a particular child might enjoy.

If a child is artistic or enjoys sensory play, he may like products such as Crayola's Outdoor Colorfoam®, which retails online and at major retailers for about \$3.99. Sidewalk chalk and bath foam are similar options that can also develop creativity and be used for prewriting/writing activities.

If a child enjoys building or if you desire to increase a child's sensory integration, pipSquigz® and Squigz® (\$16.95 and up on Amazon or Fat Brain Toys) might be the gift for you. pipSquigz, designed for younger children six months and older, are textured, suction toys that are brightly colored and make a rattling sound. They are also safe for using as teethingers. Squigz are a larger set of these similar toys that will suction together to make any number of cool creations.



The LeapFrog Scribble and Write® (about \$21.99 online and at major retailers) is a useful learning toy for children

who are going to be print readers and writers. It allows them to trace the lights on the screen to practice forming letters and numbers. We also like to use Crayola Pip-Squeaks Skinnies® markers for practicing writing in the classroom; you might like to purchase some for home use as well.

If a child in your life is an auditory learner, he or she may enjoy LeapFrog's My Pal Scout® (green) or My Pal Violet® (purple) stuffed dogs, which retail for \$24.99 at most major stores. These toys have over 40 learning songs and 15 activities, which can be used for learning words, feelings, counting, and more. They can also be programmed to use the child's name and favorite things. Scout and Violet are appropriate for six months and older. Another favorite in our classroom is the LeapFrog Fridge Phonics Magnetic Letter Set® (\$19.99 retail price), which has a letter sound song for each individual letter. Braille alphabet stickers can be put on each letter to increase braille letter awareness as well.



Learning Resources Smart Snacks Counting Fun Fruit Bowl® (\$19.99 retail price) is a good activity for counting, fine motor, introduction to fractions, and learning about healthy eating. It also has a puzzle aspect to it as children figure out how the sections of fruit fit together. Hide N Squeak Eggs® by Tomy, which cost around \$10.99, can be used for shape/color matching, one-to-one



correspondence, and imaginative play. The chicks in the eggs also make a fun squeak sound. Another toy for building similar skills is Learning Resources Smart Snacks Stack & Count Layer Cake® (also \$19.99). The cakes grow in size from one to ten. Our students also love Counting Cakes® by Lakeshore if you can find them since they are currently discontinued online.

A light box is always a fun toy, especially for children with cerebral visual impairment or low vision. You can find a number of inexpensive toys, plates, cups, etc. that are brightly colored and transparent for use on a light box. I also really like Rainbow Sound Blocks® by Wonderworld (retail \$39.99). These transparent colored blocks are filled with different kinds of beads that produce different sounds.



Finally, here are a few ideas for encouraging gross motor play among children who are blind or visually impaired. The *VTech Move and Crawl Ball*® (\$28.49 at major retailers) is a brightly colored musical and light-up ball that teaches about numbers and animals. It is useful for tactile stimulation and building visual awareness, attending, and tracking. The ball will roll itself, which may encourage children to move in order to find it. The *Prince Lionheart Wheely Bug*®, which comes in several animal designs, is a good riding toy for building balance and gross motor skills. It costs about \$70.



If you have an active older preschooler to buy for, consider purchasing a goal (or two) and a ball with sound to introduce the child to goalball, a popular sport in the blind and visually impaired community. One possible option is the *Fisher-Price Super Sounds Soccer Goal*® (\$31.99), which has the added motivation of making a fun sound whenever a goal is made. MaxiAids.com also has balls with beepers or bells, such as the *Reizen Spiral Mini Ball with Bells*® (\$7.95). Rules for how to play goalball can be found online or you can ask a teacher for the basics.

Paging Dr. Barbie

Ashley Buren, VIPS Mom and
Preschool Instructional Assistant,
VIPS-Louisville

How perfect is a Barbie who is an eye doctor? The *Barbie Careers Playset*® collection includes eye doctor, vet, teacher and babysitter. The Eye Doctor set comes with a Barbie doll complete with her own glasses and doctor's lab coat, a tiny patient, examination chair, eye chart and several pairs of glasses. What fun for a little girl who wears glasses! Each set in the collection runs around \$25.



...

We hope you find the perfect gift for the special children in your life this Christmas. If you need any further ideas or input on how to adapt toys for your child, please feel free to contact one of the VIPS teachers.

New Arrivals

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

VIPS-Louisville

Alexis -- 8 months, Louisville, KY
Brayden -- 9 months, Louisville, KY
Elijah -- 26 months, Pekin, IN
Emily -- 26 months, Fairdale, KY
Ethen -- 12 months, Hillsboro, KY
Evalyn, 9 months, Simpsonville, KY
Fredrick -- 2 months, Elizabethtown, KY
Ja'nyah -- 24 months, Louisville, KY
Lilly -- 47 months, Ft. Knox, KY
Saphira -- 13 months, Austin, IN
Trenton -- 25 months, Louisville, KY
Wesley -- 5 months, Campton, KY

