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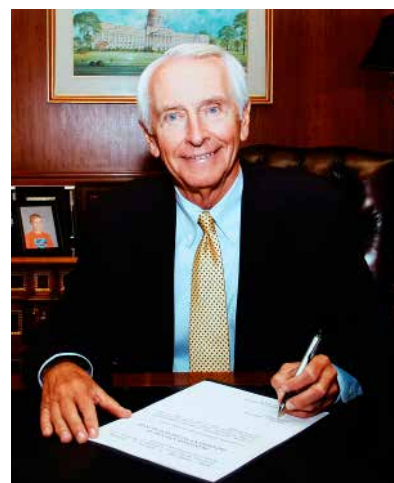
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# Celebrating Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month

Governor Steve Beshear proclaimed October as Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month at the request of the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK). In addition to the official Proclamation, Governor Beshear also signed a brailled version of the proclamation in honor of all individuals who are blind or visually impaired residing in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The BSCK states the purpose of the proclamation was to create awareness of the needs and abilities of individuals who are blind or visually impaired; to empower families and communities to provide supports and resources that will enable children who are blind or visually impaired to reach their highest potential developmentally and educationally and adults who are blind or visually impaired to lead full and productive lives; and to advocate on the behalf of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

*Continued on pg. 2*



Governor Beshear signing the proclamation.

## Family Stories of Hope

### Bronson



Before our son Bronson was born in December 2009, we worried about being good parents. We worried about buying the right car seat, the right books. We thought about how to make a house safe for a baby, and how to raise a little person into a happy, productive adult. I can say with absolute certainty that visual impairment and blindness never crossed my mind as something with which we should concern ourselves.

When Bronson was born, he was beautiful and perfect. He was so engaging with us, we initially did not notice that he could not see us. As his three-month checkup approached, we noticed that he did not track his toys and did not reach for them.

Then, at his check-up, I watched panic wash over our pediatrician as he told us he did not think Bronson could see him. I'll never forget the icy waves of fear I felt; the next day a very nice nurse at

*Continued on pg. 2*

### Mission Statement

**VIPS empowers families by providing educational excellence to young children with visual impairments in order to build a strong foundation for reaching their highest potential.**

Interventionist, Lisa West. Washington Township Lions Club President Ron Bigham generously donated five of his shifts to VIPS. VIPS received a check for \$501.47 for the Corn Stand efforts. We thank Lion Ron for his support!

## Epsilon Sigma Alpha

On Saturday, September 12, Annie Hughes had the honor of presenting to the Epsilon Sigma Alpha Indiana State Council Fall Conference at Huntington University in Huntington, Indiana. Annie was asked to share some of the ways vision loss/blindness impacts learning and development, the growth of VIPS specialized intervention in Indiana, and ways that ESA might help. The presentation occurred because of a chance meeting of ESA member, Jennifer Skinner, and Annie when they were both working at Global Gifts on Community Night in November 2014. Jennifer suggested that Annie be the conference guest speaker and offered to have members complete a craft project during the conference to donate for use with the children. Members collected/purchased the materials to make "shaker tubes" filled with jingle bells or black beans that will be used during home visits and as part of Indiana's "Welcome Bags." ESA featured photos and Annie's thank you letter on their state website. Members are certainly living their mission to work with positive people who enjoy making a difference and having fun together.

## Bosma Enterprises Celebrates 100 Years!

On Wednesday, September 23, after morning home visits, staff members Annie Hughes, Lisa West, and David Sterne attended Bosma Enterprises 100 Year Anniversary Community Open House to support this amazing non-profit that does so much in our state. Since 1915, Bosma has been providing job training, employment services, rehabilitation services and outreach to Indiana adults with blindness or low vision. Guests were treated to light refreshments, a tour of the facility, and a presentation including State and National elected officials. VIPS looks forward to future collaborations with Bosma.

## VIPS-Indiana to Host reVISION

VIPS Indiana is hosting its very own version of the ever popular art exhibit, reVISION. The opening night of reVISION will be an exciting evening of wine, hors d'oeuvres and, of course, exceptional art. reVISION is designed to welcome individuals who are blind (and their sighted peers) into a unique interactive art exhibit.

The show will run during January and February 2016 in the art gallery at the Indiana Interchurch Center. The goal of reVISION is to make an art exhibit fully accessible to a blind patron. For this unique exhibit, VIPS asked artists to re-imagine their work in a way that it can be enjoyed by art lovers who are blind. reVISION

will transform the traditional gallery presentation into a tactile, auditory, and spatial experience that welcomes everyone - blind and sighted alike. The show will feature artists of all ages as VIPS partners with the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to showcase artwork submitted by the students themselves. Contact Meredith Howell at [mhowell@vips.org](mailto:mhowell@vips.org) for more information.

# Grant and Fundraising News

## VIPS-Louisville

**Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation** provided \$55,500 to support the Direct Services and Family Services programs and the Stampede for VIPS.

**The Wood & Marie Hanna Foundation** recently donated \$7,196 to cover the cost of the air conditioning repair at VIPS-Louisville.

In the first 3 quarters of 2015, VIPS-Louisville received \$1,390.44 from the **Kroger Community Rewards program!** It takes only a few minutes online to sign up to support VIPS at [www.kroger.com/communityrewards](http://www.kroger.com/communityrewards), so please consider it if you have not already joined up. Every dollar helps us serve blind/visually impaired preschoolers and their families! If you previously signed up to support VIPS through the Kroger's program, you must re-enroll at this time because you were likely dropped from the program on September 1st.

**Patty Wheatley**, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, donated several braille books to VIPS. Patty has long been a supporter of VIPS -- we do appreciate her giving spirit!

A huge thank you goes to **Maureen, Ken and Matt at Pretty Incredible Communications** for their pretty incredible and very generous donation of numerous varieties of paper. They donated copier paper, card stock, and construction paper, in varied colors and textures. You name it...they gave it and our teachers and staff are absolutely thrilled!

Thanks so much to the **Gates and Brettnacher families** for their support! They recently requested that donations be made to VIPS in honor of VIPS Preschooler Anthony's birthday.

Anthony with his birthday cake.



#### Blindness/VI Awareness Month, continued from front page

Donna Brostek Lee, VIPS- CK board member and VI Program Faculty Chair at UK, brailled the Proclamation that Governor Beshear signed. She dropped it off at the Governor's Office one September morning, and received word that he signed it that same day! Thanks, Donna, for your part in designating this special month! Thanks also to Terry DeLuca, VIPS-CK Community Relations/Development Director, for her assistance with the photo of the Governor signing the proclamation. And of course, none of this would be possible had VIPS-CK Office Manager Mary Smyth not led the efforts to obtain this special designation as well as chairing the BSCK.

## Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Eye Opening Symposium

As a member of the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) VIPS assisted in the planning and hosting of the BSCK's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Eye Opening Symposium at the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington, KY. The symposium was aimed at professionals and caregivers of those with visual impairments. The agenda featured Dr. John W. Kitchens, Retina Associates of KY, with updates on the latest research and treatments affecting vision. Other program topics included bioptic driving, functional interventions, resources that exist in the community to help the visually impaired, and ways that quality of life can be maintained despite vision loss.



#### Family Stories, continued from front page

an ophthalmologist's office tried to comfort us by saying that Bronson might have a refractive error and may need glasses. I wanted to be casual like she was, but I couldn't muster it. I knew it was worse than that.

On Good Friday, Bronson was diagnosed with bilateral optic nerve hypoplasia, and we knew that he was severely visually impaired. As of today, Bronson perceives light and motion, and there has been some improvement of his vision over the past five years.

It's amazing how well very young children adapt to vision loss; Bronson always finds a way to do what he wants to do despite his limited vision. When he was a toddler, I was convinced that he would find a way to learn things without the benefit of vision. This is partially true; his ability to solve a problem amazes me every day. But as he got older, the impact of blindness on his development became more and more clear, and we knew we had to find a pre-school that was right for him.

Just before Bronson turned four years old, we visited VIPS in Louisville. I didn't know what to expect, and I couldn't imagine how to manage our situation. This was because we live three and a half hours away from Louisville, and a seven-hour daily commute was not a possibility. When we visited VIPS, we saw happy children who were learning and thriving, and world-class teachers and staff who knew exactly how to serve them. We knew that any other plan of action would not compare to what VIPS had to offer. We decided to rent an apartment in Louisville so Bronson and his dad could come to VIPS every week, and I would stay in Eastern Kentucky for my job. Emotionally, this was not easy, and it still isn't. But Bronson's progress tells us that we absolutely made the right decision. Every week Bronson comes home with more vocabulary and more skills. He and his daddy are inseparable and forever best friends, and their adventures together make life great.

We are thankful every day for VIPS, and I am learning to let my gratitude drown out my fear. Most of all I am grateful for my sweet boy, and the opportunity we have to love, hug, and teach him every day.

*~Megan, Bronson's Mom*

### Vance

This is my son Vance. He will be 5 years old on December 1, 2015. Recently there has been talk that this could be his final year at VIPS, as he may be ready for Kindergarten in the fall of 2016. I am, of course, protesting this!!! I am not ready, I keep telling myself. I have said those words many times in the course of Vance's life. But this time it is not because of a surgery or finding out the results of the latest test or assessment. This time it is because I am not ready to say goodbye to this time of his life.

As I reflect back on the last 5 years of his life it becomes so clear to me that I did not raise this child alone. In fact, it took a lot of people to get Vance to where he is today. I want to thank those people because without them, I am certain he wouldn't be doing as awesome as he is.

First off let me thank my husband, Brandon Lovett. Thank you for always being our rock. Your perseverance and stubbornness have served us so well with Vance. You are always there through our ups and downs. I can always rely on you to make sure we get what we need for our son. I love you! Thank you to my kiddos Max, Makenzie and Adyson. You three have proven to be the best siblings any little brother could ask for. All three of you are patient and always willing to find new ways to entertain and include your brother. It truly fills my heart to see you all playing and laughing with your brother. I know that it has been really tough sometimes but you have all been really strong and patient during those times and I know that you will grow into amazing, accepting individuals.

Thank you to all the people at VIPS. I could list all of your names but we know that could take up a whole page. You all have played a huge role in helping Vance get where he is today. Each one of you has a different approach with Vance and he has a different reaction to everyone. Thank you for not giving up on him, for being willing to try a million different techniques to get him to be involved and participate. Thank you all for being so patient with his crazy tired mother!! Thank you for giving me ideas and tips and teaching me how to teach my son. When he was first diagnosed one of my biggest fears was that I wouldn't be able to interact with him, that I would never truly be able to understand my son. All of you that worked with him from the very early days, up until now, have showed me just how much potential he has. Each and every one of you appreciates his sense of humor and his sweet smile.

