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BIG NEWS IN CENTRAL KENTUCKY

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

We have fantastic news! VIPS-Central Kentucky has found a new home! We have moved into a beautiful old building in a beautiful old neighborhood and have forged a beautiful new partnership in the process. This past December, VIPS-CK moved in with Lexington Hearing and Speech, an agency very similar to ours. Our new space includes an office suite, a multi-purpose room, and a sensory room. In addition, VIPS has access to common spaces, such as the very large cafeteria and full-size gymnasium, where our family events will now be held.

Along with our new home comes new programming. Joining our community-based services provided by Dixie Miller, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, VIPS-Central Kentucky will now host a Little Learners Enrichment Group for two- and three-year-olds. The Little Learners will meet in our multi-purpose room on Monday and Tuesday mornings, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. On two Fridays mornings each month, our multi-purpose room will welcome parents/ caregivers and their VIPS children and siblings for our Play and Learn (PAL) group from 9:30-11 a.m. Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist, will lead both of these groups. She will be assisted by our Central Kentucky Family Services Coordinator, Emily Wiley, as her classroom assistant. If you are interested in hearing more about either group, please contact Emily at 859-498-6714.

In August 2016, the inclusive preschool at Lexington Hearing and Speech will open its doors to VIPS children, too! VIPS will work with families to enroll and support their child in the preschool both educationally and financially. More information regarding preschool registration will follow.



Harper and Rory like what they see in the mirror!

We hope you can stop by and visit our new home soon! You'll find us at 350 Henry Clay Boulevard! Mary Smyth, VIPS-CK Office Coordinator/Grant Writer, will be there to greet you!

VIPS/KSB Family Conference and Retreat Weekend

PASSPORT, the first annual, joint VIPS/Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Family Retreat and Conference for parents of children who are blind or visually impaired, birth to 21, was held on November 13-14, 2015. For the very first time, VIPS joined with KSB to host parents of children served by each agency. Because of this partnership, we were able to reach even more families in Kentucky and Indiana and our VIPS families were able to connect with families from KSB! The weekend was characterized by whirlwind activities, unbelievably high energy levels and non-stop conversations.

The weekend began with a tour of the American Printing House for the Blind. Dinner on Friday night featured a wonderful speaker, **David Wickstrom**, Executive Director of Independence Place, Founder of Beep Baseball Kentucky, Chair of Advocacy and Policy for Disabled Veterans, and a Member of the President's Committee on Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. He gave an inspirational talk "Hope Awaits."



Touring the APH Museum



Children were cared for in Respite Care and Kids Camps, according to their ages. Child care workers included staff of VIPS and KSB, and professionals from other schools and agencies, as well as many volunteers.



Little ones had plenty of cuddle time as well as play time, and older children got lots of opportunity for movement and fun in the big gym.



Saturday morning there were new faces to greet and old friends with whom to reconnect as the children settled in to respite and camp and the parents enjoyed a day of speakers. The presenters were varied and included parents, students and teachers and the information they shared enlightening. The wonderful KSB campus with its great facilities was perfect for the children who took full advantage of their surroundings.



The Panels of parents and blind adults shared experiences and insights.

highlight of the evening for the parents was **Dr. Travis**



Freeman, subject/inspiration of the recent movie, **23 Blast**. The children enjoyed a glow dance party in the gym with **pizza donated by Papa John's**.

We owe a huge thank you to all the staff and volunteers for giving up their weekend to help with the retreat, making it such a success. (See pg. 15.) A special thank you to the donors who helped fund this event, making it possible for our



families to learn, laugh and enjoy themselves: *Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, William E. Barth Foundation, Cave County Lions Club, Kroger's Corporate Office, Sam's Club on Preston and Walmart on Ruckriegel Pkwy.*

We eagerly look forward to next year's VIPS/KSB Family Retreat and Conference, to again be held at KSB, on November 4th and 5th, 2016!

A Bucket Full of VIPS

By Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education

Many drops make a bucket, many buckets make a pond, many ponds make a lake, and many lakes make an ocean.

When the average person first hears of Visually Impaired Preschool Services, he may think what is shared in the news is what we are. Perhaps they have heard of VIPS-Central Kentucky's recent partnership with Lexington Hearing and Speech (LH&S) and their new home under LH&S's roof. Perhaps they have heard the press release from VIPS Indiana celebrating the amazing art show that opened in the first floor gallery of the Indiana Interfaith Center, home to Indiana VIPS. Or perhaps the individual has caught a glimpse of the VIPS Louisville campus on the local news when the new playhouse/school house on Kids Town Preschool's campus was recently dedicated.

However you learn about the work of VIPS, there's one thing you must keep in mind. What you are hearing about or seeing or reading about is only one drop in the bucketful of services offered by Visually Impaired Preschool Services. When all the services offered throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the State of Indiana are combined, VIPS might even be on her way to filling the ocean referred to in the above quote!

The services a VIPS child receives through the family's partnership with VIPS are always the choice of the parents or caregiver. As an agency dedicated to addressing the educational needs of children who are blind or visually impaired, it is VIPS' responsibility to make sure families in Kentucky and Indiana are aware of all the services available to fill their family's bucket of support. VIPS is also here to offer recommendations that best address each individual VIPS child's needs.

Families will learn of VIPS services as they meet VIPS providers visiting in their homes. The provider may be accompanied by a VIPS Family Services Coordinator. Each of our three offices has its own Family Services representative; each one recognizes the uniqueness of the area served and offers events and supports accordingly. One thing each Family Services Coordinator has in common is their role as a past or current VIPS mom. Their insight and support is priceless to families and coworkers alike.

VIPS offers home- and community-based services to the newest VIPS families. In Kentucky this is usually offered through the Kentucky Early Intervention System, First Steps. Teachers of the Visually Impaired or Developmental Interventionists with additional training in services for young children with vision loss are assigned these duties. VIPS Teachers of the Visually Impaired can also be found in the three- and four-year-olds' classrooms in VIPS's onsite preschool, Kids Town Preschool, on the Louisville campus. There is also a Two Day 2s program available in Kids Town Preschool, led by another highly qualified Developmental Interventionist. Several public school systems honor VIPS by contracting for consultation services in their preschool classrooms.

With VIPS' new home in Lexington, VIPS-Central Kentucky began welcoming two- and three-year-olds to the Little Learners Enrichment Group two days a week starting in February. The preschool located in Lexington Hearing and Speech will open enrollment for VIPS children in Spring 2016. VIPS-Central Kentucky will join VIPS Louisville in offering a Play and Learn group (with VIPS child, parent or caregiver, and sibling[s]) twice monthly as well. (See front page story.)

VIPS-Indiana has recently been awarded a state grant to provide early intervention services to the state's youngest children who are blind or visually impaired. Receipt of the state monies will allow VIPS- Indiana to continue providing the state of the art early intervention services in place to an increased number of young children, birth to three years of age. The Indiana quarterly Play and Learn sessions are some of the best attended family events VIPS offers on all three campuses.

All VIPS families are encouraged to attend events sponsored by each of our offices; no one is restricted by which county or state they call home. VIPS knows it is easier said than done to take a family on the road for a VIPS event, so great efforts are made to make the services provided out of each office as comprehensive as possible.

VIPS is eager to partner with all families to identify each child's needs. VIPS will provide assessments to determine the best way to teach a child so she is able to fully participate in an educational setting, and more importantly, in her family's daily activities. Upon request, families can be accompanied to ophthalmologist's appointments and meetings with school systems to ensure the VIPS child's strengths are recognized and needs are addressed. VIPS will help parents dream and plan for their child's future.

VIPS needs your help to continue filling the bucket of services. VIPS recently got a call from a First Steps service coordinator working in an outlying county. One of the families she is serving was at a McDonald's restaurant when approached by a VIPS mom who saw the lady's child wearing glasses. The VIPS mom

asked the other mom who the child's VIPS provider was. The mom had not heard of VIPS and the child was not receiving services – but he is now! Please help VIPS reach others by being the eyes and ears of VIPS in your communities.

As the VIPS team reflects on the services provided through the generosity of donors and supporters, we know that we may only be a single drop in your child's bucket of services. Our hope is to provide you an ocean of hope for your VIPS child's successes in the years to come.

VIPS Family Activities Offer Something for Everyone at Every VIPS Office!

VIPS-Louisville

Kalightscope!

HO! HO! HO! VIPS families were thrilled to be treated to tickets at Kalightscope at the Galt House again this year in our annual Christmas celebration. What a sensory overload of fascinating sights and sounds we experienced everywhere we looked! The families of VIPS enjoyed the spectacularly colorful lighted figures of A Christmas Carol along with beautiful luminaries and animated three dimensional people and animals (first featured in Stewart's Dry Good's storefront windows years ago!) throughout The Galt House. The Peppermint Express Train was exciting but couldn't hold a candle to the white bearded gentleman who welcomed us to the excitement! We look forward to visiting with Santa Claus and the Snow Princess again next year in what has become an annual VIPS family event. Thanks so much to the Galt House for making our families feel so welcome!