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Au'Mirecal -- 21 months, Morganfield, KY
Dennis -- 9 months, Sandy Hook, KY
Desra -- 22 months, Albany, KY
Elijah -- 17 months, Albany, KY
Faith -- 18 months, Lexington, KY
Grayson -- 14 months, Florence, KY
Gracelynn -- 9 months, Parkers Lake, KY
Jackson -- 10 months, Williamsburg, KY
Matthew -- 18 months, Russell, KY

VIPS-Indiana

Aurora -- 13 months, Rockville, IN
Bentlee -- 17 months, Springville, IN
Brantlee -- 31 months, Springville, IN
Easton -- 26 months, Danville, IN
Emmanuel -- 32 months, Camby, IN
Everett -- 24 months, Danville, IN
James -- 17 months, Elizabethtown, IN
June -- 15 months, Kendallville, IN
Noah -- 16 months, Gentryville, IN
Rhylee -- 12 months, Bloomington, IN
Zayden -- 17 months, Ladoga, IN

VIPS Staff News

VIPS-Central KY

We are pleased to announce that *Emily Wiley* started on June 30th as the new Family Services Coordinator for VIPS Central Kentucky. Emily will be working with families throughout Central, Northern & Eastern Kentucky who are referred to our program by physicians or other community professionals for services. She will also be coordinating activities during the year for the children and their entire family to enjoy as well as planning a few activities where parents get a break and VIPS cares for the children. Emily's biggest focus so far was the "Summer 2 Day Camp" in collaboration with the teachers and volunteers. We welcome Emily to our VIPS family!! She introduces herself below:



My name is Emily Wiley. I am 26 years old. My husband Eric and I got married in October of last year. We have been together for four years and we have a beautiful, blended family of four children. Madyson, Olivia, and our youngest daughter, Rory, who receives VIPS services, are our girls and Brandon is our only son. I volunteer at my church, mostly with children and youth and am always looking for ways to help others out. For the past three years, I have had the privilege of being a stay-at-home mommy and loved every minute of it! Some of my hobbies include reading, painting, crocheting, sewing, and general crafting. I am constantly coming up with DIY projects! I look forward to meeting and working with all of you!

VIPS Central Kentucky is pleased to announce that *Ethel Ross* became a recent contract employee as a Developmental Interventionist. (See more on pg. 16.)

VIPS-Indiana

Lisa West is the new VIPS Indiana Early Interventionist in Visual Impairment. Lisa has worked with children for over thirty years. Fifteen of those years were devoted to her in-home day care while she raised her five children. When her youngest started school, she began working at the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI) as an

educational assistant. While working at the school, Lisa was selected to be part of The Summer Assessment for Young Children team. She was also a presenter at the Osborn Conference where she gave practical advice to parents who had children with little to no vision. After fifteen years at ISBVI, Lisa ventured out and began teaching a class of two year olds at The Goddard School while completing college courses for her preschool teaching certificate. VIPS Indiana Teacher of the Visually Impaired, *Annie Hughes*, is a longtime friend and colleague of Lisa's. Annie approached Lisa about



a position within VIPS because she knew Lisa had a passion and love for children with visual impairments.

Lisa has been married to her husband, David, for 32 years. They have five beautiful children, one granddaughter, two dogs and many, many granddogs. She enjoys church and the peaceful sounds of nature, riding bikes and swimming with her husband. She is delighted to be working for VIPS and cannot wait to get to know the VIPS families on a personal level and help them with their wonderful children.

Meredith Howell has become a full-time staff person. Her new title is Office Manager. Meredith will not only be the contact person for the administration of the office but also the Family Services Coordinator. She will be the liaison with the State of Indiana in our new collaboration for statewide services and will continue to lead the lobbying effort and facilitate the ongoing relationships necessary in moving VIPS Indiana to an even higher level.

VIPS Staff Promote Collaboration

When Kathy Mullen first began at VIPS, she wondered if there was a group, council, or committee made up of agencies serving Kentuckians of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. She learned that there had been one but that they had stopped meeting. She and Diane Nelson took the plunge and invited about 15 agencies to join them in a discussion to start a new collaborative group; the idea was very well-received and the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) was formed.

Mary Smyth, VIPS Central Kentucky Office Manager, worked to get Governor Beshear to recognize October as Blind and Visual Impairment Awareness Month, becoming the natural person to represent VIPS with the Coalition. This past spring Mary was voted the first

chairperson of the BSCK. Congratulations, Mary, on recognition of your tireless leadership skills!

Through Mary's tireless efforts, the BSCK website was launched last month, <http://bsckinfo.wix.com/bsck>. (See related story on pg. 14.)

News of the VIPS Board of Directors

The VIPS Board of Directors held their Annual Meeting during the evening of the Beacon Awards on June 16. New Officers were elected, new Board members were welcomed, and retiring members were thanked for their service.