Everything I could give you or say pales in comparison to what this group of people has done for us. Every day they give me peace of mind and restore the hope within my heart. I am truly sad and thrilled at the same time that Vance may be graduating from preschool this year. I could not have done it without all of you.

Most importantly, thank you Vance. You have taught me so much in short life. You have showed me that there is no obstacle that we cannot overcome, that it is okay to ask for help, to never underestimate what the power of love can achieve. And you have a lot of love coming your way!!!!

**~Emily, Vance's Mom**



## Lola

### *To the Hairdresser Who Changed How People Saw My Child With Special Needs*

Dear Hairdresser,

I should know your name. I can't believe I don't. I was busy trying to corral my two children, pay for their haircuts and maintain my sanity. I remembered to profusely thank you, and I could have very well asked your name. In fact, I'm sure I did, but that important detail has faded. Unfortunately what I do remember is that people were staring at us prior to you calling my daughter, Lola, back. I remember my face feeling flush. I remember thinking the outing was a bad idea when Lola began to run in places she wasn't supposed to and grab at things she shouldn't have. I remember the piercing scream she belted out when I tried to redirect her behavior. I remember my mom trying to offer assistance. Most of the final encounter you and I shared is now a distant memory (even if it was only a few weeks ago), but one thing I will never forget is this: how kind you were to my daughter.

I once read a story where the mother shared her fear that there would be a day when people didn't think her child with special needs was cute anymore. As the child aged, the little nuances her kid had would no longer be adorable or socially acceptable. She voiced that for some reason, strangers love babies and toddlers with special needs, but the cuteness factor clearly wears off with time. This struck a chord with me because my Lola is now pushing 4 and a half years old. She's a delightful little soul who's faced tough medical challenges in her short years on this earth. She has a rare genetic condition called NR2F1, which has caused cortical visual impairment, developmental delays and epilepsy. Lola has always been ridiculously charming, and she sure is a beauty, yet I'm starting to understand the writer's concern. A tantrum by an almost 5-year-old is not really that cute anymore. Her occasional tantrum used to be a cue for others to say, "Don't worry, it's just the terrible twos," but that has now turned into uncomfortable stares and awkward whispering. Because she's now becoming a little girl, so a screaming fit or my inability to get her to stand up and walk now makes her look like a spoiled child who doesn't



listen. I totally get it because I was once on the other side. Before I had a kid with special needs, I probably would have been curious as to why a child couldn't be easily calmed. Now it's our life. Now I wish I could go back and have more compassion. It's not that I was ever rude; I was just naive. I wish I could have offered an empathetic look that said, "I'm not looking at you. I see you."

Lola has incredible hair. You even noted how gorgeous it was. She's had more haircuts than any other kid I know — without incident. So it came as a huge surprise when she began to have a meltdown as you started to cut. You and I tried everything. You took extreme caution because you didn't want to upset her more. You were gentle in your actions and words. You tried to talk her through it, but she was angry. I gave her my phone, and she just threw it. Thinking quickly, I grabbed your mirror because she loves mirrors, but she cried even harder. Nothing was working. Her unusual behavior baffled me even though we were getting used to her fits of displeasure. She's on an anti-epileptic drug called Keppra, and I didn't have it in me to explain its awful side effects. I just wanted to get through that moment. And just when I was about to give up, you did something I didn't see coming — you began to sing to her. I'm crying now thinking back to that moment. Finally, we began to see Lola relax.

A lot of people are genuinely curious about Lola, yet others will say the most asinine things like, "She doesn't look like she has special needs." Really? That sure is comforting. "God only gives special kids to special people." That's a bunch of bologna, in my opinion. There are awful stories in the news every day about parents doing horrific things to their kids with special needs. I do feel pretty lucky that she's mine, though. "I don't know how you do it." What? Love my kid? Me either — it sure is hard. "Well, can't she talk?" No. As a matter of fact she can't right now. Why do you think she is screaming so loudly? Because she can't voice her dismay. "She doesn't look visually impaired." Why? Because she doesn't use a white cane?

I'm telling you, the comments are something I couldn't make up. Most days I educate and other days I ignore the comments. I almost always want to adamantly defend her because she's worked so hard to get to where she is today. But I've realized a lot of people just don't know any better. So you can understand why it came with great surprise to see how warm and gracious you were with Lola. You would say, "It's OK, Lola," and then you would start singing another song. You would look at me for approval, and I would just smile. I think the tears in my eyes said it all. I was grateful for you. Near the end of the haircut, you quietly shared that you had a daughter with Asperger's syndrome. And that you understood what I was feeling in that very moment. You said you were able to cut your daughter's hair at home but that she had similar meltdowns like the one you saw my daughter experience. You didn't have to share all of this with me, but I was thankful you did. It meant a lot to me.

Your act of kindness seeped into the hearts of the onlookers. Stares that once said, "Get your kid together," became looks of empathy instead of pity. Some were quick to say hello to Lola. Some asked if she liked her haircut and jumped at the chance to get the door for us. You see, showing compassion is a trait not everyone embodies, but the compassion you showed my

family mirrored what others can easily do in their everyday lives. Perhaps the next time they see a child having a tantrum, they will remember that Saturday afternoon. Hopefully they will recall the songs you sang and the calmness you instilled in my daughter. Hopefully they will remember how easy it is to be kind.

Gratefully,

~ **Meredith, Lola's Mom** (*The Tearful Mom in the Salon*)

## Addy

I knew from the time that our daughter was diagnosed at four months old, that there were much harder days ahead. One in particular, that I dreaded the most. No matter how much I dreaded it and no matter the years I had to prepare myself, it would come way too soon.

Like most of motherhood, it does not matter when you are ready. So nonetheless that day came. I was getting ready in the bathroom and Addy was eating cereal on the living floor just as we had done many mornings before. Then it happened, she mumbled the words I had feared she would for so long. "I am blind." My heart immediately sank.

I didn't think it would hurt so much to hear it come out of her mouth. She was nearly five years old at this point, and we had been dealing with her diagnosis of Optic Nerve Hypoplasia for over 4 years now. I had completely accepted her diagnosis and all the therapy sessions, specialists visits, IEPs, and all the other challenges that came along with it. Regardless of how I felt, I had to address this situation as best I could. I left the bathroom and sat down next to her on the floor and wiped away the tears on my face. I didn't want her to know that I was sad. I didn't want her to ever feel sad about her differences. She is smart, and funny, and so full of life. There was nothing to be sad about. I asked her what she thought "blind" meant. She replied "it means I can't wear glasses." I told Addy that being blind meant she did not see with her eyes, like most people do. I began to tell her the different ways people see. I reminded her, Daddy needs glasses to help him see, and Addy uses her cane, sense of touch, smell, and sound to see. I continued to tell her God made her different, and that it was ok that she couldn't see with her eyes like most other people do.

She didn't insist on bringing it up again for the rest of the day, I guess God knew my heart needed a break. As a parent you want to give your child everything you can. No matter what I did, I could never give Addy her eyesight, and in a way that made me



feel like I was failing my daughter. I don't know why God made her different, and it doesn't really matter why. All that matters is how we react to the situation we have been handed. What matters is that we have created an environment where Addy feels loved and confident enough in herself that she knows there is nothing in this world she can't do. For several months after Addy was diagnosed I didn't understand why God would allow this to happen to our family, and more specifically a tiny blue eyed and blonde haired little girl. I have spent much more time now trying to understand why God allowed us to be the parents of such a wonderful little girl. She is truly amazing and such a blessing to our entire family. Although there are many struggles, there are so many more victories. "Motherhood is about raising and celebrating the child you have, not the child you thought you'd have. It's about understanding she is exactly who she is supposed to be. And if you're lucky enough she just might be the teacher who turns you into the person you're supposed to be. "

**~Brittany, or as most people know me "Addy's Momma"**

## Aurora Dawn

My name is Sara and I am a proud VIPS mom from Indiana. My beautiful one-year-old daughter Aurora Dawn is visually impaired. She has two older brothers, Nathan who is six and Noah who is three. Neither of the boys are visually impaired. I knew, nearly right away, that Aurora's eyesight was different because I had already had two children prior, and simply because of my "motherly intuition." Aurora also has a cyst, about the size of a green grape, inside the right side of her brain. Right away, we made doctor appointments and visits at Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana. Soon after her first eye doctor appointment at Riley, we were introduced to VIPS. We were also introduced to our county's First Steps office, which provides her with physical therapy, even some visual therapy.



My family and I were so thrilled to learn of VIPS and all it has to offer. I couldn't wait to make Aurora's first appointment! When the appointment time came, I met a very nice and caring individual named Annie Hughes. She and a coworker made a visit to my family home for our first meeting. I was

amazed at how knowledgeable and wonderful Annie was with my baby girl. She showed me things and taught me tools to use on my own with my daughter. They even brought toys and gifts!

My little Aurora Dawn has made so much progress and improvement with her vision. When she was just a few months

old, around her first Christmas last year, she wasn't able to look upward or even hold her eyes still, let alone look forward. She had little control, but now she can do all that and more with absolutely no problem! Thanks to the therapy and resources through VIPS, it seems as though nearly anything is possible for my little girl.

In all, my daughter, my family, and myself couldn't be happier or more thankful to have VIPS in our lives, especially little Miss Aurora Dawn. VIPS is such a blessing! Thank you, VIPS!

**~Sara, Aurora Dawn's Mom**

## Harper

Harper Gwen was welcomed into our Kentucky home in the spring of 2013. She has been diagnosed with Joubert Syndrome (JS) which is a rare genetic disorder. She has visual impairment as well as global developmental delays as a result of her JS.



After leaving the hospital over two years ago, feeling dismayed and saddened it was hard to imagine life as it is today with a daughter who brings an infectious smile and laugh to all those she meets and is a little ray of sunshine for those around her.

Raising Harper presents many challenges for our family but we have learned to live life one day at a time and treat Harper just as we do her healthy five-year-old brother Davis.

Harper works hard weekly in therapy including Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and with her teacher of the visually impaired, Ms. Dixie. Harper has developed a special relationship with Ms. Dixie and always has a smile waiting for Dixie when she walks through the front door. Just recently on a live news broadcast, Harper spontaneously held Dixie's finger throughout our interview.

VIPS has been instrumental in educating us about the resources available to Harper within the community as well as providing the tools necessary to monitor Harper's visual development. Thank you VIPS!

**~Sarah, Harper's Mom**

## Kyla

Kyla just turned two years old! She experienced a loss of oxygen (HIE) at birth that led to damage to her brain. Because of the damage, she has been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy

and Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). We found VIPS when we were searching for help for Kyla for her CVI when she was just a few months old. That is when we found Annie! Even though we live hours away from her, right outside of Chicago, Annie comes to us several times a year! She's been an enormous help in letting us know how we can help Kyla learn to see, give her more control of her world, and simplify our home so that she can see things easier!