Community Band Joins VIPS for Holiday Concert

If you heard "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" being sung at the Kosair Shrine Temple on November 15th, you must have been present for a holiday concert for VIPS children and their families performed by the U of L Community Band led by Dr. Mark J. Lynn. The band members included the VIPS children in many of their songs asking them to sit next to them so they could "feel" the music up close. The children even got to lead the

band at the end of the night! Thank you so much to the U of L Community band for providing us with this very special night.

Grace and her dad sat right in the middle of the band!



VIPS Families Go Bananas Over Minions

Six VIPS families attended the most recent VIPS Movie Night on January 15th, enjoying their showing of the "Minions". Pajama clad children watched the movie from mats in Kids Town, waving their glow sticks and snacking on nachos, popcorn and most appropriate to the movie, banana pudding. Thanks to volunteers Clint Otis and Ryan Hack along with VIPS staff members, Staci Maynard, Marchelle Hampton, Diane Nelson and Ashley Buren for their assistance.

Greatest Families on Earth at the Greatest Show on Earth

Thank you to the Kosair Shriners for donating tickets to VIPS for the February 5th and 7th performances of the Kosair Shrine Circus, the Greatest Show on Earth! VIPS families love the sights, sounds and smells that accompany the circus. Thank also to Dr. Peggy Fishman and Precise Air Filters Sales & Service for donating extra tickets.



Addison and Sarah are ready for the show!

A-MAZE-ing Night at the Museum

Almost ninety VIPS children, families and their friends attended the recent VIPS Night at the Kentucky Science Center held on February 18th. And what a night it was! VIPS supporters were the only attendees so they had ample opportunity to carefully examine every exhibit—and they did! Eager young scientists shopped for shapes, sizes and textures in the Sensory Market while future engineers built dams



Judah played at a light table.

and created waterfalls in the water play area. Future NASA astronauts climbed in and out of the space capsule and made their own rockets, carefully observing as their rocket actually launched! Young adventurers delighted in the musical floor as foreign explorers learned just how BIG polar bears and how OLD mummies actually are! The entire event brought in so many new faces along with many more familiar ones that it was not only pronounced a great success but also put on the must-do list for next year! Thanks so much to the Kentucky Science Center for this amazing opportunity!



Caleb loved the water exploration area.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

By Emily Wiley, VIPS CK Family Services Coordinator

Parent's Night Out

VIPS Central Kentucky staff members offered VIPS parents a night all to themselves. On November 6th at Bates Creek Christian Church, VIPS parents entrusted their children to the open arms of familiar staff. The parents were gifted with two and a half hours of free time to enjoy an evening out where THEY got to decide what to do! Four families took advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

While their parents took a break, the kids were comfy and cozy in their pajamas curled together watching *Inside Out* accompanied by popcorn and hot chocolate. The children also made a sweet handprint craft to give their mommies and daddies upon their return.

Halloween Party

This year we had our Halloween Spooktacular Party at Bates Creek Christian Church on October 23rd for VIPS children and their families. The kids were invited to wear their favorite Halloween costumes and participate in 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 shopped at the Usborne Book Fair hosted by Courtney McBrearty.

Courtney told spooky stories to the children who then made crafts relating to the stories they heard. Let's not forget the sensory stations they experienced! Pumpkin buckets full of guts, brains, eye balls and toe nails provided the ultimately spooky tactile and visual experience! The children didn't leave empty handed either for they earned tickets from each station which they then redeemed for prizes.

They also made their very own Take Home Sensory Bags. Parents, kids and our extremely helpful volunteers from Delta Gamma filled Ziploc baggies with googly eyes and orange hair gel. It was a big hit! This year's Halloween Party was a huge success and we were delighted that it was so well attended!

Annual Santa Party

On December 10th VIPS-CK held our annual Christmas Party at Bates Creek Christian Church from 6:00 pm until 8:30 pm. With Christmas music playing and hot chocolate warming, it was hard not to feel the Christmas spirit! The VIPS children and their siblings decorated their own Christmas cookies and ornaments and made pipe cleaner

candy canes. They danced and sang, played "Pin the Nose on Rudolph," Holiday

Bingo, and wrapped each other up with green streamers until they turned into Christmas trees! Let's not forget our guest of honor; we were visited by none other than Santa Claus himself! Our favorite Santa, Jack Patti, paid a visit and posed for photos with the children. Kids were able to tell Santa their wish

list and left his lap with goodies and huge smiles. What a great way to end the year! The hearts of our families are full; we are all excited and anticipating the family events to come in 2016!



*Above: Harper makes a Christmas craft.
Below: Santa shares a tender moment with one of his admirers!*



Pancakes with Santa

On December 19th, Forcht Bank held a Christmas fundraiser, "Pancakes with Santa", with VIPS CK as the grateful recipient. VIPS families along with Forcht Bank customers brought their children to play wintery games and eat delicious pancakes while they waited for Santa to arrive. They also made popsicle stick tree and snowflake ornaments to add to their Christmas trees at home. Santa arrived and laughed and played with the children as they told him what their Christmas wishes were.

We at VIPS were very humbled by the donations which totaled a whopping \$545! We can't thank the wonderful people at Forcht Bank enough for thinking of our organization. We are especially thankful to April Thurmond who coordinated the entire event!

VIPS-Indiana

By Meredith Howell, VIPS-Indiana Assistant Director/Family Services Coordinator

VIPS Indiana Hosts Fall Play and Learn Group

On Wednesday, October 21st, VIPS Indiana hosted a “Fall-bulous” Play and Learn (PAL) Group! Families enjoyed music and circle time with VIPS staff and learned about baby massage, yoga and relaxation from the wonderful Barb Blaine of PediPlay. The kiddos explored fall-inspired sensory tubs while the parents made Smelly Jars with lovely fall scents. All enjoyed lunch courtesy of our good friend Tim Fleischman over at Jersey Mike's Subs. Thanks to all of the families who spent part of your Wednesday with us!



Above: Making Fall inspired smelly jars; Below: Moms giving their babies a massage.

Baby Massage and Yoga Fun for Your Little One

By Annie Hughes, Director/TVI, VIPS-Indiana

At the autumn VIPS Play-and-Learn (PAL) Event in Indiana, Barb Blain, OTR (Occupational Therapist, Registered), and Director of PediPlay: Pediatric Therapy Clinic in Indianapolis, brought Occupational Therapy (OT) students Kendra Morin and Lindsey Derstadt to the PAL and provided training and information to families. Since that time, there have been several requests to share the information, so we decided to it share with families in Kentucky and Indiana.

If you plan to use this information, read it over carefully first and notice the number of times the word “gently” appears. When working with a baby or toddler who is blind or has very low vision, try to always have your hands touching the child (maintaining contact), to allow her to know where your hands are moving, and remember to move slowly. Turn off the TV, speak in a quiet

voice, and if you choose, find some soft music to play in the background.

If you have questions about baby massage or yoga fun for young children, check with your Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, or doctor before proceeding. Massage and yoga allow you a special opportunity to connect with your child!

Yoga Fun for Mom and Child

The child lies on her back on the floor or on your outstretched legs. Adjust your touch based on what is most comfortable for your child.

Gently roll her foot 2 circles to the left and 2 circles to right. Lower first leg gently and repeat with other foot/leg. Repeat with one leg, making circles with her ankle this time. Repeat with other leg.

Holding the leg from above, gently bend her knee to her chest and slowly lower. Repeat 3 times. Repeat sequence with other leg.

Gently bend both her legs to her chest and slowly lower both legs to the left with her knees still bent. Hold for 5 seconds while you sing or listen to background music the child likes. Gently bring her knees back to the center of her body then extend her legs, running your hands down her legs as her legs straighten out. Hold her legs for 5 seconds.

Repeat all parts of #3, bending legs to the other side of her body.

Gently slide your child's arms out from her body to make a letter T with her trunk and arms, keeping arms on the ground and sliding upward only as far as they easily and comfortably move. Gently slide your hands down your child's arms 2 times.

Raise one arm at a time, up along tummy, straight overhead to you then over child's head and toward floor gently. Gently run your hand from child's armpit to hand. Stroke slowly 2 times then repeat with other arm.

Place your child on your extended legs with her head by your ankles, place your hand on your child's upper thighs and the other hand securely across her chest. Slowly bend your knees and raise the child. Move slowly, and only go as far as the child can comfortably handle. Gently rock side to side if the child is enjoying the stretch and then slowly lower your legs. Repeat if she is enjoying herself.

Yoga summary:

Rotate feet, rotate ankles, knees to chest, knees to side, arms to side like letter T, arms up and over child's head one at a time, and child on your legs. Anyone who has practiced yoga as an adult will recognize these moves and positions.

Baby Massage

We appreciate so much this summary of the the baby massage information provided by Leah Matulewicz.

