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VIPS-Indiana Wins State Funding

After three years of lobbying, creating awareness about the importance of early intervention to Indiana's youngest children who are blind or visually impaired and building relationships with state legislators, VIPS-Indiana is proud to announce that the agency was awarded state funding. That funding is available through a state grant offered by the Division of Children with Special Health Care Needs. VIPS-Indiana staff worked diligently on the grant proposal called Project HOPE (Help, Opportunity, Participation and Empowerment) which would allow VIPS-Indiana to grow and expand services to even more families. This funding would not have been available had it not been for the hundreds of VIPS supporters who wrote letters, sent e-mails and made phone calls to state legislators explaining why it was critical to put funding into the state budget for vision-specific early intervention. We are so grateful for those who took the time to support this mission and we would especially like to express our gratitude to our VIPS legislative champions: Senator Mark Stoops, Senator Pat Miller, Andrew Dezelan, Adam Jones, Jeremy Hoffman and our VIPS-Indiana Board Member, LeNee Carroll. They all played a crucial role in this process and we can't thank them enough. This state investment proves the sustainability and importance of the services VIPS provides.

Congratulations Class of 2016!!

Graduation for the VIPS Kids Town Preschool Class of 2016 took place on Thursday, May 26 in the beautiful ballroom of the Kosair Shrine Center. This year's graduating class was a whopping 15 students, making it necessary to have a larger space to accommodate all of the family and friends who wanted to attend. *Kosair Charities* generously offered use of their wonderful new facility.

VIPS Executive Director Diane Nelson welcomed all of the families and thanked them for allowing VIPS to play a part in the lives of their children, saying "We learn as much from your children as they do from us." Education Director Kathy Mullen introduced all of the teaching staff and our dedicated classroom volunteers. Preschool Assistant Director Beth Krebs served as Mistress of Ceremonies.

Alan Macdonald presented each child with a print/braille edition of Dr. Suess's *Oh the Places*

You'll Go as a graduation gift from the *Dartmouth Club of Kentucky*. Dr. Seuss was a graduate of Dartmouth.



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.



Addy



Anthony



Bronson



Cannon



Ethan



Evie



Hailey



Jazmine



Judah



Kaden



Layla



Lilly



Sarah



Vance



Vivian

Keitt Wood and Priscilla Fikes of the Fincastle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented braille American flags to the graduates. And in appreciation, the graduates recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Classroom teachers each took a turn introducing their graduating students, noting the special characteristics of each child that made him or her a wonderful student and classmate and presenting a diploma to each.

Greta Gillmeister, VIPS Music Therapist, led the children in a musical performance of the song they wrote for graduation – *With My Own Two Hands* – while a video showed children using their hands to accomplish so many tasks throughout the school year. The program ended with a touching video created by LaRhonda Daniels, Preschool Instructional Assistant, that showed each student from infancy through preschool.

A reception of cake and punch followed,

Sarah Hack posed in the VIPS logo frame created by Shelby Birchler, artist and Instructional Assistant.



along with tearful good byes and promises to stay in touch and visit often!

Many thanks to the Kosair Shrine Center for allowing us to hold our graduation and reception in their ballroom. And thanks to Vicki May for donating the beautiful cake.

The VIPS Kids Town Preschool

Class of 2016

Lilly Adamowicz -- Elementary placement pending

Kaden Ballou -- Home school

Cannon Booker -- Breckenridge-Franklin Elementary (Jefferson County)

Anthony Brettnacher -- VIPS Kids Town Preschool Pre-K

Ethan Buckler -- KY School for the Blind

Addyson Clarkson -- KY School for the Blind/Brooks Elementary (Bullitt County)

Sarah Hack -- St. Stephen Martyr School (Louisville)

Judah Hales -- Home School & VIPS Kids Town Preschool Pre-K

Vance Lovett -- VIPS Kids Town Preschool Pre-K

Layla Peoples -- Luhr Elementary (Jefferson County)

Vivian Sabelhaus -- Stopher Elementary (Jefferson County)

Evie Vanderpool -- Crossroads Elementary (Mt. Washington)

Jazmine Willoughby -- Breckenridge-Franklin Elementary (Jefferson County)

Pre-K Graduates:

Bronson Damron -- KY School for the Blind

Hailey Hitner -- KY School for the Blind

Congratulations students and families. We will certainly miss you! Please stay in touch and come back to visit often!!