Kyla has been in as many as 9 therapies at one time and we consider our time with Annie to be some of the most valuable hours that we've spent with any therapist. She's amazing!

We thank VIPS and their staff for all of their hard work to give kids like Kyla a better life!

**~Lynn & Eric, Kyla's parents**

## Pyper

Many of you may know Pyper's story since I work at VIPS and have gotten to know a lot of parents. So when asked to write about blindness and visual impairment awareness month, I decided to pay tribute to all the wonderful therapists Pyper has had over the last three and a half years...Stay tuned; it has been a fun and wild ride!

At the age of five months Pyper was diagnosed as Visually Impaired with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia. She also had some other physical disabilities. Both of these things would later lead us to early intervention services through First Steps and VIPS. These wonderful people not only came into our homes, but also became a part of our lives.

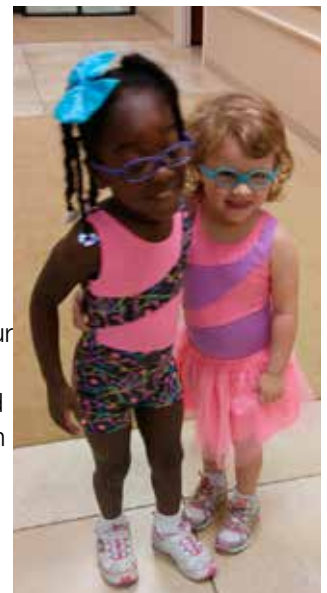
We will start with Miss Paige Maynard; she was Pyper's Developmental Interventionist and would provide us with vision services through VIPS. I will never forget the day she came into my home for the first time. I had this sweet little baby lying on a colorful foam mat, a baby who had never reached for a toy nor made the initiative to move towards anything. Paige's first suggestion was to turn the mat over to the ugly black side and see if that helped. Who would think black would help a child see a toy? It was then she explained to me that the black contrast would make it easier for Pyper to see objects. Within minutes my five-month-old little girl reached for a toy for the first time!

As time went on Paige brought us so many ideas and resources into our home. She filled my brain with so much

knowledge about the visual impairment that Pyper had and how to best help her. Paige has been to most every ophthalmologist appointment with us, and when we weren't satisfied with the results she helped us research finding another doctor until we got the answers we were looking for. We are forever grateful for Miss Paige. It has been so sweet to see Paige and Pyper build a relationship over the last three years.

When Pyper turned three she stopped receiving services from Paige because she began to attend preschool full time at Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. I have to tell the sweet story of how just the other day Pyper wrapped up a few of her toys in Kleenex and tape, she then told me she was going to give them to Miss Paige because she missed her. Melted my heart and Paige's too!

As time went on Pyper was not meeting the milestones she should have been meeting when it came to talking; it was then that we welcomed our next therapist into our home. Miss Phyllis Atzinger had already been a part of our family as we have known her for many years. Pyper's big sister Addyson had received speech services through her; Phyllis is also a family friend who is near and dear to us. As Phyllis came into our home she was so eager to learn about Pyper's visual impairment as was I. We had a few joint sessions with Miss Paige. It says so much to me as a parent when you have someone in your home who actually wants to know and learn more about your child as a whole and not just her individual diagnoses. Phyllis filled Pyper's mouth with words and my brain with knowledge about ways to teach Pyper to talk. She made her use her words or signs before giving her what she wanted. Little Miss Pyper was pretty strong-willed but Miss Phyllis did not give in. She worked her hard and now Pyper has quite the vocabulary! We still keep in touch with Miss Phyllis; she has supported Pyper and walked in the VIPS Stampede with Pyper's Peeps. We even got to enjoy a nice day at her pool with her and her grandchildren this summer. We are forever grateful for our Miss Phyllis.



*Pyper (right) and her school friend Evie dressed for dance class.*

Pyper's next therapist came into our lives to provide physical therapy right after Pyper's first birthday. Pyper had torticollis. We later found out through our physical therapist, Miss Melody Prinkleton, that she also had left-side weakness. I had never really noticed it, but all the signs were there. One sign was Pyper keeping her left arm bent by her side; because she didn't like to straighten it out, her muscles were very tight. Later when she started to walk her left foot would go out and she would trip a

lot. Melody then suggested braces for Pyper. The braces helped tremendously and Pyper still wears them. Eventually, we ended up in the water doing aqua therapy with Miss Melody. The first time we were in the water Pyper cried the whole time, “Mama”, “Nana”, “Mama”, “Nana”! But Melody didn’t cut her any slack! She pushed Pyper to the best of her ability and oh, how quickly she began to grow and improve! Pyper and Melody soon became great friends! Melody was the one who helped Pyper get a Rifton (adapted) bike through Kosair Charities. We are truly grateful for Miss Melody; not only is she an awesome PT but she is a great friend to our family as well. She still comes to VIPS just to check on Pyper every once in a while!

A little time after Pyper had started walking we welcomed Miss Ashley Emmons into our home. Little did I know our friendship would grow as I would become an assistant in her preschool classroom at Kids Town. Ashley was Pyper’s orientation and mobility specialist. As she came into our home she taught us how to adapt Pyper’s environment so it would be easier for her to get around. She was really one of the first people to explain to me how important directional concepts were for Pyper to learn at such an early age. I really never thought of introducing right, left, top and bottom to my one-year-old. I took her advice and right, left, top, and bottom became a part of our daily routine. Within a few months Pyper had all of these concepts down. We then started to venture out into the real world and would have sessions at Bass Pro Shop, community parks and any other unfamiliar environments we could think of. The more we were out in public the more I realized how much Pyper needed Ashley’s guidance and help. She taught us how and when to use cues like “Step up” and “Step down” and to navigate the world through Pyper’s eyes. She is such a fun and energetic person with the best laugh! Pyper and Miss Ashley hit it off well.

We are forever grateful for Miss Ashley. She is now Pyper’s preschool teacher, and has handed Pyper off to Mr. Maury Weedman to continue working on orientation and mobility. It was a smooth transition and Pyper loves her Mr. Maury. He, too, is so knowledgeable and has a special way with not only Pyper but all the children in Kids Town Preschool! I am excited to see the two of them grow and develop a special relationship over the next few years. We are forever grateful for our Mr. Maury.

Pyper has had many sensory issues over the past few years, with not sleeping being one of them. This is when we welcomed occupational therapists into our home. Miss Lori Distler and Miss Kim Vasko became a part of our family as well as Pyper’s other therapists. They gave me many ideas and suggestions on ways to help Pyper calm and sleep.

Now that Pyper is three-years-old, she is no longer enrolled in First Steps. She has now started receiving services through Baptist East. We receive OT from Miss Tara Mason. She is amazing and Pyper connected with her instantly. She is helping

us work on pre-writing skills as well as staying intact with her sensory needs. She is also working with Pyper on how to ride a tricycle using all parts of her body at the same time. Pyper loves going to see her every Friday! We are forever grateful for all three of these wonderful occupational therapists.

Wow! To look back on the last 3 years and realize how much therapy Pyper has received, how much help and guidance and information we have all received as a family, we recognize we have truly been blessed by these wonderful people who have become such an important part of our lives. Therapy sessions can be so overwhelming at times and can seem to take over your lives. We would often have two to four sessions a week; however, every minute, every tear, every fit, every smile and every laugh was so worth it. Pyper has grown in so many ways – all for the better. I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart to each and every one of Pyper’s team for loving on and helping my baby girl grow into the energetic, spunky little three-year-old she is today! We couldn’t have done it without all of you!

**~Ashley, Pyper’s Mom**

## **Aria**

My beautiful daughter Aria (at right) wearing her new glasses to encourage near sighted vision and play.

**~ Jaquelyn, Aria’s Mom**



## **Jamie**

It’s early Saturday morning. The air is cool, the traffic on the street is minimal, and many local runners are congregating outside a shoe store to begin their weekly training session. One member of the group stands out. He walks up to the front entrance of the store with a white cane in one hand and in the other hand he holds a water bottle. In his left pocket sits a tether for his guide. This person is me, Jamie Weedman. I have been blind my whole life. I use my cane to travel independently when I am not running, and a tether for my running guide when I am. I have actively participated in this sport for 15 years, and my travels have taken me from the gym and track at the Kentucky School for the Blind, to the crowded New York City Marathon. How much farther will this journey take me? I can’t say for sure, but the possibilities are endless.

### *Early Beginnings*

I first became familiar with the sport of running as a freshman at the Kentucky School for the Blind, when I joined the track team. Like any new experience, I was nervous at first. I didn’t know how well I would perform, or, if I really wanted to do it at all. Aided by encouragement from my coaches, I stayed on. As time progressed, I realized how much I was falling in love with running.

I loved feeling the air on my face as I was completing laps on the track. I loved the adrenaline my body was experiencing with each step quickening my pace. Another aspect that I loved was traveling across the country to various other schools for the blind, meeting other athletes and participating in competitions. Some of you may be asking yourselves, "How do a group of blind people compete in a track meet?" Well, for those of us who are totally blind, we would hold on to guide wires placed around the track as we ran. We would also pair up with our low vision peers for a particular mile long race known as the Tandem. This race was a milestone for me, as it is still the fastest mile I ever ran. At that point I realized that my running adventures would take me way beyond high school. My dream had been built, now it was time to master it.

### *After High School*

After high school graduation, I became acquainted with a runner while searching for a guide to participate in a local annual competition, the Stampede for VIPS. Dave Gassman, was a lifelong athlete and avid runner. With him as my mentor, we developed the strategy that I use to this day -- I would hold on to one end of a shoestring, and Dave would hold the other. This technique allowed me to increase my running speed while my partner made sure that I didn't run into any obstacles, such as low hanging tree branches, other people on the road, etc. We started practicing as frequently as five times a week. We also competed together in countless small races throughout the city. One not so small, was the Kentucky Derby Festival Mini Marathon. At the time, it was the longest race I had competed in and was also the most crowded. So crowded in fact, that another running friend of ours ran ahead of us, clearing the path of obstacles. Like doing anything for the first time, I was quite nervous. I didn't know if I could run for 13 miles without stopping, or how long it would take me. I just set a comfortable pace, quickening with each passing mile. Finally, I had reached the finish line, after running for less than 2 hours. I was totally surprised and excited. I had reached my goal. This particular race and the three races leading up to it have become annual events for me. I have done the Kentucky Derby Festival Mini Marathon approximately nine times.



Dave also introduced me to the Iroquois Hill Runners. Joining this group was instrumental to my training for long distance races. They also organized races themselves, as well as other social events. Throughout the years I have made lifelong friends through this organization, and have found other guides.

### *Involvement With Achilles and New York*

Although my involvement with the Hill Runners was still prevalent, I had been contacted by a fellow runner, expressing interest in forming a group specifically for disabled athletes.