- **Benefits of Massage:** May reduce crying and fussiness, increase peaceful sleep, and strengthen the immune system. The nervous system is also stimulated and amounts of serotonin, the “feel good” chemical, is released more frequently. The cardiovascular and respiratory systems are also benefitted by the soothing touch and relaxing environment. In addition, there is an increase in emotional bonding and communication between the infant and the caregiver. It has been shown that massaging can be beneficial to all infants, but it can be especially beneficial for premature infants as well.
- **When to massage:** Block out 10-15 minutes when the baby is alert and relaxed. The most commonly recommended time to massage is after her bath or after a diaper change. Do not massage if your baby is fussy as this can potentially increase tension and make it more difficult for the child to calm down.
- **Materials needed:** A quiet and warm environment, baby oil or moisturizer*, clean hands, a soft blanket or towel and a pillow.

* Make sure your child has no allergies to the baby oil or moisturizing lotion prior to beginning massage by testing a small patch of skin on the child’s leg prior to applying to many parts of the child’s body.

Types of massage/target areas: Start by gently rubbing your baby’s palms with your thumbs as this will pull the baby in and calm her down. The idea for massaging is to work from the bottom and go up. Here are suggested target areas and techniques:

- **Legs:** Start by wrapping your hands around thigh area of leg and gently, but firmly, glide down the leg until you reach the ankle. You can then move to the feet and just rub circles into the soles of the feet. Repeat this process of starting at the top of the thigh and moving down to the feet about 6 times.
- **Belly:** Check first with your doctor and make adjustments if your child has a G-tube or has had other belly surgeries. Place both hands at her naval and then circle your thumbs across the stomach, both thumbs moving in the opposite direction. Move to the breastbone in a circular motion then down to the navel again. Do this gently 4 or 5 times.
- **Arm:** Take both hands and place them at her shoulder in a wrapping motion. Slowly roll the arm through the hands while moving down toward the wrist. Do this 2 or 3 times, then move to the other arm.

- **Neck:** with one hand, support the infant’s head. With the other hand, take the thumb and place it about a half an inch under the ear and then the ring and index finger and place them half an inch under the other ear. Rub tiny circles on the neck a few times.
- **Colic-relief:** repeat the steps of the belly massage, but before you conclude, bend the legs at the knee and fold the legs up to the tummy. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat twice. Next, place your thumb on the navel and stroke down, just a thumb’s length, a few times.
- **Back:** roll baby onto tummy and trace tiny circles on either side of the spine from the neck down to the buttocks. Finish with long firm strokes from shoulders down to the feet.

Once the massage session is over, place your child in a comfortable napping outfit.



Comes to VIPS- Louisville!!

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) is proud to announce our new partnership with Radio Eye, Kentucky’s radio reading service for those who are unable to access the printed word. Radio Eye broadcasts the reading of current newspapers, magazines, health materials, grocery ads, children’s books and much more, offering greater independent living to people who are blind, visually impaired, or physically handicapped.

Radio Eye has welcomed volunteer readers to their Central Kentucky studios for many years to record readings to be broadcast across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. One volunteer has traveled from Louisville to Lexington weekly to complete her assignment.

But no longer! Starting in February 2016, VIPS has provided dedicated space on our Louisville campus for such recordings. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up for their recording times, Mondays through Thursdays, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Support staff from Radio Eye will be present to help readers get started their first several sessions.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer reader, please contact Radio Eye’s Amy Hatter, Executive Director, or Lucy Stone, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, at (859) 422-6390.

If you know someone who will benefit from the services of Radio Eye, please refer them to the number listed above or Radio Eye's website, www.radioeye.org. Listeners can access Radio Eye's 24/7 broadcast on special pre-tuned Radio Eye radios (provided to the listeners), on the iBlink Radio app, on the NFB-Newsline telephone service, and at www.radioeye.org.



(L-R) Lucy Stone, Radio Eye Studio Manager, Amy Hatter, Executive Director of Radio Eye, and Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education.

Welcome, Radio Eye!

On the Road with VIPS-Indiana Teachers



Ava & Arabella make marshmallow snowmen.



Everett enjoys the metallic sound of dropping chips in the coffee can.



Zayden is mastering putting pegs in the fine motor jar.



Above: David gets to know Andrew during an initial visit. Left: Timmy loved the shaker bottle that came in his welcome bag.

In the Classrooms with VIPS-Central KY

Right: Marshall loves coming to learn at Little Learners!



Below: Rory chuckles with excitement watching the bubble tube.



Above: Teacher Lesley Lusher and Rory and Classroom Assistant Emily Wiley and Marshall snuggle in the sensory room.

Left: Harper plays in the ball pit.



Kids Town Preschool at VIPS-Louisville

Two Day 2s

By Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist/Twos Teacher

The 2s class continues to be a class filled with transition, change and growth. We have added new friends to our class and sadly said goodbye to some as they have traveled across the hall to preschool. While Shelby and I are sad with each goodbye, we love witnessing the growth that occurs in the 2s room, particularly when they start to show signs they are ready for that next big step known as Preschool.

Our children often enter our room nervous and anxious because they have never been separated from a family member. It only takes a couple weeks for that same child to cry because they have to leave to go home. I smile when our 2s can identify shapes and colors, but I'm PROUD when they experience the social/emotional growth that is so important at the age of two. Showing compassion to a friend, waiting turns, sharing, following directions, "using our words", showing pretend play skills, helping during clean up, participating in circle, and cooperatively playing with a peer are just a few of the skills our 2s tackle and overcome in our room.



The Twos, Wednesday-Thursday Group, ready to learn, with teacher Ms. Tracy and instructional assistant Ms. Shelby.

Amidst the social/emotional growth our 2s have been busy expanding their knowledge using a winter theme. We kicked off our winter season with a trip to Bass Pro Shop in December to visit Santa, hike on a secluded trail, pretend to drive a four wheeler, and have a pretend snow ball fight. All of the 2s liked Santa from a distance but some were less thrilled to actually sit

in his lap. A big thanks to all of our parents and chaperones who attended the trip with us. Without you, the trip would not have been possible.

After the holidays, we brought the winter weather into our room as we painted a snowman, played in pretend snow, dressed up in scarves and mittens, built a snowman on our lightbox, and discussed the difference between mittens and gloves. We moved from our fun winter theme to discussing the things and people we love in our life during February. Love was shown in our room as we shared pictures of our families, made a friendship tree, displayed ways to show love to others, explored pink peppermint scented rice, and looked for heart shapes around our room.

Fall Fun in Kids Town Preschool

By Staci Maynard, Preschool Teacher

Kids Town preschool had a busy autumn. In November, we went on a trip to Bernheim Forest where Ranger Whitney took us on a nature walk and let us tactually explore items from forest plants and animals. We also visited Kroger to shop for ingredients in recipes we later cooked. In December, we went to Bass Pro Shop to visit Santa. Our art therapists worked with us to create tambourines, shakers shaped like presents, and ornaments made from applesauce and cinnamon. Here are some highlights from each classroom.

GREEN ROOM

Prior to our trip to Bernheim Forest, Ms. Ashley's class discussed what kind of animals live in the forest. We read *My Very First Book of Animal Homes*. After our trip to Bernheim, we then learned about the different types of homes in which we live. Some are made of wood, brick, etc. We then read *The Three Little Pigs*.

We have been practicing identifying our address, and even discussed in what city and state we live. We used each child's address to work on number identification.

On Wednesday, November 18th, we took a trip to the grocery store to purchase the ingredients we needed in order to make pizza. The students created an emergent reader titled *At the Grocery Store*. Inside the book, each student had the opportunity to

Jasmine at the store.



fill in the blank, “We can buy _____,” and identified different items you might buy while shopping at the grocery.



Ms. Ashley's Green Room Class with instructional assistant Ms. Beth (Ms. LaRhonda was behind the camera).

In December, we learned all about candy canes, ornaments, and jingle bells. One of the books we read was *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bell*. The students had the opportunity to tactually explore objects from the story including a sleigh, bell, bow, present, etc. When learning about candy canes, each student was encouraged to create various letters or shapes out of the candy canes. We also created candy cane patterns using paint dotters, blocks, bingo chips, and other materials.

RED ROOM

In November, Ms. Staci's class focused on the forest, shopping, and cooking. After our trip to Bernheim Forest, we played a game in which we systematically searched for forest animals. The students also decided what descriptive words they wanted to use to tell about different animals. Some of our favorite examples:

“A hedgehog is as prickly as a shot” and “A skunk is as stinky as feet.” The students worked to make patterns out of shape stickers to create a forest path for our animals. We practiced using a monocular to find objects around VIPS that start with different letters of the alphabet. One



During a Kids Town Preschool trip to Bass Pro Shop, the children were in awe of the large reindeer.

of the class's favorite activities in this unit was retelling the story of *Bear Wants More* with puppets and yelling the phrase “but he still...wants...more” together when the bear was still hungry.