New officers include: **John Talbott** (Parent of a VIPS grad) - **President**; **Amy Sitterly** - **Vice President**; **Andy Steinbach** - **Treasurer**; and **Mike Johnson** (Parent of a VIPS grad) - **Secretary**. New members of the Board include **Dawn Bauccho**, **Patty Burkland**, **Brittany Clarkson** (VIPS Parent), **Scott Duncan** (incoming President of the VIPS-Central Kentucky Board), **Nathan Holladay**, **Misty Jones**, **Lindsay Renner** (Parent of a VIPS grad), and **Trey Zoeller**. Outgoing Board members, including **Erik Hitzelberger** (Parent of VIPS grads), **George Hocker** (outgoing President of VIPS-Central Kentucky Board), **Bill Jessee** (outgoing Treasurer), **Therese McGuire**, and **Jennifer O'Dea** (outgoing Secretary), were presented with a small gift along with our gratitude for their service.

Founding Board Member and first President of the VIPS Board Maud Fliegelman, recently celebrated her 90th birthday! Congratulations, Maud, on a long lifetime of volunteerism and service to our community! Maud's daughter, **Ellen Prizant**, also has a long history with the VIPS Board and is a current member.



Outgoing President Jay Hatcher presented LeNee Carroll with the VIPS Ambassador Award for her efforts with the Indiana state legislature in getting VIPS state funding.

Hometown Heroes

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Throughout the years VIPS has employed different models to deliver early intervention services throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky. In the past we have had satellite offices in Martin, KY as well as Lexington. We have taken VIPS "on the road" with a traveling therapist who made her way across the state visiting communities weekly or twice a month. We have provided services through an Outreach contract where providers from our Louisville and Central Kentucky offices have gone to communities on a quarterly basis to assist parents whose children have been identified as needing services to address their visual impairment. A lesson we continue to learn through the use of these different models is that families are much more receptive to receiving guidance from a familiar face than from the expert traveling from afar. There really is truth to the term "Hometown Hero!"

As a result of these lessons learned again and again, VIPS has worked over the past two years to identify Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Developmental Interventionists from across the state to work with VIPS to serve children and families who live in their same communities -- recognizing that in rural Kentucky, some of these "communities" are actually made up of multiple counties!

These providers have become a part of the VIPS family, although they may fall into the category of "distant relatives!" Please welcome:

Dianna Grubb -- a Developmental Interventionist from Catlettsburg, Kentucky. Dianna is serving children out of the FIVCO (Ashland), Buffalo Trace (Maysville), and Big Sandy (Prestonsburg) First Steps Points of Entry (POE).



Tricia Johnson -- a Teacher of the Visually Impaired from Clarkson, Kentucky is serving children out of the Lincoln Trail (Elizabethtown) and Barren River (Bowling Green) First Steps POEs. Tricia has currently reduced her caseload to care for her mother who is battling some health issues.



Dianna Grubb is shown top right; Tricia Johnson is shown with her daughter at right.

Tonya Martin -- a Teacher of the Visually Impaired from Middlesboro, Kentucky serving children out of the Cumberland Valley (Corbin) and Kentucky River (Hazard) First Steps POEs.

Pam Mattox -- a Developmental Interventionist from Morehead, Kentucky serving children out of the Buffalo Trace (Maysville) First Steps POE. Pam is a former VIPS mom as well.

Joy Ortman -- a Developmental Interventionist from Crescent Springs, Kentucky serving children out of the Northern Kentucky (Covington), Bluegrass (Lexington), and Buffalo Trace (Maysville) First Steps POEs.

Ethel Ross -- a Developmental Interventionist from Beattyville, Kentucky serving children in 34 counties, out of the Bluegrass (Lexington), Kentucky River (Hazard), Lake Cumberland (Somerset), Cumberland Valley (Corbin), and Big Sandy (Prestonsburg) First Steps POEs.



Blind Services Coalition of KY

When Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear declared October as Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month in 2013, many agencies across the Commonwealth came together to promote awareness of all services and supports for individuals with low or no vision. The success of this effort encouraged all of the agencies to continue their combined efforts and to expand the awareness-building to a year round effort. As a result the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) was formed in December 2013.

BSCK recently launched its website allowing individuals the ability to access all 26 Members' information and websites with just a couple of clicks. Additionally, basic information about blindness and visual impairments and a calendar of events may also be found on the website. To access the website please go to <http://bsckinfo.wix.com/bsck>.

In Memoriam

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memory of

Taylor Gernert

daughter of Reed and Susan Gernert, of Louisville, who passed away on June 18 at the age of 17.

Our hearts go out to all who were blessed to have known and loved Taylor.

Kind Gifts of Time and Talents



VIPS-Louisville

Once again we are indebted to *Brandi & Erik Hitzelberger*, parents of two VIPS graduates, along with members of the *Middletown Christian Church* who refreshed the landscaping around the building. The faithful green-thumb gardeners included *Betty Ayers, Linda McCarty, Laura Miller, Jerry Miller, Susan Moore, Anissa Richer, Cailyn Richer, Leann Stewart, April Strickler and Lizzi Strickler*.

Thanks to *Alyssa Shippey* of Atherton High School, for her many hours of work in our Parent Library entering books into an online catalog. Alyssa has also helped with office tasks. She is the daughter of VIPS controller Kim Shippey.

Thanks to *VIPS Parent Trent Damron* for continuing to help out with maintenance tasks.