Her name was Abby Florence. She originally hailed from San Francisco, and informed me about an internationally known organization called Achilles. The purpose of Achilles is to financially assist disabled athletes to compete in local and out-of-town competitions. They can also help find athletic partners if needed. Since there wasn't a local chapter, she wanted to start one and I enthusiastically agreed to be a part of it.

After becoming acquainted with some new running enthusiasts, I was asked if I wanted to participate in a marathon, in particular, the New York City Marathon. I was hesitant. A Marathon? The biggest city in the country? The idea terrified me at first. The longest I had ever run was 13 miles, and a full Marathon is 26. However, I saw it as another challenge and decided to make it my next major goal.

As my involvement with Achilles increased, I became acquainted with the man who would guide me in New York. Shay Kirkpatrick was a veteran long distance runner as well as an avid swimmer and biker. With Shay on board, and a crowded marathon ahead of us, we began a three-month training program, sometimes running up to 60 miles a week. Working with Shay was quite enjoyable. We shared a lot of the same goals, as well as common interests. He also could give me tips on improving my endurance and keeping my stride consistent.

After three months, it was time for our journey. I couldn't believe it. This was a dream come true in every sense of the expression. New York was everything I expected. The streets were loud and cluttered with vendors, music and people shouting and laughing. It was quite festive. The marathon was no exception. From the first shot of the cannon, to the finish line, I was met with crowds cheering encouragement. The more cheers I heard, the faster I would increase my speed. The course itself was easy to navigate. There were a few hills, some twists and turns, but with the wind at our backs, we kept up a pretty consistent pace. Finally, after 4 hours and 50 minutes, I had reached the finish line. The cold New York wind never felt so rewarding. I was living a dream, and even I myself couldn't believe it. I was so excited that I couldn't even feel the soreness in my legs until hours after.

### *Conclusion*

I am often asked what running has taught me over the years. I think the three main things that I have learned from my experiences are patience, tolerance, and above all self-confidence. The strength you gain from it is as much mental as it is physical. My coaches back at the School for the Blind always preached to us that our minds are stronger than our bodies. No more has that statement rang more true for me than in these last couple of years. Sometimes your body wants to give up and quit and you find yourself fighting against it. However, if you keep on trucking, the end result can become the ultimate reward of going the distance.

**~Jamie, VIPS graduate**

# Just a Mom ????

by Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

In August we opened the doors of Kids Town Preschool to welcome the students to the 2015-16 school year! Our numbers are amazing. It is overwhelming and an honor to be entrusted by so many families to nurture and serve their beautiful children.

The first week of school is one I face annually with excitement and fear. I always wonder if the students and their parents recognize that I have just as much to learn as the children. I question if the smile on my face is comforting or alarming. As a family of educators, my husband and I still have back-to-school dreams each August, although neither of us has been full-time in classrooms for over 25 years. Our third child has started her third year as a teacher now; she has inherited the back-to-school dreams as well. Recalling them together makes for excellent dinner table conversation.

I heard lots of interesting things the first few mornings of school this year. One of our newest friends repeated "I'm not staying in this place. I'm not staying here. I'm going home," as he was lead down the hall to meet Miss Paige in the Orange Room. I heard it again on the second day, but never in the classroom. By the third day of school, the same lad was asking, "Where's my room?" as he journeyed to the Orange Room down the hall.

I heard another child correct her mother as she passed up her classroom from last school year. Tears followed. I'm sure the child was wondering how Miss Ashley and her mother could possibly let this happen. A terrible mistake, for sure. By the end of the second day, the student was pretty much asking "Who's Miss Ashley?" for she was now well-acclimated to the happenings in Miss Staci's Red Room. While any teacher will tell you, all students remain forever in the hearts of their teachers, by the second day, Miss Ashley was well on her way to becoming the hero to her new students in the Green Room.

Across the hall from the Green, Red, and Orange Rooms, there were lots of new sounds coming from the Blue Room. To the untrained ear, they sounded like sobs. Lots of sobs. So many sobs one might consider renaming Kids Town to Tissue Town. Miss Tracy in the Blue Room recognized those sounds as the echoes of transitioning to a new environment, new people, new things all around. One of the goals of the Two Days Two's class in Kids Town Preschool is to prepare our VIPS parents for the idea of another adult offering assistance and care to their precious child. The children are learning that it's okay to accept love and assistance from another adult, one who comes in the form of a teacher like Miss Tracy.

There was one sound I heard in the hallway of Kids Town Preschool on the first day of school that I did not like so much.

One parent mistook another as a teacher or therapist. When asked a question about programming, I heard the second mother say, "Oh, you have to ask someone else. I'm just a mom."

I ask you, what is "just a mom"? I'll start with my children's wise pediatrician who told me years ago, "Kathy, you are the CEO of a small corporation. If you do not accept the leadership, your family will crumble." My first thought was, yeah, right. But then I puffed up my chest a bit and realized what all came under the umbrella of "Just a Mom." I'll name a few: Cook, Nurse, Comforter, Laundress, Maid, Chauffeur, Personal Shopper, Referee, Negotiator, Scheduler, Bookkeeper, Encourager, Therapist, Implementer, Equalizer, Midnight Rocker, Storyteller and Magician.

This, of course, is only a partial list! Feel free to add to it to meet the needs of your own family. You will notice that one important role is missing from this list. If you could roll all of these qualifiers into one, the result would be one magnificent TEACHER! When your VIPS family identifies our parents as their child's first teacher – we mean that. We know that all the things you do within the home and heart of your family are getting your child ready for their next educational setting – whether it's within the walls of Kids Town Preschool or elsewhere. VIPS will continue to support you in that mission as long as you continue to support yourself and your child by celebrating all you do to get your child to Kids Town or elsewhere. We are only part of your child's village – you are the CEO – and not just a mom!

Oh, and one more thing. Those sobs in the Blue Room? Some were from the students. Some were from the parents. A few were even from grandparents. All sobbing has stopped – until it's time to go home for the day. Then some of the sobbing starts up again as the children have to say good-bye. That's the magic of the first week of school – year after year – as dependable as the return of back-to-school dreams!

## Program News

### *If the Walls at Kids Town Preschool Could Talk*

by Paige Maynard, TVI, Preschool Teacher

*(If the walls of the classrooms themselves could share with you what they've seen happen from the beginning of the school year, they would have a VIPS saga to tell. However, I'll keep their report short enough to confine to the pages of this newsletter:)*

I am the walls of Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. When the school year went in to session in August, I was so excited to once again be filled with the joy that is the children who come through my doors! My favorite part of this joy is seeing how the

children learn and develop each day. Some days, a child has made so much progress I have to blink the shades in my windows twice, just to make sure I am still looking at the same little friend!

It was the students in Ms. Ashley's green classroom who inspired me to write down my story for this article – they started the year by writing “all about me” stories.

In writing about their physical features and interests, they developed skills in the area of emergent reading and writing. These scholars also learned to navigate the environment when they explored each of my learning centers. They looked at the objects in each center, and identified the first letter in each center's name. Ms. Ashley also helped her students grow in skills of self-care through addressing the importance of washing their hands in my sinks.

The children in Ms. Paige's orange classroom grew the most when they created their own versions of monoculars out of PVC pipe, so that they could practice visual skills. I still see them use these tools to spot pictures on me, and to look out my windows. I even got to catch a glimpse of them use their monoculars to spot parts of the “under construction” Mobility City, which they explored using all of their senses. I beamed with pride for all of the children in the classroom who began developing their tactile exploration skills to read tactual stories, including “What Happens at School?” by Ms. Paige. I was amazed to see their tiny fingers investigating each object from the story in order to connect it to an activity that they would take part in during the day.

When I shift my gaze to the children in Ms. Staci's red classroom, I remember how proud I was as the students learned



Vance put his “family” in order from oldest to youngest.



Ethan practiced sorting using tongs to sort items.

about themselves and many of the great things they could do. When the children practiced navigating the classroom, I did my best not to laugh when their fingers tickled me as they trailed me. The students showed their developing daily living skills as they completed a lesson on learning to dust my furniture. I even heard how well-mannered the red classroom is when they voiced how thankful they were for the talking measuring tape that Chris Dahmke let them borrow. They used it in order to learn to use tools for measuring themselves.

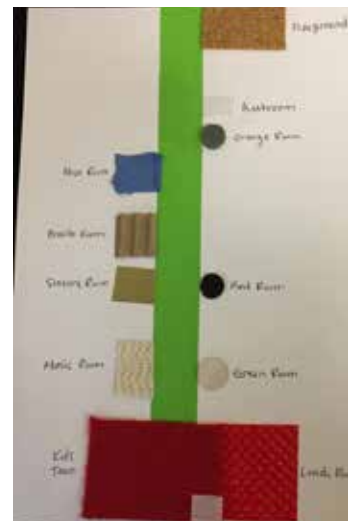
Working as the walls of Kids Town Preschool is a dream career: using my steadfastness and strength to serve these remarkable children in a way that warms my outlets and makes my baseboards smile!

Kids Town Preschool would also like to thank Carly Stotts of heART for teaching us fine arts during the month of September, and the National Honor Society at Trinity High School for helping our students practice for the Bill Roby Track and Field Games.

## Pre-K in the Spotlight

by Ashley Emmons, TVI, O & M, Pre-K Teacher

Our new Pre-Kindergarten class at Kids Town Preschool has kicked off to a great start! Some highlights have included learning about textures and creating individual texture books using textures such as rough, smooth, soft, bumpy, etc. We used texture cards to work on matching and sorting skills, as well as the concept of same and different. The students took a tour of Kids Town Preschool. During the tour the students had the opportunity to select a tactile symbol to represent each location of the school (e.g., classrooms, sensory room, music room, braille room, restroom, etc). The students then used the same tactile symbols to create his/her very own tactile map of the school.



Tactile map of the preschool.

While reading *The Napping House*, the students were provided blocks of different sizes and textures to represent each character in the story. Using these blocks, the students were encouraged to retell the story by identifying which character came first, second, last, etc. To expand on the story, the students were encouraged to tactually explore all items you may find on a bed including a mattress, fitted sheet, flat sheet, pillow, pillowcase, etc. We then traveled to the loft area of Kids Town to practice making a bed.

During math, our main focus has been on counting using one-to-one correspondence, and learning to pick “just one” object for each number said aloud. While practicing the concept of “just one” the students were asked to place “just one” marshmallow in each cup of a muffin tin, place “just one” sticker on top of a full braille cell, place “just one” apple on each paper plate, and place “just one” sock in each shoe.

We're off to a great start!