Before taking our trip to Kroger, we made a grocery list of the ingredients we would need to make vegetable soup. As we made homemade soup, the class practiced how to follow a recipe. We read the book *Growing Vegetable Soup* with this unit and used gardening tools and seeds to act out the story as it was read. At the end of the month, students enjoyed creating turkey art using our favorite Thanksgiving herbs and spices as well as practicing their skills in number recognition and fine motor skills by giving turkeys the number of clothespin feathers listed on their bellies.



Evie, Vance and Lena acting out the letter T.

In December, the Red Room learned using topics like gingerbread men, decorations, and holiday traditions. Using the story of “*The Gingerbread Man*,” the students practiced sequencing events and comparing similarities and differences in two versions of the story. We made our own gingerbread play dough and used it to create gingerbread men. The class also decorated its own gingerbread house. To work on counting and subtraction, we used a song called “5 Little Gingerbread Men” and gingerbread manipulatives. Students worked on systematically searching with their eyes or their fingers to find matching sets of gingerbread men.



Ms. Staci's Red Room Class, with instructional assistants Ms. Kathy and Ms. Ashley B.

As winter break approached, the class learned a bit about winter holiday traditions in other countries, such as customary foods that are eaten. Students were able to create several kinds of ornaments to give their families as well as shop for family members at the VIPS Santa Shop. Students were excited about writing a letter to Santa that we then delivered to the big guy himself on our trip to Santa's Wonderland at Bass Pro Shop. My personal favorite activity in December was writing our own version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" together. Each student independently picked at least one gift that they wanted to include in the song. This is our final product: "On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me: 12 dinosaurs, 11 dog toys, 10 Barbie dream houses, 9 chocolate cakes, 8 shaky eggs, 7 roller skates, 6 chocolate cookies, 5 cotton candy machines, 4 barking dogs, 3 red balls, 2 bull Transformers, and a magic elf in a box."

ORANGE ROOM

Ms. Paige's class made homemade applesauce with a crank-operated apple saucer. Our class explored the Kids Town optometrist's office to find out what is inside. The students' favorite part was the doctor's chair. The class was interested in tornados, so we learned about weather and pretended to be tornados while the fan blew. We also learned about the letter W for wind.



Santa may still use a sled, but Kaden tried out a different kind of snow travel vehicle.



Ms. Paige's Green Room Class, with instructional assistants Ms. Gretchen and Ms. Marchelle.

As we incorporated elements of the expanded core curriculum into our class, students with low vision learned about the concept of "in focus" and "out of focus."

Students who are learning braille have made great improvements in tracking a braille line; we found "apples" at the end of braille lines during applesauce week. Students with cortical visual impairment have loved the light box and playing with red and yellow shapes on it. We pretended the red circles were apples.

Pre-K in the Spotlight

By Ashley Emmons, Pre-K Teacher

The Pre-K students have been very busy improving their independent dressing skills with hands-on experience using zippers, buttons, snaps, Velcro, shoelaces, etc. By the end of our lesson/unit, each student was able to put on his/her socks and shoes independently. We read *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*, and used buttons to work on math skills including creating patterns and sorting by size, shape, and color.



Above: Bronson practices fastenings using a dressing frame. Left: Hailey works on getting her shoes on the correct foot.

One of the lessons the students seemed to have enjoyed the most was centered on money! The children learned all about the dollar bill, quarter, dime, nickel, and penny. We recited and reviewed money poems each day while tactually exploring each coin. Each student had the opportunity to sort coins, create a graph, and stack coins to build a tall tower. They also created their very own "My Money Book" using real coins.

The children have worked hard exploring the Brailewriter over the past few weeks. Each student has had the opportunity to experiment with making dots on the brailewriter, as well as learning the parts of the brailewriter. Each is also encouraged to push each embossing key separately and in combination with other keys. They have also had the opportunity to practice independently inserting and removing paper from the brailewriter.

The American Printing House's (APH) EZeeCOUNT Abacus has been a tool we have used often in the Pre-K classroom. This

has been a great learning tool to build the concept of rows and columns, as well as to practice counting and addition skills. The students are able to identify the two sides of the abacus beads by color and texture with the yellow side being smooth, and the red side as rough. They are also learning abacus terminology such as “set” and “cleared.”

ART THERAPY in Kids Town Preschool

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Kids Town Preschool is pleased to welcome art therapists Ehren Reed and Jackie Pallesen each Monday to provide tactual and auditory art experiences to our preschool students. This amazing opportunity has been made possible by the very generous folks at Kosair Charities and Louisville Fund for the Arts. While the children are creating their masterpieces they are also developing more sophisticated problem-solving skills, gaining courage for exploring new things, increasing language skills, and most importantly, learning to advocate for themselves when they need assistance.

Stop in on a Monday to see our students at work. Bring your own apron – we’re known to be messy as we create!



Creating works of art!!
Below: VIPS kids attended the Fund for the Arts kickoff.



New Arrivals

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

VIPS-Louisville

- Arley -- 25 months old
Bardstown, KY
- Brantley -- 14 months old
Ewing, KY
- Charlotte -- 27 months old
Louisville, KY
- Eliza -- 19 months old
Henderson, KY
- Elizabeth -- 3 years old
Madison, IN
- Faith -- 26 months old
Louisville, KY
- Jasper -- 31 months old
New Albany, IN
- Journie -- 10 months old
Louisville, KY
- Kenneth -- 28 months old
Louisville, KY
- Lena -- 4 years old
Louisville, KY
- Maddie -- 11 months old
Bedford, KY
- Maeley -- 11 months old
Louisville, KY
- Rayder -- 8 months old
Winslow, IN

VIPS-Indiana

- Addisyn -- 17 months old
Fort Wayne, IN
- Addison -- 28 months old
Columbus, IN
- Andrew -- 28 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Cody -- 31 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Delandest -- 33 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Domnique -- 14 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Emily -- 13 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Jacob -- 13 months old
Indianapolis, IN
- Jael -- 34 months old
Fishers, IN
- Jessie -- 22 months old
Goshen, IN
- J'Shon -- 21 months old
Fort Wayne, IN
- Timmy -- 33 months old
Elkhart, IN

VIPS-Central Kentucky

- Arianna -- 15 months old
Lexington, KY
- Brantley -- 12 months old
Ewing, KY
- Brooklyn -- 18 months old
Greenup, KY
- Caleb -- 10 months old
Paris, KY
- Colton -- 6 months old
Waco, KY
- Daxton -- 8 months old
Phelps, KY
- Decker -- 12 months old
Lexington, KY
- Eilam -- 11 months old
Hazard, KY
- Hemi -- 7 months old
Lost Creek, KY
- Jolie -- 32 months old
Waco, KY
- Maggie -- 28 months old
Richmond, KY
- Mason -- 5 months old
Campton, KY
- Miriam -- 14 months old
Richmond, KY
- Noah -- 5 months old
Ashland, KY
- Quenton -- 18 months old
Bonnyman, KY
- Rheanna -- 33 months old
Danville, KY
- Sophie -- 16 months old
Somerset, KY
- Tara -- 11 months old
Pikeville, KY
- Xavier -- 17 months old
Greenup, KY

Expanded Core Curriculum, Pt. 7: Career Education

By Jan Moseley, Vision Impairment Specialist/Newsletter Editor

One of my very favorite parts of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is career education. It's not that I want every preschooler to state her career choice but rather that many activities each VIPS two-year old encounters during the day leads to future vocational skills. How is that possible, you say?

If one of the youngsters in our Two Day Twos groups shows that he is tolerant of playing next to another child, we see this as a beginning step to social give and take. From there we see him actually playing with another child, then taking turns with another, and finally working together to accomplish a task. This social give and take is a necessary skill involving communication with others, collaboration with others and in general, just getting through life with other people. Social give and take is almost always required during the work day, even if the worker is completing tasks on his own. And if he must complete part of a task in which others are responsible for completing other parts, he must have the ability to work with other project members or the entire project could fail. This is true in all aspects of schooling besides working a job.

When one of our Two Day Two children begins to focus her attention on a specific object, whether using her vision or her other senses, we see this as a step to then increasing the amount of time she can direct and hold her attention. That step is a precursor to actually focusing attention on a task long enough to complete it, a vital part of educational programs everywhere, besides being able to complete a job task. So, yes, it's a baby step but a step that leads to a higher level step that leads to an even higher level step that ultimately leads to a job skill.

Language skills are always a vital part of early education so it is imperative that young children are provided models and guided into using their language as often as they can. Learning to listen to others' words and using your own words lead to higher level skills such as back and forth conversation, a social requirement in addition to being a very important job skill.

We introduce braille skills to all of the children at VIPS, whether or not it is expected to become their primary reading mode. We do this because we think it critical that children be provided with options to determine the medium or media they prefer as they move on up in the educational system. And it is important that

the working adult with vision limitations be able to decide whether to use their computer, braille device, auditory input/output or enlarged print to perform each task. As the tasks change, so might the media choices of the well informed adult, who can select a different media or device to complete each one.