Maintaining organization of the teachers' craft closet is an ongoing struggle but several ladies from *Highland Baptist Church* helped us do just that. While some were thanked in our previous newsletter, these volunteers were not: *Delaney Baker, Madeline Brummett, Emily Moyers and Lily Schapmire*. We apologize for our delay in telling them how very much we appreciate their efforts!

It's difficult to express the full extent of our ongoing gratitude to *Fran Woodward*, the hardy soul who comes back week after week to offer her support in our 2s classroom! We love that she chooses to spend some of her retirement hours with VIPS and to share her impressive skills with our younger kiddos.

Speaking of helping in the 2s classroom, we are also appreciative of Oldham County High School's Kirsten Webb for her time with the 2s.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make our Easter Party into such an enjoyable event: *Ryan Hack from St. Stephen Martyr School; Ben Toebe from Newburg Middle School; Suzann Bays, Mary Bays and Mary McNeill, all from Presentation Academy; U of L's Leah Breau, Christine Dillman and Haley Grosskopf; and Lauren Garrett of Sacred Heart Academy.* Thanks so much to each of you for sharing your time and talents with our families!

More thanks to *Ryan and Ben* who helped with tree removal prior to the installation of new lighting. They both also volunteered at Family Movie Night. Ryan volunteers at almost all VIPS events and is usually accompanied by his friend Ben. Ryan is the son of VIPS Family Services Coordinator/Development Assistant Martha Hack and has received a Beacon Award for his work.

Lucie Potter also volunteered her time by helping us with office work. Thanks for your help, Lucie!

We greatly appreciate *Otha Kessinger* for helping at the cookout benefitting the WHAS Crusade for Children.

For help with the Drive-In Movie Night, thanks to *Ashley Buren, Ryan Hack, Vicki May, Staci Maynard, Connor Peoples, and Ben Toebe.*

Friday Friends is a wonderful monthly event open to the public where children are royally entertained with meaningful learning activities. It is difficult to accomplish without the assistance of volunteers such as *Barry Banta and Jack Koch from St. Xavier High School; Kaylee Carruthers, Braxton Downs, Skyler Downs and Ally Priebe, all from Assumption High School; Sarah Cecil and Ali Fulkerson, both from Crosby Middle School; Jon and Michael Daniels, both of Barrett Traditional Middle School; Lauren Garrett from Sacred Heart Academy; Lydia Morris from Oldham County High School; Quinlan Morris from Oldham County Middle School; Lucie and Molly Potter from Holy Trinity School; and Kassani Wilson from Kentucky Country Day School.* It's wonderful to see youngish folks interacting with much younger ones! Thanks to all who gave unselfishly of their time.

A group of students from the *Kentucky Country Day School* helped with organizing and labeling donated preschool supplies in the storage room. Our thanks go to *Zuhayr Asad, Connor Caudill, Colin Ferguson, Annie Harrison, Julie Harvey, Melissa Hong, Kesric Mason, Asher Rosenblatt, Mick Smith, Alisya Solankhi and Jennifer Williams.*

Besides putting in some time observing in our classrooms, *U of L students Marcus Harper and Emily Smith* also helped with filing. Thanks for your help!

Events during which we depend heavily on volunteers are the Tennis Ball and Tennis Tournament. Helping with preparations for the tennis events, we owe a debt of gratitude to *Ryan Hack from St. Stephen Martyr* and *Amanda Landherr of University of KY* and a sibling of a VIPS grad. Helping with the Tennis Ball was a large number of VIPS staff members including *Ashley Buren, Beth Krebs, Mary Lesousky, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Mary Smyth and Tracy Webb.* Also helping were *Brandi Hitzelberger*, mother of two VIPS graduates, *Amanda Landherr, VIPS Board member Ellen Prizant and Kathy Toebe.*

VIPS receptionist Dani Harper's cousin, *Maggie Cajka*, brought her team from the *Humana Medicare Billing and Reconciliation Department* to volunteer. They did a great job of purging and organizing files and filling new board members' binders. They helped add Braille labels to board books. A volunteer also put Braille labels on the appliances in the Kids Town Bakery kitchen. They were all very enthusiastic and did a great job. Another volunteer has a cousin attending VIPS Kids Town Preschool. Thanks to these volunteers: *Beth Amburgey, Maggie Cajka, Brittney Kinzer, Kathy Mahoney, Melinda Metcalfe and Magan Wagner.*



The volunteers from Humana placed brailled labels on print books.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Many thanks to *Buddy Horn* who eagerly helped make glitter bottles and shakers for VIPS Welcome Bags. He was also a big help moving some boxes from the Central KY office to the VIPS storage unit.

Thank you to *Stephen Smyth* who helped load and unload filing cabinets from the Louisville office to the Central KY office. Couldn't have done it without him!

The *Delta Gamma Alumnae* joined forces with the *University of Kentucky Delta Gammas* to host a book drive on behalf of VIPS. They were able to collect three big boxes filled with brand new books like *Touch N' Feel* and musical books. These books will be brailled and given to new VIPS families. Thank you *Delta Gamma Alumnae* and *UK Delta Gammas* for helping VIPS children learn to read and grow.