## Don't Miss Out on the Fun & Learning: Come to VIPS-Louisville PAL

By Staci Maynard, TVI (in training), Preschool Teacher

During most of the past two and a half years, I had the privilege of organizing the PAL (Play and Learn) group for VIPS. This experience has been a great way for me to develop deeper relationships with families that otherwise I would have only seen in passing or talked to once in a while. I was able to witness children's progress and see friendships grow between students and parents. However, the time came for me to examine other ways that I can serve the VIPS family. So as of September 25, Amanda Hamm, a VIPS developmental interventionist, took the lead in PAL. She has some great ideas, and I would encourage you to come check it out.

This program is a free play group, which meets at Kids Town Preschool on Fridays from 9:30-11:30, for VIPS families with children ages 0-5. A parent or other adult stays with the child during the play time, and siblings are welcome as well. Children get to explore through center play in the classroom, the sensory room, Kids Town, and/or outside. They also get to enjoy time with music and art or sensory play.

PAL will not meet on the following dates during the remainder of 2015:

December 11

December 25

PAL is also cancelled if Jefferson County Public Schools cancel school that day. Any other dates which must be canceled will be posted on our Facebook page.

What better way to spend fun, quality time with a special child in your life? The environment is inclusive, safe, and encouraging. You can have the opportunity to meet other families who empathize with your victories and struggles in ways that few others can. Your children will have the chance to develop social relationships with other children their age. Come experience what it's like to be a part of the VIPS family!



Some of the cute little Pals waiting to be your friends, (l-r) Pyper, Maycin & Brody.

## VIPS-Louisville Two Day Twos

By Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist/ Twos Teacher

The Twos have welcomed several new friends to our class and each friend brings a unique personality to our group. Our days are spent learning through play and exploration in both structured and unstructured activities amidst a "flexible" routine. We spent the first few weeks of our new school year learning the names of our friends and teachers, the routine of our class, and exploring the learning centers in our room. After learning all about our friends, we switched to an "All About Me" theme that provided opportunities to recognize our likes/dislikes, draw faces in shaving cream, learn the parts of our body through songs, and create a "little me" that proudly hung in our hallway. The children particularly liked building with blocks that had his/her picture on it. Once we could identify our body parts, we connected the body part used for each of our five senses. We enjoyed touching different textures, smelling a variety of scents, listening to sounds, tasting new foods, and using our vision to look for objects in our room.

After we learned about our senses, we put that knowledge into action as we used our sense of smell, touch, vision, and taste to explore apples. Our class loved eating the apples and discovering the star shape inside. The majority of our friends thought green apples were yummier than red. Our apple theme kicked off our October Fall activities. We explored nature as our sensory table and science area were filled with pine cones, leaves, and sticks to touch and examine over the light box. We were also able to pick pumpkins from our VIPS sensory garden, explored the pumpkins' insides, and then decorate them. While we use themes to plan activities in our classroom, we always embed opportunities to learn our shapes, colors, and preschool readiness skills.

## On the Road With Mary

VIPS-Louisville's Mary Lesousky is always on the road, visiting children in Southern Indiana and in local preschools where VIPS children are enrolled. She recently snapped this cute picture of Tariq using a PVC monocular to scope out his classroom. While VIPS-Louisville serves many children at our Kids Town Preschool, there are many other children who are being served in their homes and in local preschools.



Tariq with his "monocular."

## VIPS-Indiana Hosts Summer Play & Learn

By Meredith Howell, Assistant Director

VIPS Indiana hosted a Summer Play and Learn (PAL) on Saturday, July 25. Families enjoyed music and circle time led by our Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Annie Hughes. Afterward VIPS was presented with money that was raised by the awesome fundraiser, K's for Kutter. The Clay City Eels and the North Central Lady Birds raised almost \$2,700 on behalf of VIPS kiddo, Kutter, to benefit the families served by VIPS. Many, many thanks to Kutter's mom, Christan, and to the coaches and athletes for helping VIPS serve Indiana's youngest blind children!



Handsome Kutter who inspired the fundraiser.

The families also enjoyed pizza generously donated by Pizza Hut. Then the parents said goodbye to their children for it was time for the learning portion of the event. The VIPS staff made sure the kids were well entertained while their parents and caregivers learned about future planning from Heather Dane of Family Voices Indiana and Gordon Holmes of MetLife Center for Special Needs Planning. We wrapped up with a Picnic-Themed Make & Take tactile book that had both large print and Braille. Thanks to all of the families for spending part of your Saturday with us!

Right: Making tactile books.

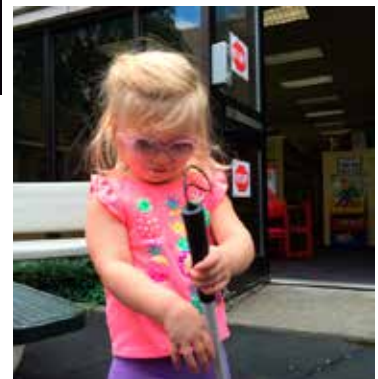
Below: Music time with Ms. Annie.



## On the Road In Indiana With Annie, David and Lisa

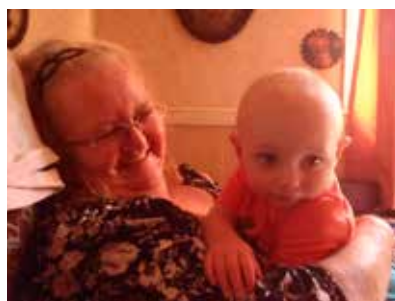
Every week, the Developmental Interventionists of VIPS-Indiana travel hundreds of miles all over the state of Indiana visiting children and families who need VIPS services.

Below: Brantley looked up when he knew his photo was being taken, but then re-immersed himself in the Feely Bug Book with David. Right: Kyla explored fall gourds and pumpkins with Annie.



Above Left: At an initial visit, Ethan and Lisa are getting to know each other. Above Right: Arabella is getting acquainted with her white cane, a tool that will serve her well in the future.

At right: After a pediatric ophthalmology appointment at Riley Hospital for Children, Christopher and his mom, Sierra had their visit at the VIPS-Indiana office. Right before they left for the long trip home a friend in the office next door snapped this photo.



Left: Debra and John-John share a special moment during a VIPS home visit.

# The Expanded Core Curriculum, Pt. 6: Recreation & Liesure

*By Jan Moseley, Vision Impairment Specialist/Newsletter Editor*

The upcoming winter is an ideal time to talk about recreation and leisure skills, one of the areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) that we discuss each issue. Most of us become less active in the cold weather months because it is much less comfortable to be outdoors. And yet most of us need some sort of purposeful involvement with meaningful things to do to occupy our free time during those long cold days ahead.

Recreation and leisure skills may not seem as critical to a child's future life as reading or mathematics but they are a vital part of healthy adult living. As adults, our free time activities help us recover from the routines of our daily lives and allow self-expression that may be limited as we perform our daily tasks.

All children must participate in physical education activities in school but many children with visual impairments are frequently "pulled out" of PE classes/recess -- considered "less strenuous" in terms of academic classes -- in favor of receiving additional help from a teacher of the visually impaired. As a result, many children with limited vision are seldom exposed to activities that can help prepare them for lifelong movement and physical activity. The same situation also occurs with music and art classes, further reducing exposure to skills that could help the child learn how best to use her "down time."

Recreation and leisure skills include:

- using academic skills to read books and magazines for enjoyment,
- using physical skills to play games and engage in sporting endeavors such as ball games and running,
- or even using creativity to paint, sew, knit or or engage in other crafts.

The point is to identify areas of the child's interests and to give her enough information to decide how she wants to build independent skills in her chosen area as she ages.

Children in the Kids Town Preschool classes are exposed to a wide variety of potential leisure and recreational activities. When a child cannot see well, toys on shelves, crayons in a pack, puzzle pieces and the like are frequently out of her visual range and for some children, totally invisible. Our classroom teachers and assistants work to open up each child's world by exposing

her to everything within the classroom. Each child is encouraged to play with a variety of toys and to experience the range of activities and materials in each center. Effective use of center time in the classroom is encouraged and monitored --the goal is to expand each child's skills and areas of interest. Children are asked open-ended questions about their experiences and activities and allowed to answer freely so as not to stifle creative responses.

Our wonderful playground at VIPS provides plenty of safe yet challenging adaptive activities for all skill levels. Climbing the rock wall in the workout room not only challenges physical skills but also self-confidence, the perfect storm of developing recreation and leisure skills.

And of course, Kosair Charities Kids Town is filled with fabulous opportunities for children to move about on riding toys and to play act in any number of simulated settings -- bank, library, grocery, UPS store, hotel, KFC store with drive-through window, laundry, and bowling alley. VIPS Kids Town Preschool also participates annually in the Bill Roby Track & Field Games held at KSB (see following article).

Our staff's efforts are geared toward developing the **whole child**; and while reading and writing are "big business," you can bet that the preschoolers are exposed to a huge variety of motivating materials, games, investigations and the like to help them make use of their individual gifts and interests to explore and enjoy their world.



*Judah climbs the rock wall at VIPS-Louisville.*

## 38th Annual Bill Roby Track & Field Games

Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> was a beautiful sunny day as 25 VIPS preschool children joined about 125 other students who are blind and visually impaired, aged 3-14, to compete in the 38th Annual Bill Roby Track and Field Games held at the Kentucky School for the Blind. The students came from schools for the blind in Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana and were joined by students from the Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools and VIPS. The preschoolers spent a wonderful morning competing in running events and the long jump as the older students also participated in the softball throw and shotput.

To his delight, Anthony was invited to sit on a police horse and later got to compete in a run seated on his grandfather's back! Jazmine was reluctant to run on the adapted track that has cables separating the lanes for the students to grasp as they run but wound up running with a smile on her face. The children also were able to independently climb the stairs to sit at the controls of a police helicopter and also to sit on a police all terrain vehicle (ATV).



Each child received a medal for each event and enjoyed a picnic lunch while exploring the contents of a large gift bag, graciously provided by many local businesses and donors.

*Above: Sarah and Vivi modeled their event T-shirts. Left: Cannon, held by Ms. Kathy, got to pet the horse's muzzle.*



## VIPS-Central KY Summer Sensations Camp

Summer Sensation Camp provided varied and fun learning experiences for eight VIPS children and their siblings. All of the children had a great time riding the pony and petting the goat from Rosie's Ponies. They even made their very own summer camp t-shirts and had tons of fun being creative as well as messy. They got soaking wet during water play and later ate ice cream to their hearts' content! The younger children enjoyed singing and making music with Musikgarten, while the older children expended tons of energy in Zumba.

We were extremely fortunate that Gardenside Christian Church graciously made room for us despite other events being held at their facility. We were even lucky enough to use the gym both days! The volunteers we had were very helpful and willing to be hands-on. They were enthusiastic and ready to jump at any opportunity to lend a hand.