That decision of which media to use for which task leads to my most favorite aspect of career education---self advocacy. When a preschooler can learn to identify her needs and practice speaking up about what she needs in order to complete a task ("May I have a pencil, please?" or "I would rather have the brailled copy") in a pleasant, positive manner, she is taking the first small steps toward telling her college professor or a job supervisor the adaptations she needs to use in order to succeed. This is an absolutely vital skill for her to be independent in her chosen arena as well as in her personal life.

Of course, if we consider actual job responsibilities, VIPS preschoolers can actually practice at many such jobs in our Kosair Charities Kids Town. Checking out groceries at the grocery, counting out change in the



Ms. Shelby helps Zach mail a letter in Kids Town.

Chase Bank, wrapping packages at the UPS Store, making cookies at the Sullivan University Bakery, filling an order at the drive through KFC window or even washing and drying clothes at the Highland Cleaners, all as part of open play give the children the opportunity to "try out" different jobs in a safe, secure setting.

There are many more examples that could be provided but suffice it to say that there are very few times during the school day at VIPS when our youngsters are NOT actually working on a task that could ultimately lead to a successful career for them!



Addy and Hailey share a braille story book.



Notes of Interest

~~ An app developed by a California gent with VIPS Indiana connections is called *Be My Eyes*: <https://itunes.apple.com/dk/app/be-my-eyes-helping-blind-see/id905177575?mt=8> . This “micro-volunteer” opportunity to be

a blind person’s eyes means being willing, when contacted, to help the blind person with tasks that a sighted person can perform. For example: if you are contacted to provide assistance, you can tell the person requesting help if the milk carton has expired. There are many more volunteers than blind people, but this presents a wonderful way to help. We all want to give our time to a cause, but life is busy, and this is a unique way to help.

~~ The American Printing House for the Blind, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the world’s largest nonprofit company devoted solely to researching, developing, and manufacturing products for people who are blind or visually impaired. Founded in 1858, it is the oldest organization of its kind in the United States. Under the 1879 federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, APH is the official supplier of educational materials for visually impaired students in the U.S. who are working at less than college level.

APH manufactures textbooks and magazines in braille, large print, recorded, and digital formats. APH also manufactures hundreds of educational, recreational, and daily living products including computer software and other technology items. APH’s fully-accessible web site features information about APH products and services, online ordering of products, and free information on a wide variety of blindness-related topics.

The American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. is located at 1839 Frankfort Avenue in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information, call (502) 895-2405 or log on to www.aph.org.

The Museum, where visitors experience hands-on history, is open Monday through Saturday. It is located on the second floor of the American Printing House for the Blind, 1839 Frankfort Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky. Admission is free. The Museum collection includes a display featuring the Book of Psalms from Helen Keller’s Bible (this Bible was embossed at APH). Helen Keller was inducted into the Hall of Fame at APH; a section of the Hall includes a 1930 video of Helen and Annie Sullivan talking about how Helen’s education began. <https://youtu.be/Gv1uLf35Uw>

Regular hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday and 10:00am to 3:00pm on Saturday. Visitors can write in braille, see

the first book embossed for blind readers created in France in 1786, play a computer game designed for blind students, see the piano used by Stevie Wonder when he was a student at the Michigan School for the Blind, and much more. For more information, visit www.aph.org/museum or call (502) 895-2405 ext. 365 or ext 213.

~~ I Run For Michael is a group on Facebook which matches your child with a runner who will dedicate their miles, workouts etc. to your child. Some runners send the child medals or memorabilia from their races. The key is to build a relationship between the child and runner. The runners are asked to post to the child on facebook (parents page or in the I run 4 group) at least 3 times a week, to build their relationship and offer support. They even have an I Run 4 siblings group which is where they match the sibling of a special needs child with a runner as well. As of right now they have more runners signed up than children. If you have any questions, contact someone in charge of the group and get more information if needed <<http://www.whoirun4.c> (Thanks to VIPS Mom Ashley Buren for submitting this information!)

~~ 64oz Games, founded by Emily and Richard Gibbs, is a company which ran a successful Kickstarter campaign which helped them make board games accessible for blind people of all ages. 64oz Games has revolutionized board games for blind people with their braille accessibility kits. With these kits, blind players can play the same games along with their sighted friends. Go to: <http://www.64ouncegames.com> to see the entire collection.

~~ The Pediatric Hydrocephalus Foundation, a national advocacy organization for children with hydrocephalus, has learned that iPads, which contain strong magnets, can actually re-program programmable shunts if a child lays her head near or on an iPad. The settings of the valve of these shunts, which regulate the pressure/flow of fluids in the brain, are typically adjusted by the child’s physician using magnets. The iPad’s magnets are apparently strong enough to alter the settings of the programmable shunt from Medtronic’s if the child’s head is within two inches of the iPad. The same warning exists for all other household magnets such as on your refrigerator door seal, cell phone, etc. For additional information visit <http://ipadforums.net/ipad-help/57639-magnets-danger-ipad-2-a.html> and <http://www.medhelp.org/posts/CChiari-Malformation/FYI-Those-with-Programmable-SHUNTS/show/1661065>.

Thanks to Our Wonderful Volunteers!

VIPS-Louisville

Thanks to *Alyssa Shippey* from Atherton High School for volunteering her help in the office.

We are grateful to *Devon Newton* of St. Gabriel and to *Clint Otis* for their help with maintaining our facility.

We appreciate the efforts of the ever-reliable *Ryan Hack and Clint Otis* who both volunteered at the Family Movie Night!

Speaking of reliable, we also thank the highly reliable *Fran Woodward* for her help in the Twos classroom. And we have a new volunteer to thank for working with our Twos, *Juanita Miles*. Thanks so much, ladies, for your selfless work with the young VIPS-sters!

Again this year we express our gratitude to the wonderful ladies from the *Delta Gamma Louisville Alumnae Chapter* who perennially help us with the Holiday letter fund-raiser. Thanks so much to the following members: *Elizabeth Back, Tessa Belding, Alison Bogen, Julie Campbell, Katrina Dannhelm, Leslie Dims, Jeannine Flynn, Ginny Fuller, Chris Gary, Martha Hemminger, Geri Huff, June King, Penny Orth, Mary Frances Pack, Brenda Scalzo, Debbie Summers and Karin Tyrev*.

A Fabulous Family Retreat & Conference Thanks to Volunteers!

Thank you to all our sponsors and donors who helped make the Family Retreat so very special: **Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, William E. Barth Foundation, Cave County Lions Club, Kroger's Corporate Office, Sam's Club (Preston Highway) and Walmart on Ruckriegel Pkwy.**

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers that helped make the Family Retreat happen. We could not have this great weekend without your help.

We say a huge thank you to our wonderful speakers and presenters, including: *Dr. Travis Freeman along with his parents and wife Stephanie, Brian Goemmer, Diane Haynes, Connie Hill, Kirsten Schmidt, and Dave Wickstrom*. Our great parent panelists included: *Brittany Clarkson, Brandy Hitzelberger, Ben*

& Mary Anne Reynolds, and Sarah Richter. The panel of blind adults included married couples *Maria & Kenny Jones, Ashley & Aaron Linson, and Dawn & Dave Wilkenson*.

Our extreme gratitude goes to the following volunteers who made this weekend so memorable for our families:

Amanda Coomer, Pam Cox, Sophia Ethridge, Jake Gawarecki, Vijaya Gumpina, Ryan Hack, Allison Haycraft, Stacy Hazelwood, Rachel Krebs, Tracy Marchegion, Brittany Mockbee, Lydia Morris, Quinlan Morris, Clara Mudd, Jennifer Peffley, Tamera Sandford, Fernanda Scharfenberger, Dylan Smith, Jessie Smith, Sammi Turpin, Joy Wall, Kelly Weber and Brittany Williamson.

KSB Staff who volunteered at the Retreat included: *Beth Baker, Dr. Terry Berger, Renee Brewer, Ann Crawford, Robbin Cox, Carol Dixon, Mitch Dahmke, Melissa Gatewood, Connie Hill, Verna Howell, Pam Howard, Peggy Sinclair-Morris, Connie Sea, Teri Richie, Brenda Stovall, Wendy Strode-Ross, Phylliss Vincent, KSB Dorm Staff and KSB Housekeeping*.

VIPS Staff who volunteered at the Retreat included: *Heather Benson, Ashley Buren, Sarah Cocanougher, Gretchen Cutrer, Carol Dahmke, LaRhonda Daniels, Terri Deluca, Ashley Emmons, Pauletta Feldman, Martha Hack, Marchelle Hampton, Dani Harper, Annie Hughes, Beth Krebs, Mary Lesousky, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Kathy Moulden, Kathy Mullen, Diane Nelson, Ashley Penn, Beth Owens, Kim Shippey, Mary Smyth, Traci Webb and Maury Weedman*.