VIPS-Indiana

Many thanks to *Eric Bruun, Carpenters Local Union #301, Delta Gamma -Theta Chapter at Indiana University, Glazer's Distributors of Indiana, and Gordon Holmes Special Needs Financial Planner with MetLife* for your generous sponsorships of our Walking with Dreams team. Thank you to the members of the *Washington Township Lions Club and the Delta Gammas* for walking on behalf of the children we serve. We owe thanks to *Chris Harden of Badly Drawn Dog, Jockamo Upper Crust Pizza, Ossip Optometry & Ophthalmology, Oliver Winery and Tito's Handmade Vodka* for supplying the door prizes for walkers to win! We are appreciative of the members of our *Advisory Board* who helped volunteer at the event. And our gratitude goes out to each and every person who donated and/or walked on behalf of VIPS – we couldn't do what we do without your support!

Development & Community Awareness Events

VIPS-Louisville

Yum! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament

VIPS-Louisville held the 27th annual YUM! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament on Monday, May 18 at Persimmon Ridge Golf Club. The weather served as the perfect backdrop to an enjoyable day on the course for nearly 30 teams along with some of the preschool



Longtime VIPS friend John Aufarth lets kids try on the Cris P. Chicken head.

children who demonstrated their skills with miniature clubs! Ty Thompson, a golfer who happens to be blind, joined the golfers for the day. As teams finished, the golfers could participate in the ball toss from the balcony, which was won by our very own VIPS parent Chad Davis.

Congratulations to the "Friends of VIPS" team for taking the top prize of the day! And of course, many thanks to our numerous sponsors, but especially to YUM! Brands' Andy Steinbach, Debbie Baldwin and their team for putting together another successful tournament, which raised a staggering \$72,000!



The Par-Tee Girls won one of the flights.

Brown-Forman Tennis Ball & Tournament

On May 30 and 31, VIPS-Louisville "served" a weekend of fun and fundraising at the Louisville Boat Club with the annual Brown-Forman Tennis Ball & Tournament! Saturday evening festivities kicked off with a bourbon tasting compliments of our sponsor, Brown Forman. Nearly 200 guests gathered for a special dinner and auction at the Ball, where they were treated to an eloquent testimony given by the Hitzelberger family, whose twins Abby and Alex graduated from VIPS in 2008. They then danced the night away to the live tunes of Rick's Rockin' Soul Revival featuring Rick Bartlett and his band. Fund-A-Vision began with a bang with a generous matching donation from Kosair Charities of \$10,000! Our very generous guests matched and then exceeded the \$10,000, raising over \$32,000!



A friendly handshake between competitors.

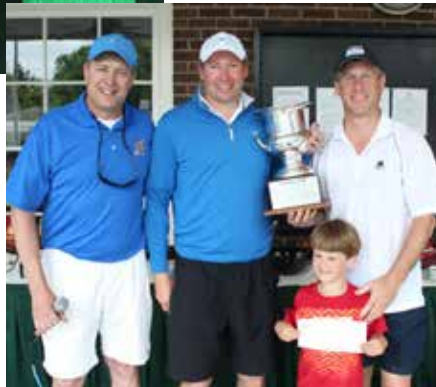


Above: On the ready to slam the ball.



Left: Winners in the Women's A Division, Dr. Symmes Johnson and Allison Scanlan, with Mark Fraley, Tennis Pro at the Louisville Boat Club.

Right: Winners in the Men's B Division Charles Garner and Marshal Farrer with Mark Fraley.



The following day, tennis teams battled it out on the courts in the annual Tennis Tournament. In all, VIPS was able to raise more than \$100,000 throughout the entire weekend! Special thanks to our event chairs, Brandi Hitzelberger and Jay Hatcher, for creating such a fun and memorable event.

2015 Beacon Awards

On Tuesday, June 16, VIPS was honored to recognize the donors, volunteers and advocates who have helped to advance the agency's mission at its 2015 Beacon Awards event, held at the Louisville campus.

The recipients were recognized during a dinner inside Kosair Kids Town and presented with an award. The 2015 recipients were as follows:

Individual Benefactor: *Ms. Bonnie Bizer (posthumously)*

Individual Volunteer: *Ryan Hack*

Corporate Benefactor: *Brown-Forman Corporation*

Corporate Volunteer: *UPS Louisville Brokerage United Way Committee*

Social Service Award: *Middletown Christian Church*

KY Parent Ambassador: *The Buren Family*

IN Parent Ambassador: *The Kelly/Singleton Family*

VIPS Ambassador Award: *Ms. LeNee Carroll*

Congratulations to all these winners as well as all others who have helped shape and share VIPS' impressive growth!

Award Winners 8th Grader Ryan Hack, son of Events Coordinator/Family Services Coordinator Martha Hack and Ashley Buren, VIPS Mom and Instructional Assistant.



Supporting the WHAS Crusade for Children

VIPS in Louisville has been a grateful recipient of funding from the WHAS Crusade for Children for many years. When our office in Lexington was founded, the staff there also began writing Crusade grants and then, a few years later, our Indiana office followed suit.