Dixie Miller, Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)/ Developmental Interventionist took charge of the group of

younger children with the help of volunteer Katie Dick. Emily Wiley, VIPS-Central Kentucky Family Services Coordinator and her husband Eric, took charge of the group of older kids. Ashley Emmons, Orientation and Mobility/TVI/Preschool Teacher, floated wherever she was needed, which was greatly appreciated. Special thanks to Jill Major for her energetic Zumba-ing! VIPS Summer Sensation Camp of 2015 was a tremendous success with staff members working closely and the children benefitting from the wonderful experiences!

## VIPS-Central KY Family Events

### Happy Jack's Pumpkin Farm

Seven VIPS families enjoyed a fun morning/afternoon event at Happy Jack's Pumpkin Farm in Frankfort, Kentucky on September 26. They fed and petted the horse, goats and sheep, while roosters and peacocks roamed nearby. They took a wagon ride to the pumpkin patch where each child got to pick out his or her very own pumpkin! Once the families made it back to the barn, the children got their faces painted and explored Happy Jack's Enchanted Forest! The day ended with a picnic style lunch. The children had a blast and we cannot thank the friendly folks at Happy Jack's enough for their hospitality!



*Ashlynn had her face painted.*

### Halloween Party

This year we had our Halloween Spooktacular Party at Tates Creek Christian Church on October 23. The children wore their favorite Halloween costumes and entered the costume contest. They also played lots of ghoulish games, like ghost bowling, mummy wrap up, and Thriller shake. While the children were having fun with the games, their parents got to do some shopping at the Usborne Book Fair, hosted by Courtney

*Timothy, assisted by a Delta Gamma volunteer, got a kiss from a service dog.*





Batman with Clay and Ashlynn

McBreairty. She also told spooky stories to the children followed by making crafts related to the stories they heard.

Let's not forget the sensory stations they experienced! There were pumpkin buckets full of guts, brains, eye balls and toe nails! The children earned tickets at each station that

could be redeemed for prizes. They also made their very own "Take Home Sensory Bags." Parents, children and our extremely helpful volunteers from Delta Gamma filled baggies with googly eyes and orange hair gel -- a big hit!

## November Parent's Night Out

We offered our parents a night all to themselves, November 6, at Tates Creek Christian Church. Parents were able to drop off their children for two and a half hours with our staff and enjoy an evening out where THEY got to decide what to do! While parents were taking a break, the kids were comfy and cozy in their pajamas curled together watching "Inside Out" accompanied by popcorn and hot chocolate. The kids also got to make a sweet handprint craft to give their mommies and daddies when they returned.

## The Cogswell-Macy Act

Named for pioneers in the education of the deaf and blind, Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy, **the Cogswell-Macy Act -- H.R.3535** would truly bring students who are sensory impaired into full accessibility in public education. It is supported by over 100 leading national, regional, and community organizations. "Our national special education law has been a success at getting kids with disabilities into their neighborhood schools, but what we haven't done yet is to make sure that students with vision loss get the education they deserve once they get in the schoolhouse door," said Mark Richert, Director of Public Policy for the American Foundation for the Blind. "We've waited forty years, and we're not waiting another forty to give kids who are blind or visually impaired an education that is worthy of their tremendous potential. That's why the Cogswell-Macy Act is imperative."

Please let your legislators know how you feel about this piece of legislation! For more information, go to: <http://www.afb.org/info/get-involved/take-action/12>.

## VIPS-Louisville Trunk 'N Treat

On Saturday, Oct. 24, VIPS-Louisville held a festive Trunk 'N Treat. Though it was rainy, children still had a wonderful time under the back canopy of the playground, visiting VIPS families and staff who were passing out treats. A lunch of hot dogs and chips was provided in Kids Town. Thanks to Ginger Hales, Judah's mom, for painting faces. Thanks to Ashley Buren, VIPS mom and Kids Town Instructional Assistant, for putting all the fun together this year!



Left: Siblings (l-r), Moses, Kaden and Layla. Below left: Eli and mom Jennifer. Below right: Oliver and sister Lola.



## Important Medicaid Notice

Medicaid has made an important change. If mail sent to you by Medicaid or kynect is returned to the Medicaid Office, you risk losing your health insurance coverage. You must update your address to keep Medicaid. If you are moving or your mail is no longer being accepted at the address on file with Medicaid and kynect, you only have 30 days to update your address. You will lose your Medicaid health insurance until you update your address. You can call the kynect hotline at 1-855-459-6328 to update your address.



## New Arrivals

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

### **VIPS-Louisville**

Aaliyah – 7 months, Louisville, KY  
 Bentlee – 24 months, Shepherdsville, KY  
 Brayden - 5 years, Louisville, KY  
 Connor – 18 months, LaGrange, KY  
 Bryce – 32 months, Taylorsville, KY  
 Elijah – 9 months, Shelbyville, KY  
 Elizabeth – 33 months, Madison, IN  
 Kenzie – 12 months, Bowling Green, KY  
 Maddie – 7 months, Bedford, KY  
 Matthew – 19 months, Sebree, KY  
 Paige – 15 months, Sturgis, KY  
 Parker – 13 months, Jasper, IN  
 Reid – 7 months, Louisville, KY  
 Reginald – 13 months, Beaver Dam, KY  
 Ryanne – 14 months, Louisville, KY  
 Silas - 8 months, Louisville, KY  
 Waylon – 5 months, Waverly, KY

### **VIPS-Central Kentucky**

Clara – 5 months, Lawrenceburg, KY  
 Ethen – 14 months, Hillsboro, KY  
 Jake – 10 months, Taylor Mill, KY  
 Kinsley – 35 months, Phelps, KY  
 Lilliana – 13 months, Pikeville, KY  
 Lorenzo – 12 months, Sandy Hook, KY  
 Noah – 14 months, Brodhead, KY  
 Rebekah – 5 months, Mouthcard, KY  
 Ryder – 21 months, Lexington, KY

### **VIPS-Indiana**

Abigaile – 12 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Brantlee – 11 months, Muncie, IN  
 Christopher – 10 months, Middlebury, IN  
 Ethan – 26 months, Mitchell, IN  
 Hunter – 15 months, Mitchell, IN  
 Izaac – 30 months, Forest, IN  
 Johnny – 30 months, Peru, IN  
 Kaelyn – 16 months, Lafayette, IN  
 Matthew – 18 months, McCordsville, IN  
 Miles – 26 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Tony – 16 months, Carmel, IN

## VIPS Staff News

We welcome *Sarah Cocanougher* as a new hire to help with childcare at Kids Town Preschool as her schedule allows. Sarah currently attends Spaulding University, working towards her degree as an Occupational Therapist (OT). She previously worked at “Mindi Learning Center” where she served as a respite worker for children with behavioral problems.



We are pleased to announce that *Annie Hughes* has been named Director of VIPS-Indiana and that *Meredith Howell* is now the Assistant Director. Considering that Annie and Rebecca Davis built VIPS-IN out of hard work and dedication, pulling Meredith in as they went, this is a thrilling development that bodes well for the future.

Meredith recently won the Professional Development Grant offered by the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI). She was able to use the funds to attend a two-day workshop called Preparing Successful Grant Proposals. The course was offered through The Fund Raising School at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Meredith was honored to be a recipient of the IYI Professional Development Grant and is excited to use the knowledge she gained from the class in her work at VIPS.

We are thrilled to welcome *David Sterne* who has been hired as a Developmental Interventionist for VIPS Indiana. We first met David when he participated in VIISA trainings and are excited to have another male as a role model for our youngsters. “I am very excited about joining VIPS Indiana as an Early Interventionist, says David. “I have been providing developmental therapy services to a variety of families, (including many Spanish speaking families), in the First Steps program for almost 15 years, and first worked with Annie Hughes with a child with visual impairments



10 years ago, long before Rebecca Davis and Annie Hughes began growing VIPS services in Indiana. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning from her since then and have worked with several children with a variety of visual impairments with her help and support, first when she was on staff at the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and now through VIPS.

“I enjoyed learning so much through the VIISA trainings held in Kentucky in July and November of 2014, and have applied much of what I have learned there and over the years since first working with Annie to ALL of the children and families I have worked with!

"I am thrilled about beginning this new chapter in my life and working with many wonderful Indiana families through VIPS, and am very thankful for the opportunity and warm welcome!"

*Ashley Emmons* has passed her last praxis exam which means she is now a full-blown certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired! Yea, Ashley! We're so proud of you and happy for your family. And for the VIPS Family! Ashley says she is also certified as a Former Student -- she will NOT be returning to school -- ever. (She went straight into the TVI program after completing her Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) coursework, which immediately followed her completion of her Orientation and Mobility licensure!) Thanks, Ashley, for ALL your hard work inside and outside of the classroom!

Hooray for *Paige Maynard*, who has finally received word that her certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired has come through. Because Paige attended online classes at Missouri State University, she had to first be certified in Missouri before Kentucky would certify her. Lucky Paige got to take the Kentucky praxis exam twice due to all the paperwork requirements! We are absolutely thrilled that she has added TVI to her list of accomplishments, including Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) certification. Congratulations, Paige, and thank you for your dedication!

*Mary Smyth*, VIPS-Central Kentucky Office Coordinator, serves as the chairperson of the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK). The Coalition goes to great measures to serve the VI population in Central Kentucky. The Coalition held a very successful Eye Opening Symposium in Lexington on Oct. 15, featuring several engaging presenters -- as seen in the attached photo. Thanks Mary for representing our VIPS family so well and as you go above and beyond your job requirements.

We are sad to report that *Jenny Feinman* has resigned her position as Community Outreach Coordinator for VIPS-Indiana. Her family and her full time job responsibilities complicated her working this part time position. She will continue to serve on the VIPS-Indiana Advisory Board, however, so VIPS will still be able to benefit from her involvement!

## Board News

After all the good news, it seems a shame to report bittersweet news. One of our long-time supporters and board members, *Amy Sitterly*, has been transferred back to her hometown of Chicago, requiring her resignation from the board and from her role as Vice-President. Amy is renowned for bringing her UPS crews to volunteer at VIPS fundraisers and for encouraging silent auction bids. We will greatly miss her many accomplishments on our behalf and the board will miss their vice-president. Best wishes, Amy!

We are pleased to announce that *Dr. Ashima Kumar Gupta*, pediatric ophthalmologist, and her businessman husband, *Pareesh Gupta*, have agreed to fill one open position on the VIPS board, depending upon who is in town and available to attend board meetings. Dr. Gupta is no stranger to VIPS as she sees children each month in the VIPS clinic. We welcome both Guptas!

## Kind Gifts of Time and Talent

### VIPS-Louisville

**Getting ready for a new school year --** We had wonderful helpers working to get VIPS ready for the beginning of a new school year.