Special thanks to VIPS mom, *Ginger Hales*, for volunteering as a face painter.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

There were many tasks to complete as VIPS-Central KY settled into their new home. *The Delta Gammas from the University of Kentucky* were quick to respond to VIPS' request for assistance. They helped with carrying items up and down two flights of stairs, organizing and moving things around in the basement, and filing records. As usual, they were a tremendous help and we appreciate them so very much.

VIPS-Indiana

Thank you to *Gary and Nancy Bingham of Diversified Mail Services* for kindly applying postage to a great deal of our outgoing mail.

We thank VIPS supporter *Eric Bruun* for his extremely generous Holiday Card donation as well as his gift of three new

iPad Airs for the early interventionists to use with the children they serve.

Many thanks to *Mel Jolliff, Ginger Bievenour, Mike Barclay, Pete Brown, Rob Howell, Phil Hughes and Kris Johnson* for all of their help and insight in making reVISION a reality. And thank you to *Maury Weedman* for supplying all of the braille for the exhibit.

VIPS Staff News

Terry Deluca, VIPS-Central Kentucky Community Outreach Coordinator and Director of Development, has left VIPS in order to address some ongoing health issues. We appreciate the work Terry has done on behalf of VIPS for the past 18 months. She has helped us share our mission across eastern and northern Kentucky. VIPS is most grateful for the gifts Terry has shared and wish the best of health and good luck to her in the years to come. Thank you, Terry!

We welcome back **Barbara Merrick** who left a VIPS Kids Town Preschool teaching position to work with her new grandson. Barbara will serve as a contract Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) in Lexington.

The **VIPS-Indiana team** continues to gather accolades for going above and beyond their job requirements during the recent Krista Detor concert. Despite many personal hardships ranging from birth of a new grandson to children's surgery/illness, the staff pulled together to make this benefit concert a most memorable occasion. Their passion and professionalism, assisted by Martha Hack from the Louisville office, is further evidence of their overwhelming commitment to VIPS and its mission. Well done!

Lesley Lusher joined the VIPS-Central KY team in October 2015 as a developmental interventionist serving children in the Bluegrass Region. Lesley's service to VIPS has grown significantly as she takes on the role of lead teacher for our Little Learners Enrichment Group and Play and Learn (PAL) Group hosted in the VIPS Central Kentucky office in Lexington. Lesley received

At right: Lesley shows Rory and Harper some textured blocks.



her certification as a developmental interventionist from Eastern Kentucky University. She also successfully completed the intensive VISA (Visual Impairment In Service of America) training sponsored by VIPS in the summer and fall of 2014. Lesley comes well-prepared and equipped to provide amazing services to our VIPS families and children. Welcome, Lesley!

VIPS-Indiana Happenings

Operation Chili for Children

On Friday, October 23rd, VIPS helped out with Operation: Chili for Children (OCC) held at the National Armory in Bloomington, Indiana. OCC is a chili dinner fundraiser to support VIPS-Indiana and two other youth-serving agencies. It is hosted by the **Kiwanis of Bloomington** along with several other community organizations. The wonderful ladies of **Delta Gamma Theta Chapter** at Indiana University hosted a Bake Sale and proceeds from their bake sale went back to VIPS! We thank all of our supporters, our board members and especially the Kiwanis for making this event a true success!



Above: Tana Helwig (center) joined Meredith and Annie in working at Operation Chili for Children. Left: Former Kiwanis Club of Bloomington President David Garshaw presents a check for \$1,000 to former VIPS Board Member Julia Slaymaker and Advisory Board President and VIPS Mom Jenny Kelly.

Krista Detor Holiday Show

Critically acclaimed singer-songwriter, **Krista Detor**, hosts a Bloomington concert every year and chooses a local nonprofit as the beneficiary from the funds raised through the ticket sales. VIPS-Indiana was honored to be chosen by Krista for her 2015 Krista Detor Holiday Show! Krista orchestrated a wide array of artists including **Sue Swaney, Voces Novae and Amanda Biggs**



to create the unforgettable “Points of Light” concert. It was a sellout performance held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Bloomington. The concert began with a touching VIPS-Indiana video that concert goers watched in complete darkness. Then Krista began to work her melodic magic with her intimate tunes as well as some fan-favorites she played with her band. The audience was able to browse the ever-popular Holiday Market, before the show as well as during intermission. It was a truly a beautiful evening!

Thanks so much to Krista Detor for choosing VIP Indiana as the beneficiary of her annual concert. We owe our gratitude to **Allen Pease** for his brilliance with putting together the concert. Thanks so much to **E. Gilliam** for her incredible talent in the design of the poster. A huge shout out goes to our incredible board members **Jenny Kelly, Shannon West, Julia Slaymaker, Tana Hellwig, Rowan Candy and Jenny Feinman** for their hard work and dedication to this big event. The evening would not have been possible without them! Also thank you to **Martha Hack and Heather Benson** from VIPS Louisville for their help!

VIPS had the best sponsors for the event that included: **Solution Tree, Smile Promotions, Aaron and Shannon West, GP Strategies, Glazer's, The Eye Center, Bloom Magazine, The Herald-Times, IU Credit Union, Touchstone Yoga & Massage, Long Family Eye Care, Insights Optical and the IU School of Optometry.** We are grateful for your support!

Alternative Christmas Fair

For the third consecutive year, VIPS-Indiana participated in Northview Church of the Brethren's Alternative Christmas Fair on November 14th. The event invites non-profit organizations to sell crafts or goods or to provide opportunities for visitors to donate to an organization in the name of a gift recipient. **David Sterne** staffed the booth this year and guests purchased several ornaments made by **Jenny Feinman and Annie Hughes**. They

also learned about services VIPS provides and some equipment we use (they especially liked the braille writer and light box!) A few even had the ornaments personalized by having the recipient's name typed in braille. The event was quite successful and raised over \$150 for VIPS. We are looking forward to the next fair this November!

Global Gifts

On Monday, November 23rd, VIPS-Indiana participated in Global Gifts Community Shopping Night at three Global Gifts locations. Ten percent of the proceeds from any shopping between 5-8 pm were generously donated back to VIPS. VIPS staff were present at each location where they shared information regarding the mission of VIPS. They also told the customers that 5% of their purchases would go back to supporting critical early intervention services for Indiana's youngest children with blindness and low vision.

Dinner in the Dark

VIPS-Indiana Director, Annie Hughes, and early interventionist for visual impairment, Lisa West, participated in **Lebanon High Schools Key Club's "Dinner in the Dark"**. This is the third straight year that the Key Club student's have coordinated this philanthropic event. After a Power Point presentation featuring VIPS children, the lights went off and it was indeed “Dinner in the Dark”. VIPS is grateful for the continued support from these bright young high school students.

Training for Early Interventionists

VIPS-Indiana staff has been busy providing training to several First Steps provider agencies in the state. Most recently these have occurred in Fort Wayne and Carmel. These trainings are extremely important to VIPS because they alert interventionists to be on the lookout for children whose vision may not be normal in addition to providing ideas for materials and methods when working with young children with visual impairments. We frequently receive a number of referrals for service following these training sessions.

reVISION

VIPS-Indiana hosted an art exhibit called reVISION | Re-exploring Art, Expression & Perception. Some of you may recognize the name reVISION as VIPS Louisville has hosted a fundraiser donning the same title. Assistant Director, Meredith Howell, wanted to create something similar for art patrons with vision loss in Indiana because of her 5-year-old daughter and



reVISION was held at the ICC Gallery from mid-January through the month of February featuring art that could be felt with the heart and hand as well as delight the eye.

former VIPS child, Lola. She said, “I was inspired while looking over the traditional 2D pieces in the Indiana Interchurch Art Gallery. I wondered how Lola could experience the art without being able to touch it.” Therefore reVISION was created and was designed to welcome individuals who are blind (and their sighted peers) into a unique interactive art exhibit.

reVISION was on display for almost two months and was extremely well received by those who attended. Patrons were encouraged to revisit the exhibit often and many did. The art on display was fully accessible to touch and explore. Artist statements were written in braille and large print. Artists also recorded audio statements that were used through bar codes to provide another level of accessibility. For sighted patrons, sleep shades and visual impairment simulator goggles were available to give them the opportunity to experience the exhibit by using senses other than vision.

Almost all of the artwork was available for sale and artists agreed to donate part of their proceeds to VIPS-Indiana.

VIPS also partnered with the *Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI)* in an effort to showcase artwork by the students at ISBVI. Many of the students had submitted their work into national competitions and had won titles for their exemplary work. 100% of the proceeds from the sale of the students’ artwork went directly back to the student.