It has long been our practice to ask our employees to support the Crusade's endeavors since those ultimately benefit the children we serve. We can have Crusade donations automatically made from our paychecks. Our staff most willingly open our classrooms for WHAS film crews including the Christmas angels (interviews with VIPS children) for the Crusade's e-card and as part of the Crusade's Papa John's online deal. We encourage our families to serve as spokespersons, participating in the actual Crusade as well as at other community events. Ashley Buren, a VIPS mom who also happens to be an employee, and her daughters actually accompanied their local firemen on their house-to-house collecting!



Pyper and Addyson Buren collecting for the Crusade in their neighborhood.

VIPS staff members and families support a cookout that draws patrons from the nearby office buildings with all the proceeds sent to the Crusade. This year Executive Director Diane Nelson presented the Crusade with a check for \$1,650 from staff donations and fundraising.



During the Crusade Cookout, the children were able to experience an antique fire truck, thanks to Middletown Fire Department and Beau Schuster,

VIPS-Indiana

On Monday, April 20, VIPS-Indiana Advisory Board President and VIPS mom Jenny Kelly made a presentation to the Delta Gamma – Theta Chapter at Indiana University. Jenny spoke about the services VIPS provides to children and their families. Because she experienced it firsthand, Jenny was able to share the profound effect of Maya's home visits. While listening, the participants used tactile materials to produce texture bottles which are included in Welcome Bags for new VIPS families. Jenny's first presentation was such a success, we're sure there will be many more!



On April 22, VIPS-Indiana Teacher of the Visually Impaired Annie Hughes gave a presentation to Professor Melissa Keller's Early Childhood Educator class at Indiana University in Bloomington. Professor Keller has become a supporter of VIPS and has even taken her class to the VIPS preschool in Louisville so that her students could learn about young children with blindness and low vision. An interesting fact about Professor Keller is that she is actually a relative of Helen Keller's! Thank you Professor Keller for enthusiastically sharing the mission of VIPS with your students!

On Wednesday, May 13, Annie Hughes and Meredith Howell, VIPS-IN Office Manager and Family Services Coordinator, spoke to the National Association of Social Workers on best practices for working with infants and toddlers with visual impairments. The morning training was a joint collaboration of VIPS and Bosma Enterprises. The goal was to provide practitioners an opportunity to learn about resources and services for individuals with visual impairments of all ages.

Families, staff members and board members of VIPS-Indiana joined the Kiwanis Club of Bloomington at the Bloomington 4th of July Parade! The goal was to reflect our collaborative efforts in helping the community learn about Operation Chili for Children. Operation Chili for Children is a chili dinner fundraiser that benefits VIPS and other nonprofits that serve children throughout the community.



The fundraiser will take place on Friday, October 23 at the Bloomington Armory. Stay tuned for more details. Many thanks to all of the VIPS supporters that handed out flyers and candy to the crowd of over 8000! And most of all, thank you to the Kiwanis of Bloomington for all that you do to support the children and families we serve!

On Monday evening, June 8, Annie Hughes provided training for First Steps early interventionists from Pediatric Specialty Associates. The professionals attending received information about the impact of vision loss and blindness on the early development of babies and toddlers. Annie also shared an update on the growth of VIPS in Indiana. David Sterne, a participant in Project VIISA, (Visually Impaired In-Service in America), shared his personal experiences from the training which was held in Louisville for Indiana and Kentucky interventionists. Specific information that had been requested regarding Orientation & Mobility and fostering movement in young children with vision loss was also shared. The training included a Power Point presentation with many photos of VIPS children, hands on opportunities with many materials, and a lively question and answer session.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

12th Annual Golf Tournament

May 12th at Keene Trace Golf Club in Nicholasville was a great day for golfers at the 12th Annual Visually Impaired Preschool Services Golf Tournament. A first this year was the need for two tee times with the first at 8 a.m. and the second at 2 p.m. We had 24 new hole sponsorships and are looking forward to increasing that number next year! Auction items were a huge success and also brought in new community supporters to the organization. Next year's date has been set for May 10th at Keene Trace with a dinner and silent auction the night before! Mark your calendars now for another great event!



Left: Miss Dixie gives Clay a hand for making his putt. Below: Sarah and daughter Harper drove a golf cart.



Children's Charity of the Bluegrass

The 35th Anniversary of the Children's Charity Golf Tournament was held in Lexington, KY the week of June 22 – 27th. As a recipient of the Children's Charity grant, VIPS Central Kentucky was very active in this weeklong event. On Monday, June 22, Chairman of the Central KY Board, George Hocker and Director of Community Relations, Terry DeLuca, attended the kick-off reception. Co-chairs for the tournament, UK Women's Coach Matthew Mitchell and former Cincinnati Reds star Doug Flynn presented VIPS-Central KY with a check for \$25,000 from last year's tournament proceeds of \$5,180,000.00. Tuesday, June 23, Dixie Miller, Teacher of Visually Impaired for VIPS and her daughter Olivia, as well as several VIPS families attended the Children's Charity Kids Jamboree

which was held at The Explorium. This is a special evening where kids of the benefiting agencies can come to experience all the fun The Explorium has to offer and just be entertained. June 25th brought an evening of entertainment by celebrities in for the tournament as well as local celebrities for dinner and a cabaret show. Friday and Saturday were the tournament days and our own VIPS staff, board members and former board members worked the event. Those assisting the tournament were George & Kathy Hocker, Tony & Denise Placido, Mary Smyth and Terry DeLuca. Another successful tournament was held for agencies that will benefit greatly from the money raised again this year.