- Volunteers from *Sullivan University* came in for a day and put together new parent folders, helped with purging files, and cleaned all the windows in the preschool as well as wiped down every single surface in Kids Town to prepare for the first week of school. Thanks so much to *Chelsea Battle, Liz Dutschke, Laura Jones, Melissa Lowe, Rachel Maguire and Diana Vela* for their tremendous efforts on behalf of our preschoolers.
- *Vickie Bowman and Angie Riggs from Sullivan University Early Childhood Education* department held a drive for school supplies and consumables and made a donation for the beginning of the new school year.
- We recently received donations of school supplies from *Nathan Holladay, Kathryn & Bill Brangers, and Laverne and Susan from Donard Park Condominiums*.
- *Skylar Downs and Ally Priebe, both of Assumption High*, assisted us by cleaning the preschool classrooms to prepare them for the start of school.
- *Aggie Nelson*, mother of VIPS Executive Director Diane Nelson and a fabulous painter, donated arts and crafts supplies to the preschool.
- *Gretchen Cutrer*, JCPS instructional assistant in the orange classroom with Ms. Paige, donated a compact vacuum cleaner for the preschool. We are so thrilled to have Ms. Gretchen with us full-time this year and the vacuum cleaner is helpful as well! Thanks for seeing a need and filling it!

We are thankful for their help in getting the school year off to a great start.

**Stampede for VIPS --** When a small non-profit agency puts on a big event like a golf tournament or a race, it truly takes a village to actually pull it off. VIPS is very lucky to have so many volunteers to help us in our events, most recently the *Dr. Mark Lynn and Associates Stampede*. Our most sincere thanks to

everyone who helped both prior to the Stampede and on race day -- a record cold Saturday morning in October!

- Thanks to *Dani Harper and Ashley Buren*, VIPS staff members, and frequent volunteer *Ryan Hack from St. Stephen Martyr* who helped with the preparations and packet pickup for the Stampede.
- Thanks to *Board Member Ellen Prizant and husband Bruce* for providing a wonderful pasta dinner for our guest VI runners on Friday evening.
- *Trinity High School students* came out in full force to help the day of the Stampede. Our thanks to: *Zach Allen, Jack Baum, Paul Bradford, Hunter Brashear, Jacob Burnam, Will Bobrow, Andrew Cawood, Kevin Deye, Nick Gnadinger, Luis Gonzales, Axel Halvarson, Thomas Kane, Daniel Langford, Ethan Lally, Jack Meredith, Sam Meredith, Nick Michels, Will Mullen, Nick Neumann, Paul Passanisi, Dominic Repp, Nick Schmitt, Nick Stauble, Mark Tierney, Jacob Travelstead, Trevor Warren, Henry Wilmes, Shane Williams, Matthew Woodall and Charlie Young.*
- Also helping at the Stampede and Kids Fun Run were members of the *Vipers Baseball Team*. Our gratitude goes to *Andrew Kyser, Marlene Mosqueda, Thomas Mosqueda, Amy Sitterly, Don Sitterly, Jacob Sitterly, Samantha Sitterly, Anna Winger, Chris Winger and Joc Winger.*
- *VIPS staff and board members and their families and friends* also volunteered at the Stampede. Thanks to staff members *Gretchen Cutrer, Carol Dahmke, LaRhonda Daniels, Ashley Emmons, Pauletta Feldman, Amanda Hamm, Marchelle Hampton, Mary Lesousky, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Kathy Mullen, Beth Owens, and Maury Weedman.* *VIPS Mom Julia Peoples* also volunteered as did *Board members Dawn Bauco, Lester Sanders, Amy Sitterly and Glen Stuckel.* Thanks to the families of staff, including *Ken Cutrer, Mitch Dahmke, Ashley Erwin, Fred Hampton, Allie Lesousky, Eddie Maynard and Elaine Maynard.* Friends of staff who were helping included *Jemima Fields and Katrina Hutchins.*
- Other Stampede volunteers included: *Brian Albanese from UPS; Rory Atkins from St. Steven Martyr; Clay Amlung and Samuel George from St. Xavier; Suzann Bays from Presentation Academy; Mickey Canter and Skilar Pratt from Floyd Central High School; Jon & Michael Daniels, and Justin Buford from Barrett Traditional Middle School; and Kennedy Raley and Caitlyn Tumey from Mercy Academy.*



Many VIPS staff volunteers showed up by 5 a.m. to help with set-up and onsite registration. *Mary Lesousky and Kim Shippey* were dressed to stay warm and dry

**Four of our long-term volunteers** continue to grace us with their kind efforts, again and again.

- *Fran Woodward's* weekly assistance with the 2s class is such a marvelous blessing for both the staff and the children in the class. We appreciate her time and talents!
- *Jamie Weedman* continues to transcribe books into braille for the preschoolers, and has recently been calling families to complete their satisfaction surveys. Jamie also represented VIPS on the Louisville White Cane Day Planning Committee and the Oct. 15 White Cane Day community event. We are so thankful for his kind assistance.
- *Deanna Scoggins* read books to the Friday Friends this summer and continues to teach Braille to the preschoolers.
- *Ryan Hack* from St. Stephen Martyr continues his legacy of helping with the end-of-summer bash and cleaning the playground equipment.
- *VIPS Dad Trent Damron* continues to help us with maintenance chores. We so appreciate his time and energy!

We are thankful for *DuPont Manual High School's Ally Doctrow* for her help in the classroom. The children painted cards and Ally turned them into darling framed cards for their parents. Thanks for sharing your time and talents!

For her help with Friday Friends we thank *Callie Freeman of Sacred Heart Academy.*

*Highland Cleaners* courtesy of *Michael Jones* donated their services to clean all our tablecloths.

Thanks so very much to the *Gates and Brettnacher families* who donated arts and crafts supplies to the preschool along with numerous baskets to use for auction items.

*Julia Peoples*, mother of a VIPS child, donated children's clothing for the preschool.

*Trinity High School's Braden Barnett, Sam McCalpin, James Moremen, and Connor O'Brien* assisted with tasks in the VIPS office but more importantly, they helped the preschoolers practice for the Bill Roby games. Thank you, guys, for your help!

Thanks to volunteers from Kentucky Country Day school, led by teacher *Jenni Williams* to help with office tasks, including filing and cleaning, as well as helping with some Retreat items. They included: *Emily Alexander, Zunayr Asad, Connor Caudill, Allie Dudgeon, Colin Ferguson, Annie Harrison and Alisya Solanmi.*

## VIPS-Central Kentucky

The *University of Kentucky Delta Gammas* once again came out in full force to help VIPS with the planning and organization

of the Halloween party. They decorated and manned the activity stations, and even dressed up in costumes! Several partnered with the children to help them with the different activities while parents socialized with each other. Thank you, Delta Gammas!



*Delta Gammas play games with the children.*

Thanks also to *Courtney McBreairty* whose time and talents certainly helped to make the Halloween party a huge success. Additional thanks go to volunteers *Jessica Dalton, Hannah Goodrich, Lisa Johnson, Brooke Raque, Kristine Rose, Andrea Rue, Paige Shaw, and Sydney Walker*. A word of gratitude goes to *Tates Creek Christian Church* for their gracious hospitality in providing a venue for the party.

Members of the *Junior League of Lexington* stopped by the VIPS office one evening to assemble various items for VIPS Welcome Bags. Thank you *Erin Jones, Mary Leppo, Jada Newsome, Elizabeth Perry, and Danielle Story!* *Kendra Estes*, a freshman at *Henry Clay High School*, also joined the group to help put together the glitter bottles, color rice, and seal Pringles cans.

## VIPS-Indiana

We would like to thank *Jennifer Skinner* for arranging the opportunity for VIPS to present to *Epsilon Sigma Alpha*.

We owe our gratitude to *Gordon Holmes of MetLife Center for Special Needs Planning* and *Heather Dane of Family Voices Indiana* for providing our families with informative presentations at the Summer PAL. We also need to thank the kind folks at *Walmart and Pizza Hut on Michigan Road* in Indianapolis for their generous food and refreshment donations.

We owe a huge thank you to *Larry Ledford of WHAS Crusade for Children* for taking the time out of his busy schedule to film TVI, *Annie Hughes*, on a home visit with *Gracie*. Thanks to *Gracie's family* for welcoming Larry and his camera into their home.

## Notes of Interest

**VIPS@Home: Parent Empowerment Program**, originally developed by VIPS and published by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), offers courses for parents that can be studied in the home, making it possible to get information to families at their convenience. These materials offer opportunities for connecting with professionals and other parents for support.

- **Power at Your Fingertips:** This course provides a concise and family-friendly introduction to braille. Parents can begin to experience the joy of learning braille without the frustration of enormous textbooks. Parents will learn how to bring braille literacy into their everyday routines and discover numerous resources.
- **Emergent Literacy:** This course helps parents become comfortable reading to their child with a visual impairment as they learn how to make story time come alive. Parents learn how to make a story box, adapt books, and create books of their own.

**To find lists of relevant apps**, Meredith Howell, VIPS-Indiana mom and Assistant Director recommends: <http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/apps-early-learning-blind-visually-impaired-deafblind> as well as <http://wonderbaby.org>.

**A resource for older students, that is also of interest to parents of younger ones** is: <http://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/helping-students-with-visual-impairments/>. While developed for students preparing for college, some aspects, including the list of assistive technology, are certainly appropriate for younger students as well.

**The Perkins School for the Blind website is a treasure trove of wonderfully useful information.**

- **For tips on fire safety** for children with visual impairments, go to <http://www.perkins.org/stories/blog/eight-tips-for-teaching-fire-safety-to-kids-who-are-blind>.
- **For tips on how to prepare your child for learning to read Braille**, go to <http://www.perkins.org/stories/blog/ten-tips-to-prepare-your-child-to-learn-to-read-braille>.
- **For information about Individual Education Programs (IEPs)**, go to <http://www.perkins.org/stories/blog/individualized-education-programs-ieps-for-students-who-are-visually-impaired>.

**For a catchy song celebrating white canes** for internationally celebrated White Cane Day go to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_7gxrrwFt4&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_7gxrrwFt4&sns=em), written and performed by blind/visually impaired students in New Zealand.

**Echolalia** is an aspect of healthy language development that lasts much longer in children who are blind. This article explains why children who are visually impaired repeat what they hear, and how parents can help minimize repetition in a constructive way. <http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/echolalia>.