The opening night of reVISION took place on Thursday, January 14th at the *Indiana Interchurch Center Art Gallery* and was extremely successful! The sighted visitors experienced the artwork with sleep shades as well as the visual impairment

simulator goggles. Many commented on how much the experience changed their perspective about the way they “see” art. Howell said, “We definitely achieved our goal to change perspectives, create a dialogue, raise awareness about VIPS and, to make an accessible art exhibit for visitors who are blind or visually impaired.” While reVISION has now ended, VIPS-Indiana has been asked to bring it back in 2017!

reVISION was sponsored by the *Washington Township Lions Club, Delta Gamma Theta Chapter at Indiana University and Oliver Winery*. We thank all of these wonderful organizations for their support!



A reVISION visitor stops to look closely at a piece called “Old Man.”

Thank you, Anna Cady!

We are so appreciative of the fund-raising efforts of twelve-year old Anna Cady Clouse, daughter of former VIPS parents, Robb Clouse and Rebecca Davis, who donated her Christmas money to VIPS. (Rebecca was the co-founder of VIPS-Indiana and is currently employed as VIPS-Indiana's Development Director.) Anna Cady's most welcome donation of \$41.20 was accompanied by this wonderful letter:

Dear VIPS,

Every year I save up money and pick a fundraiser to give it to. This year I chose you guys at VIPS. I chose VIPS for three main reasons. Firstly, I believe in what you are doing. Helping visually impaired children learn is a great cause that many children benefit from. Secondly, you guys built from the ground up with little to work with. You guys are hard workers and you never give up. Thirdly, VIPS has changed my family for the better. You helped my sister, Eliza, learn more and have given her a foundation for her education. Also, you have given my mom a job she loves. These are some of the reasons I chose to donate my Christmas money to VIPS.

Love,

Anna Cady Clouse

Anna Cady with little sis Eliza.



knew it was a perfect opportunity to give back since VIPS has helped our family in so many ways with Audrey. People like giving. It makes them feel good and knowing Audrey and how much VIPS means to our family was all the more reason for them and us to want to give. I'm confident we raised more in giving a donation than she would have received in gifts. I also wanted to educate my family and friends about VIPS and how important it is for Audrey's development. We count on VIPS to support, educate and help Audrey utilize the vision she was blessed with.

We also have an older daughter and have an abundance of clothes and toys already, so to say Audrey actually needed something for her birthday was a stretch. We also did the same for our other daughter's first birthday. All her donations went to the Morgan County Boys and Girls Club. It's another not-for-profit that is near and dear to our hearts.

It's easy to give when that is all we can do to show our support. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."



Little Audrey playing with VIPS-Indiana TVI Kelly Lloyd.

Recent Grants & Donations

VIPS-Louisville

Thanks so much to the following donors whose generous assistance enables us to reach and serve more children with visual impairments and blindness and their families.:

- **Karston A. & Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund** for \$30,000 towards the VIPS Pre-K program
- **Fred B. & Opal S. Woosley Foundation** for \$25,000 towards the VIPS Family Services Program & Kids Town Preschool
- **Irvin F. & Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation** for \$15,000 towards a new donor database system

VIPS-Indiana Benefits when Audrey Turns "1"

Kristina and BJ Pendill chose for VIPS to receive donations in lieu of presents for their daughter Audrey's first birthday. In their words...

"There are many reasons why we requested donations to VIPS in lieu of gifts. To us it just feels right to give. We saw a need and

- *The King's Daughters & Sons Foundation of Kentucky* for \$5,128 for technology upgrades
- *The Cralle Foundation* for \$5,000 towards Kids Town Preschool at VIPS
- *GE Employee Community Fund* for \$5,000 towards Kids Town Preschool at VIPS

Holiday Letter

Wow, we sure do have some great supporters! Thank you to everyone who thought of VIPS over the holidays and donated towards our holiday card campaign. But we still need some help. It's never too late to participate! To donate online, visit www.vips.org.

VIPS Kids Donate to Salvation Army

Thank you to all who donated hats and gloves to our first ever Salvation Army Giving Tree. We collected 28 hats and 64 pairs of gloves over the holiday season for The Salvation Army Louisville! This effort was a way for us to teach our students about giving back to others. We think they got the message!



Anthony hung a pair of mittens on the children's giving tree.

Playhouse Dedication

A new outdoor learning destination is now open at VIPS-Louisville. On December 15th, VIPS-Louisville held an official "ribbon cutting ceremony" for the new playhouse, which sits along the backside of the playground. This project was donated and fully built by the Building Industry Association of Greater Louisville, its Foundation and its vendors. It is no coincidence that it looks like a schoolhouse because the interior is most conducive to learning opportunities, such as a reading nook, a music board and an interchangeable texture board. The

playhouse is even heated and air conditioned, and will soon be topped off with a real school bell! Many thanks to everyone who made our beautiful new playhouse a reality!



VIPS Kids Town Preschool students and parents gather on the playground for the Playhouse Dedication.

Kroger Cards

Many thanks to **Lester Sanders** and fellow members of the **Omega Psi Phi** fraternity for donating a stack of Kroger gift cards to help several VIPS families have a brighter holiday season!

Former VIPS Board President, Lester Sanders, presents Executive Director Diane Nelson with donated Kroger cards for VIPS families.



Amazon Smile

Don't forget that you can easily give back to VIPS by selecting us when you shop on Amazon Smile. Just select Visually Impaired Preschool Services from the list of participating organizations before you check out. The website is smile.amazon.com.

Darryl Isaacs

Thanks so much to local attorney Darryl Isaacs whose generosity provided a toy for each child attending VIPS Preschool and the Two Day Twos. Additional toys appropriate to the learning experience were also provided for our classrooms. Mr. Isaacs, in a demonstration of his gratitude for his many blessings, worked in conjunction with the WHAS Crusade for Children to help 12 different agencies, one charity for each of the 12 days of

Christmas. The experience was aired on WHAS-TV as part of Good Morning Kentuckiana.



Local attorney Darryl Isaacs, with his huge bags of toys, brought lots of joy to VIPS kids during his visit.

Thanks also go to...

~ **Bill and Kathryn Brangers**, parents of VIPS Event Coordinator/Family Services Coordinator Martha Hack and the grandparents of former VIPS child JD, who graciously donated door prizes and glow sticks for January's Family Movie night.

~ **The Greater Louisville Association of Realtors** for their wonderful donation of assorted items, including pillows, shirts, bags, and office supplies, which arrived just in time for Christmas. The preschool children enjoyed themselves selecting gifts for their family at an impromptu Santa Shop. Thanks so much for your kindness.



~ **Beau Schuster**, father of a VIPS graduate, surprised the staff with three giant bags filled with brand new toys. The toys had been dropped off at his fire station so Beau delivered them for VIPS to use.

~ **Kae Ann Rausch**, one of our veteran visually impaired runners in the Stampede for VIPS, for the twin vision (large print and Braille) book she donated to our library.

VIPS-Central Kentucky Grants

Thanks so much to the following donors for helping VIPS-CK serve the children and families in our program:

- **The Linda Neville Trust** donated \$35,000 for direct services to children and the publication of VIPS' VisAbility parent newsletter. We greatly appreciate their wonderfully generous donation.
- **The Karston A. and Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Fund, Inc.** graciously donated \$15,000 for direct services to children.
- We are most appreciative to the **George Weeks Trust** for donating \$11,000 for direct services to children.
- Thanks to the **Lexington Lions Club** for generously donating \$9,500 for direct services to children.
- We are grateful to the **Keeneland Foundation** for the \$2,500 donation for direct services to children.
- We thank the **King's Daughters and Sons Foundation of Kentucky** for their kind donation of \$2,380 for the purchase of a laptop, a desktop, and educational software.

For the Love of the Children

By Mary Smyth, VIPS Central Kentucky Office Manager

VIPS-CK joined **Allegro Dance Project, Appalachian Regional Healthcare, CASA of Lexington, Easter Seals Cardinal Hill, and Hospice of the Bluegrass** to organize the For the Love of the Children campaign. It was a group effort to bring awareness to the WHAS Crusade for Children in the central Kentucky area. Members of the group appeared on local television stations and spoke about the Crusade and the campaign. A Facebook page and website were created specifically to highlight the Crusade and the campaign.

For the Love of the Children campaign involved a week long dine-to-donate at several restaurants in Lexington, Frankfort, and Louisville. The participating restaurants donated a certain percentage of the sales from guests who dined at their restaurant and mentioned the campaign. All proceeds from the campaign will go directly to the Crusade. The Crusade distributes 100% of the funds it raises to organizations that provide services to children.

Carin's Crew Relay for Life

On November 6th, 2015, the Carin's Crew Relay for Life was held at the **Jessie M. Clark Middle School** in Lexington, KY. "The purpose of the relay was to honor Carin Brown Addams and her fight against cancer through philanthropy." Carin is the daughter of a former science teacher who taught at Jessie Clark. For the past six years Carin's Crew has held a fundraiser to benefit various charities. It has raised over \$20,000 since its inception. This year VIPS-Central KY was the chosen charity. The students of Jessie Clark raised \$1,949 through the Carin's Crew Relay for Life. **Kono Ice** also participated in the event and donated partial sales in the amount of \$782 for a grand total of \$2,731 for VIPS! Thank you students, teachers, and Kono Ice for your generosity and support of VIPS.