At the check presentation (L-R): former Cincinnati Reds star Doug Flynn, VIPS-Central KY Board President George Hocker, Community Relations/Development Director Terry DeLuca, and UK Women's Coach Matthew Mitchell.

Fundraisers, Grants and Donations



VIPS-Louisville

Crusade for Children: We received the great news that the Crusade for Children has awarded a total of \$139,000 to the three VIPS offices, all for direct services! VIPS-Louisville will receive \$84,000, VIPS-Central Kentucky will receive \$40,000 and VIPS-Indiana will receive \$15,000. Thanks for your support of the Crusade and thanks, Crusade, for your support of VIPS!!!

The Artemis Fund donated \$2,000 for direct services;

Jacob C. Koch Charitable Trust has donated \$4,859 for classroom furniture, iPads, playground equipment and Family Retreat;

Kosair Charities has made a commitment of \$150,000 to support Kids Town Preschool at VIPS during the 2016 fiscal year;

Louisville Metro Government is funding \$8,000 to support the Music Therapy Program;

The Porcini/Farmer Children's Foundation has donated \$2,000 for the VIPS Pre-K Program;

Younger Woman's Club has awarded a grant of \$2,450 to purchase new classroom learning tools and Music Therapy instruments;

Dr. Mark Lynn donated a huge amount of lens cleaning supplies for the Kids Town Preschool.

Thanks Subway!

VIPS would like to express our immense gratitude to Roy and Shannon Pierce, owners of the Subway at Newburg Road and Goldsmith Lane. We have benefitted from their generous spirit time and time again since they became neighbors a few years ago. We have received food donations, open arms to our children on "field trips" and now, solving a somewhat complex problem at VIPS.

Our Louisville location sits on a small parcel of property with limited parking. We were facing the possibility of losing

some parking due to a needed move of our dumpster (because dumpster pickup vehicles can no longer fit under the portico that led to the former location). We reached out to Roy to see if we could temporarily use his dumpster until we found a feasible alternative. Roy agreed without hesitation to just "share" his dumpster on a permanent basis, completely solving the issue!

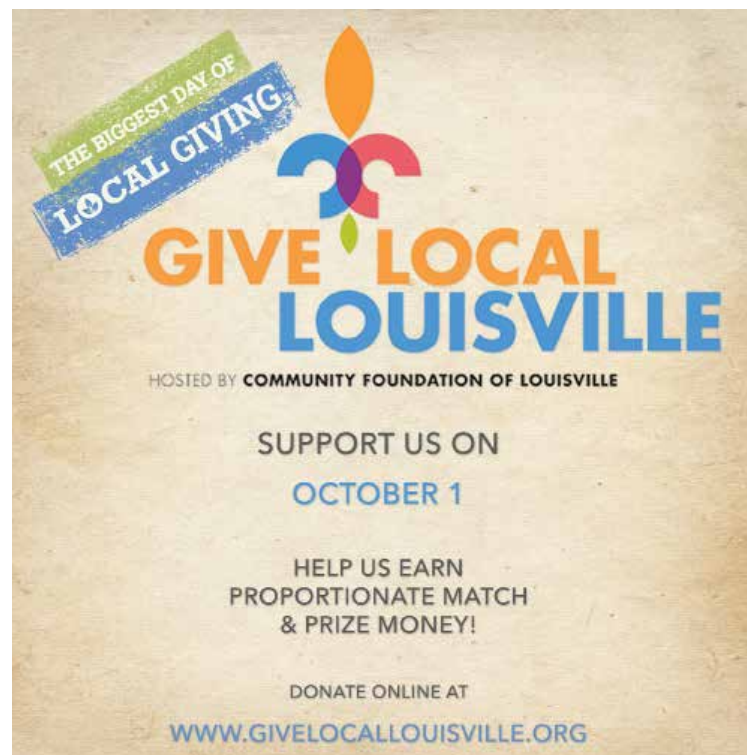
The Pierces and Subway have been amazing and generous neighbors; we thank them for helping us continue to change the lives of children with blindness and low vision!

30th Anniversary Challenge

The VIPS 30th Anniversary Challenge continues throughout 2015! An anonymous donor has pledged \$100,000 to VIPS if we can raise an additional \$200,000. Your donation during this time will help many VIPS children and their families to receive important early intervention services. A donation envelope is included in this newsletter or you can donate online at www.vips.org.

Raffle

Congratulations to James Darmstadt of Louisville who won the VIPS Spring Raffle! He purchased his ticket at the YUM! Brands Golf Tournament. We hope he has fun spending his cash prize. Thank you to everyone who purchased a raffle ticket this year!