#### **How can you handle public comments about your child?**

When our children have differences that are visible, it can be a challenge. This is an interesting take on how one mother handled this situation <https://www.yahoo.com/parenting/when-a-soccer-mom-had-an-outburst-about-my-122767731816.html>

**To follow VIPS on Pinterest**, go to <http://www.pinterest.com/visuallyimp0052/>.

#### **An online comic book store for the blind and the visually impaired**

has been created by Guy Hasson, CEO of New Worlds Comics. To read an article about how comics can empower kids and teens, and how a comic book series was created specifically for blind and visually impaired kids, go to [http://comicsempower.com/empower\\_your\\_kids](http://comicsempower.com/empower_your_kids) <http://comicsempower.com/>

**Humana offers talking prescription labels** at no cost to blind and visually impaired members who fill prescriptions through Humana Pharmacy, Inc. Humana worked on its accessible prescription initiative with the American Council of the Blind and individual blind members in Nevada, Florida and Georgia. These talking labels are provided by the ScripAbility prescription accessibility system, a service of En-Vision America. Braille labels are also available through the Humana mail-order pharmacy.

## VIPS-Indiana News

### *Indiana First Lady's Charitable Foundation*

It's not every day that one finds oneself at the Governor's Mansion, but that's precisely where VIPS Indiana's Director Annie Hughes and Developmental Interventionist, David Sterne, were on



(l-r) Annie, First Lady Karen Pence, and David.

Wednesday, September 22. Annie and David were among the guests of Indiana's First Lady Karen Pence as grant recipients of The First Lady's Charitable Foundation. First Lady Pence presented Annie with a \$1,000 check for her exemplary work teaching infants and toddlers with visual impairments. Mrs. Pence felt the work Annie does on behalf of VIPS is a perfect fit for her foundation's mission to encourage and support youth and families of Indiana. We agree! Annie signed the check over to VIPS to help support the education of the children she serves. Congratulations and thank you, Annie!

### *Camp Woodsmoke*

On Sunday, September 28, Assistant Director Meredith Howell packed up her family and attended a Lions Club-hosted Pork Chop Dinner at Camp Woodsmoke in Greensburg, Indiana. The goal of the trip (besides eating good food and mingling with wonderful VIPS supporters) was to explore the campground to see if Camp Woodsmoke could be a potential VIPS Family Retreat option in the future. The Camp is indeed a hidden gem in Indiana! The grounds were beautiful, the cabins were quaint and clean, there was a lovely kitchen and dining facility as well as a large children's playground that even included wheelchair accessible swings. Meredith was honored to be a guest at the event and hopes VIPS families will have an opportunity to explore the campgrounds in the future.



### *Washington Township Lions Club Corn Stand*

With summer coming to an end, so is the ever-popular Indiana corn season. If you have ever frequented the Indiana State Fair, then certainly you've tried the hot, buttery Indiana corn at the Washington Township Lions Club Corn Stand. And if you haven't, let this article be your incentive to make it a priority next year! The members of the Washington Township Lions Club have been longstanding supporters of VIPS, which is why VIPS staff was eager to work the Corn Stand for the second year in a row. The hourly wage earned for the shifts would go directly to VIPS. Assistant Director Meredith Howell and her husband Rob worked a shift at the Corn Stand as did Indiana Director Annie Hughes and Developmental



Annie and Lisa working the Corn Stand.

VIPS grandmother **Barbara Green** donated several bags of art supplies, file folders and paper, all organized in containers. We appreciate her sharing as well as her organizational skills! Thanks so much for thinking of VIPS.

## Munch A Bunch for Lunch

A common question we hear around VIPS-Louisville is, "When are you having that lunch truck event again?" Well, we satisfied everyone's cravings and held the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Munch A Bunch for Lunch event on Thursday, September 10 at VIPS-Louisville. Guests enjoyed lunch options ranging from tacos to barbecue, gourmet grilled cheese and even snow cones. Each food truck donated a percentage of proceeds, in addition to a nice assortment of raffle baskets, which generated more than \$1,200 for VIPS! Thank you to **Belinda Lasch**, a dedicated volunteer of VIPS, who organized the entire event.



*Kids Town Preschooler, Pyper, enjoys a Kona Ice snow cone.*

## Give Local Louisville

On Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, the city of Louisville proved its status as a "Compassionate City" by raising nearly \$3 million for local nonprofits within just 24 hours! Give Local Louisville was a one-day online giving campaign, which benefited 362 charities, including VIPS. Thanks to many generous donors, VIPS-Louisville was able to raise \$48,431.88! Special thanks to the Louisville Downtown Lions Club for matching the first \$10,000 of donations made to VIPS during Give Local Louisville.

## Stampede for VIPS

Despite a blustery fall day, several hundred runners and walkers warmed up with the Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS 5K on Saturday, October 3. This year we held the event at the brand new Dr. Mark & Cindy Lynn Stadium on the University of Louisville campus. Children had a blast in the Kids Corral area and the Kids Fun Run, which was held on the U of L soccer field. More VIPS families than ever formed teams and came out in droves, many in custom-made shirts that honored their child. Special thanks to VIPS Kids Town Preschoolers Addy, who sang the National Anthem, and Bronson, who served



*VIPS Kids Town Preschool Graduate Jaiden and family came to support VIPS.*

as the Deputy Race Director! Also we so very much appreciate all of our sponsors, particularly **Dr. & Mrs. Lynn**, our participants and volunteers who helped us raise more than \$70,000!

*The Stampede is the only local 5K with a division for blind and visually impaired athletes.*



*Team Addy wins the prize for most participants!*

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenge

The VIPS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenge continues! 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](http://www.vips.org).

## UAW/Ford Mobility City

Work on the brand new "Mobility City" is in its final stages at VIPS-Louisville. This project, 100% donated by the UAW Local 862 and their vendors, is a first-of-its-kind Orientation & Mobility station, which will be used to teach VIPS children important navigational skills. "Mobility City" is a completely enclosed, safe replica of a city block, complete with a park bench, fire hydrant, audible pedestrian crosswalk signals and more. A ribbon cutting will be held soon to officially dedicate this exciting project!

Speaking of Ford, we are sad to say goodbye to Jim Conklin, the Ford employee and VIPS board member who brought the "Mobility City" project to VIPS. Jim was recently transferred by

Ford to bigger and better things in Michigan. Thank you, Jim, for all that you did during your time on the VIPS Board of Directors.



UAW/Ford  
Mobility City under  
construction.

## Papa John's Pizza Parties

There are many reasons to celebrate Papa John's here at VIPS! Not only is the pizza giant a major sponsor of the Stampede for VIPS and a supporter of the VIPS Tennis Ball, but the company recently committed to monthly pizza parties for Kids Town Preschoolers and the staff at VIPS! Representatives from Papa John's were also recently at VIPS-Louisville to conduct a check presentation with another VIPS supporter, the WHAS Crusade for Children. Thank you, Papa John's, for being such a great community partner.



Kids Town Preschool  
student, Jazmine, enjoys  
pizza for lunch.

## Old National Bank

Thank you to employees of Old National Bank in Louisville for recently raising \$207 for VIPS through a company jeans day. Two representatives stopped by VIPS in August to present the check. If your company does a similar fundraising campaign, we would love to hear from you!

## A Special Visitor

VIPS-Louisville was pleased to have recently hosted a special visitor to Kids Town Preschool. Steve Magre, who was District Councilman for a short while, stopped by for a tour and to see firsthand the important work being done in his district for young children who are blind and visually impaired. Mr. Magre took over his position from the late Jim King, an ardent supporter of VIPS. Thank you Councilman Magre for taking the time to visit VIPS!



VIPS Executive Director Diane  
Nelson with Steve Magre.

## VIPS-Central Kentucky

Many thanks to the **Blue Grass Community Foundation** for the generous donation of \$10,000 for a Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) to enlarge images for classroom use, four mini-light boxes to encourage visual skills and for direct services to children.

A most welcome donation of 21 cases of Kleenex tissues recently came from **Ben L. Graven of Total Quality Logistics**. These could not have come at a better time as we head into the cold and flu season.

## VIPS-Indiana

**Indiana First Lady's Charitable Foundation, Inc.** honored Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Annie Hughes, with a check for \$1000.

Three laptops were awarded through a grant from an anonymous source for the teachers and interventionists to use.

## In Memoriam

This issue of *VISability* is dedicated to the memories of

**Johnathon Cornett**

son of Sherry Leach of Louisville  
who passed away on March 27th  
at the age of 24 years  
~ and ~

**Aria Alaniz Gatzlaff**

daughter of Rachael Alaniz and Kevin Gatzlaff  
and sister of Daisy Gatzlaff of Yorktown, IN  
who passed away on September 20th  
at the age of 4 years.

Our hearts go out to all those whose lives were touched  
by Johnathon and Aria.

## Wish List

VIPS-Louisville is in need of the following items:

Clorox wipes

Paper towels

Hand soap refills



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

### VIPS-Louisville

#### December

*VIPS families who signed up will receive free tickets to Kalightoscope at the Galt House Hotel. Tickets may be used until December 27th.* Each ticket offers many Christmas activities for the whole family

- Larger-than-life KaLightoscope luminaries
- Magical performers and 3D projections
- Snow Fairy Princess, her Castle and Make a Flake
- Snow Play- Make Your Own Snowman
- Peppermint Express Train
- Santa's Sleigh Green Screen Experience
- Mr. Sugar Pine, the Talking Tree
- Letter Writing to Santa

#### Friday, January 15

*VIPS-Louisville will have another movie night.* Bring the kids in their PJs and blankets for the floor. Concessions will be available. Watch for more details.

### VIPS-Indiana

#### Friday, December 18

*VIPS is honored to be the beneficiary of the Annual Krista Detor Holiday Concert!* The Holiday Concert will be a beautiful evening of candlelight and choral presented by singer/songwriter

Krista Detor, held at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Bloomington. Doors open at 6:45 pm; the Concert begins at 7:30 pm. Contact Meredith Howell at [mhowell@vips.org](mailto:mhowell@vips.org) for ticket information or go to [www.vips.org](http://www.vips.org).

#### Thursday, January 14, 2016

*reVISION opens at the Indiana Interchurch Center.* (See pg. 21 for details.)

#### Saturday, January 23, 2016

*Brush off those "winter blues" and join the fun at the winter Indiana Play and Learn (PAL)! As always, there will be music, a special learning time, a Make & Take, a light lunch, and the opportunity for social time with other VIPS families.*

### VIPS-Central Kentucky

#### Thursday, December 10

*VIPS Family Christmas Party will be held at Lexington Hearing & Speech.* Call VIPS-CK for details at (859) 276-0335, Toll Free 888-254-8477 or Email: [vipslex@vips.org](mailto:vipslex@vips.org)

#### Saturday, December 19

*Forcht Bank "Pancakes With Santa" fundraiser for VIPS-Central Kentucky.* Call VIPS-CK for details at (859) 276-0335, Toll Free 888-254-8477 or Email: [vipslex@vips.org](mailto:vipslex@vips.org)

#### Sunday, January 31, 2016

*"Souper Bowl Party" fundraiser for VIPS-Central Kentucky.* Call VIPS-CK for details at (859) 276-0335, Toll Free 888-254-8477 or Email: [vipslex@vips.org](mailto:vipslex@vips.org).

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