Service. This activity was the culmination of a \$500 grant that was awarded to VIPS Indiana for the fourth straight year. The grant helped purchase items for Welcome Bags. During the day of service the volunteers made tactile books that will be given to each VIPS child we serve.



CIP volunteers who helped during MLK Day of Service.

VIPS-Indiana Grants

VIPS-Indiana is so grateful for the recent grants we have received. Our thanks go to:

- **The Junior League of Indianapolis** -- VIPS Indiana was honored to be awarded \$10,000 from the wonderful women of the Junior League of Indianapolis through the Community Assistance Grant. VIPS was one of five finalists that were chosen to present before the ladies of the JLI during their Annual Meeting. Unfortunately we didn't win the grand prize (as we did last year), but each organization walked away with at least \$10,000 so that makes us all winners! Thank you JLI for your support of the children and families we serve!
- **SCI REMC Community Fund** -- VIPS Indiana received \$4,420 from our friends at the SCI REMC Community Fund, Inc. through their Operation RoundUp Grant. Funding from the grant will go toward specialized home visits by VIPS to children with blindness or low vision, and their families, in the South Central Indiana region. Thank you!
- **NineStar Connect** awarded VIPS Indiana \$2,200 to cover home visits in the Central Indiana region. This is the first time we have received the Nine Star Connect grant and we are honored for the support.

MLK Day of Service

VIPS Indiana Director, Annie Hughes, joined volunteers from College Internship Program (CIP Bloomington) for the Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Commissions Day of

First Award Made from the Bret Dahmke Memorial Scholarship Fund

The first award of \$250 has been made from the The Bret Dahmke Memorial Scholarship Fund, and VIPS-Louisville mom **Ashley Buren** is the lucky parent to receive it.

The fund was started in March, 2015 when Bret's family decided to turn the tragic situation of his death at a young age into a beacon of hope for the future, by supporting, in perpetuity, other families whose children have visual impairment or blindness. Bret's parents **Carol and Mitch Dahmke, along with his siblings Chris and Ashley, and Bret's widow Jessica**, requested memorial gifts to VIPS in Bret's name. An amazing \$10,000 has been raised to date!

This year's award was meant to assist a family in participating in a support/learning opportunity (such as through a local, regional or national conference) so that they can better meet the needs of their child/ren with visual impairment. Award recipients are also asked to share the knowledge and insight they gained with other families facing similar challenges.

Thank you, Carol, Mitch, Jessica, Chris and Ashley for your dedication to other families of children with visual impairments.



It's A Reverse Raffle!

Get your chance to win \$5,000 by purchasing a VIPS Reverse Raffle ticket. You can purchase online at www.vips.org or by calling the VIPS-Louisville Office at 502-636-3207.

The raffle works like this:

- 1st ticket drawn will win \$100
- 50th ticket drawn will win \$100
- 100th ticket drawn will win \$100

Final Three Tickets Drawn:

- 2nd Runner-up: \$500
- 1st Runner-up: \$1,000
- Grand Prize: \$5,000



Tickets are \$100 each. The drawing will be held May 22 at the Tennis Tournament at the Louisville Boat Club. You need not be present to win. Call 502-636-3207 or go online to www.vips.org to purchase your chance(s) today!

Why Give to VIPS*?

**from "10 Great Reasons to Give to Charity" by The Life You Can Save – www.thelifeyoucansave.org.*

1. Even small donations have an impact. Often we feel that what we can afford to give is not enough to really make a difference. At VIPS, we have mastered the art of spending carefully! So every donation makes a difference in the level of service we can provide. (\$10 can purchase two pizzas for a parent meeting, making it easier for parents to attend educational activities after work.)

2. Giving benefits the neediest in our community. While VIPS families may not be financially needy (some are, but certainly not all), their children need the opportunity to become all they can be through the educational services VIPS provides.

3. Problems have solutions. Even though 80-90% of what a young child learns occurs through the use of vision, educational intervention can mitigate the developmental impacts of visual impairment. Children and their families learn alternative techniques to carry on with life without sight. Your donation to VIPS cannot cure blindness, but it sure can help a child and family learn to cope with it.

4. Giving makes us happier. Research has shown that we do not necessarily become happier when we spend on ourselves, but that giving to others can really increase our sense of well-being. Then when giving to VIPS, we have the added benefit of helping make a child's life better.

5. Giving brings us closer to creating the kind of world we

want to live in. It may not be a perfect world, but it can be a world with greater compassion, fewer problems, and more solutions. Just visit Kids Town Preschool and witness the joy in learning that is taking place and you will see.

6. Giving works! When you give, services arise to help those in need. VIPS would not exist without our donors. And through increased giving, VIPS has been able to expand to meet the needs of more and more children.

7. Giving is a matter of justice. Our success is in large part due to where we live in the world, having an able body, and access to opportunity. Through giving to VIPS, we expand the "wealth" of education and opportunity that young children who are blind can experience.

8. Giving is in our nature. Most of us have a gut reaction to misfortune – we want to help. Add to that, the fact that blindness is, according to research, the most feared disability, and we are even more struck by the seemingly tragic occurrence of childhood visual impairment. Helping is so easy -- just give to VIPS and create possibility.

9. Giving is tax deductible.

VIPS-Louisville Staff Challenge

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the VIPS-Louisville staff has been fortunate enough to be outfitted with a small exercise room that includes free weights, treadmills, elliptical machines and other workout equipment. Starting in January 2016, the VIPS-Louisville staff began an 8-week weight loss challenge where staff members were encouraged to push themselves harder during workouts and to make changes in their lives to foster better eating habits. 20 staff members were split into two teams led by Heuser Health personal trainers, Chris Thompson and Katie Puffer. Chris and Katie helped each team member reach their own personal weight loss or health goals over the course of the challenge. At the conclusion, the results were outstanding! A total of 131.2 pounds were lost among the 20 participants! The VIPS-Louisville staff had such a positive experience that they decided to extend the challenge into the upcoming months. Feel free to stop by VIPS Louisville to check out our expanding exercise room and our decreasing waistlines!

Kids Town Preschool Wish List

- Washable or tempera paint in primary colors
- Paper towels
- Baby wipes
- Clorox Bleach wipes



Visually Impaired
Preschool Services

1906 Goldsmith Lane
Louisville, KY 40218

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-Indiana

Saturday, April 16

VIPS Indiana will host a *Spring Play and Learn Group* from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the *Indiana Interchurch Center*. As always there will be circle/music time, special presenters for the parent training portion of the event, a Make & Take, a light lunch, and an opportunity to connect with other VIPS families.

Sunday, May 22

Join VIPS Indiana at the *Walking for Dreams Family and Pet Walk* in downtown *Indianapolis*. It's a great opportunity to get some fresh air, exercise, spread awareness about the work we do in Indiana and raise critical funds that support our mission. Call VIPS Indiana for details (888) 824-2197 or email mhowell@vips.org.

VIPS-Central KY

Tuesday, May 10

Mark your calendars! *VIPS-CK's Golf Outing* will be held at the *Keene Trace Golf Club* in *Nicholasville, KY*.

VIPS-Louisville

Monday, May 16

The *YUM! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament* will be held at the beautiful *Persimmon Ridge Golf Club*. Please contact VIPS or visit our website if you are interested in joining us for the day.

Saturday & Sunday, May 21 & 22

The *5th annual VIPS Tennis Ball and Tournament* starts with a silent and live auction, dinner and dancing on Saturday

night. The following day is the exciting *Tennis Tournament* that will be held at the *Louisville Boat Club*, the location of the *2016 Women's Tennis Association (WTA)* international hard-court event.

Thursday, May 26

Final snow make-up day at VIPS Kids Town Preschool (same as JCPS make-up schedule).

Graduation for VIPS Kids Town Preschool will be held in *Kids Town*, 7 p.m.

Are you getting VIPS Blips?

On the 1st and 15th of each month you can receive VIPS Blips, an online news update for VIPS families and staff. This little news update will contain info that is happening too soon to include in the broader newsletter, VISability. Please take a moment to review it when it comes to your inbox! In the format, info of interest to all three VIPS Offices will be in the top section of VIPS Blips. Following that are sections for each individual office. There is also a calendar of upcoming events along the right hand side of VIPS Blips (when viewing in browser mode).

Of course, in order to receive these updates, we need your current email. So please, contact us to make sure we have your current email on file!! And if you do not want to receive VIPS Blips, just delete it from your inbox --do NOT unsubscribe! If you unsubscribe, we will not be able to contact you about anything using email.

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

VIPS-Louisville

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Mary Lesousky, TV/Developmental Interventionist
Paige Maynard, TV/Preschool Teacher
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