UAW/Ford Mobility City Coming to VIPS-Louisville

Thanks to UAW and Ford Motors, VIPS-Louisville will soon have an outdoor mobility practice area modeled after a typical street scape. The groundbreaking for the UAW/Ford Mobility City project was on Aug. 17. The anticipated cost of the project will be \$60,000 - \$70,000, all of which will be covered through donations and donated labor and materials.

VIPS-Central KY Grants

VIPS-Central Kentucky has received the following grants:

Ronald McDonald House Charities has donated \$4,100 for Summer Enrichment

United Way of the Bluegrass has funded a local grant of \$4,000 for Family Events

Children's Charity of the Bluegrass, \$25,000 for direct services

Frankfort Kiwanis Club presented VIPS-Central Kentucky with a check for \$350 for programming during their meeting and luncheon.

Lexington South Lions Club made a generous donation of \$500 to VIPS-Central KY for programming.

Thanks to all of our donors for your continuing support. We could not serve the children of VIPS without you!

Wish List

VIPS-Louisville

Baby wipes
Paper Towels
White cardstock paper
Colored cardstock paper

VIPS-Indiana

Plastic Bins with Lids
Computer Paper

VIPS-Indiana

Walking for Dreams was VIPS Indiana's largest fundraiser to date bringing in over \$16,000! On May 17th, 106 walkers represented VIPS in this 5K fundraiser sponsored by the Sycamore Foundation for local non-profits in and around Indianapolis. VIPS staff, families, and friends walked along the Canal in downtown Indy on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

We are thankful for our **2015 Walking for Dreams sponsors: Eric Bruun, Carpenters Local Union #301, Delta Gamma -Theta Chapter at Indiana University, Glazer's Distributors of Indiana, and Gordon Holmes Special Needs Financial Planner with MetLife.**

Thanks to the VIPS families and friends who showed up with smiles on their faces and good walking shoes on their feet. We could not serve Indiana's youngest visually impaired children without you!

We are eagerly looking forward to next year!



Top: VIPS had a large group of supporters. Middle: Washington Township Lions joined in the fun to support VIPS; Bottom: VIPS moms & kids.



1906 Goldsmith Lane
Louisville, KY 40218

Visually Impaired
Preschool Services

Change Service Requested



ViSability is made possible through grants from the Linda Neville Foundation and the Fred B. and Opal S. Woosley Foundation.



Upcoming Events

Saturday, October 3

The 13th Annual Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS, a 5k walk/run presented by Ford and Louisville Downtown Lions Club, will be held at the Dr. Mark & Cindy Lynn Soccer Stadium on Floyd Street. Day-of registration will begin at 6:30 a.m. with race to follow at 8 a.m., and Kids' Fun Run at 9:30 a.m. Families are encouraged to form friends & family teams. Festivities will include live bluegrass music, face painting and more! Register at www.vips.org.

Midwest Mahem Custom Car Show benefitting **VIPS-Central KY**, at Whittaker Bank Ball Park.

Thursday, October 15

The Second Annual Eye Opening Symposium will be held at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. The event will cover topics such as bioptic driving, developments in research, Orientation & Mobility, low vision clinics, and quality of life. The event is sponsored by many agencies including VIPS, and is free to the public.

Friday, October 23

Operation Chili for Children,
Bloomington, IN

Saturday, October 24

Trunk-n-Treat at VIPS-Louisville. Watch your mail for details.

Friday & Saturday, November 13 - 14

Registration is now open for the 2015 VIPS Family Retreat & KSB Parent Conference! VIPS is partnering with the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) to hold a joint family retreat/parent conference at KSB in Louisville. We will begin on Friday with registration, a family dinner, and an inspirational speaker for the parents as well as activities for the children at Kids Camp and Respite Care. On Saturday, we will continue with exciting speakers on topics of interest to families with children from birth-21! We only have room for 50 families so don't delay! Register now at www.vips.org. For more information contact Martha Hack at mhack@vips.org or 502-498-2926 with questions.

Holiday Season

VIPS-Louisville families will be able to attend KaLightoscope at the Galt House for a Holiday Treat. The exhibit features giant silk luminaries and many other fun activities for everyone. Tickets will be available by November 15 from Martha Hack. Immediate members of VIPS families will be able to attend free of charge. Additional tickets may be purchased for \$5 each.

Friday, December 18

Krista Detor Holiday Concert,
Bloomington, IN

ViSability is a quarterly publication of Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Jan Moseley, Editor.

VIPS-Louisville

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Pauletta Feldman, Administrative Support
Greta Gillmeister, Music Therapist
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Dani Harper, Receptionist
Beth Krebs, Preschool Assistant Director/Instructional Asst.
Mary Lesousky, TV/Developmental Interventionist
Paige Maynard, TV (in training)/Preschool Teacher
Staci Maynard, TV (in training)/PAL/Preschool Teacher
Barbara Merrick, TV/Preschool Teacher
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Kathy Moulden, Preschool Instructional Assistant
Becky Owens, After School Care
Ashley Penn, Developmental Interventionist
Beth Owens, Preschool Instructional Assistant
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