Accreditation!

On Wednesday, March 16, 2016, Visually Impaired Preschool Services received proof of something they have known for a long time – Kids Town Preschool at VIPS is a great place for early learning. Kids Town Preschool received national recognition by AdvancED as an accredited early learning school. Accreditation through AdvancED is a voluntary process used at all levels of education and is recognized for its efforts to effectively support the learning, growth and development of young children and the continuous improvement of the schools these children attend.

After a year of self-study and assessment, VIPS submitted a 100+ page report describing how children are served and cared for in Kids Town Preschool, along with electronic files filled with evidence to support the self-assessment, and a draft of a school improvement plan. A month later, in mid-March, three evaluators visited VIPS-Louisville for two days to see how well the self-assessment report matched our practices. The visitors were blown away and had many wonderful things to say about our students, our teachers and support staff, and our agency as a whole.

As they departed from VIPS, the evaluators shared a short presentation with VIPS administrators that identified Powerful Practices (observations of things done well), Opportunities for Improvement (recommended ways to improve), and Improvement Priorities (required actions to be taken). Kids Town Preschool was praised for having three powerful practices identified but only limited need for improvement.

Some of the comments contained in AdvancED's follow-up report included:

"They (teachers and support staff) are focused on every child reaching their highest potential."

"Leadership and staff serve as advocates for their families to continue to receive needed services now and in the future to reach their highest potential."

"AdvancED is delighted to have VIPS join its network of accredited schools, allowing AdvancED to remain connected to this excellent team of educators."

And our very favorite comment from the external review team:

"The AdvancED External Review Team is very proud to recommend Visually Impaired Preschool Services of Louisville to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission for the distinction of accreditation."

Please join the VIPS Board of Directors in celebrating with VIPS administrators and Kids Town Preschool's education team for this wonderful recognition. Congratulations!

(Editor's note: This wonderful feather in VIPS' cap is due primarily to the unbelievably dogged determination and dedication of Kathy Mullen in gathering those 100+ pages along with the additional data required to support our statements. Thank you so much, Kathy, for taking VIPS to heights never dreamed of 35 years ago when a group of interested people sat around a table creating a vision that became the VIPS of 2016!)

More of a GREAT Thing!

When our families prepare their Kids Town Preschool student for the return to school in August, they just might need a bigger backpack! Now is a good time to start looking for one that can hold projects created during **five days** of preschool rather than the four days a week traditionally enjoyed in Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. Next school year, the 3- and 4-year-olds' program is adopting a five-day per week schedule in response to Jefferson County Public School's district wide transition to the five-day model.

Our preschool day will still begin at 9 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. Childcare will still be offered before and after school. We will still visit Kosair Charities Kids Town and the Sensory Room daily and go outside to play on our amazing playground when the weather cooperates. But now, Mr. Maury will have more time to provide Orientation and Mobility services in the UAW Ford Mobility City to our students needing it. Our visiting therapists will have greater opportunities to help our friends learn new songs and create art. Partnering public school systems will have more flexibility when scheduling visits from their speech, occupational and physical therapists. And our teachers will have more time to encourage, empower, and educate our students.

Our Two Day 2's will continue to meet on Mondays and Tuesdays OR Wednesdays and Thursdays. Five days a week is only for the "BIG" guys!

With any change, there are usually questions. If you would like more information, please contact Kathy Mullen, Director of Education, at kmullen@vips.org or 502-498-2927.

VIPS Families Enjoy Fun Times With One Another!

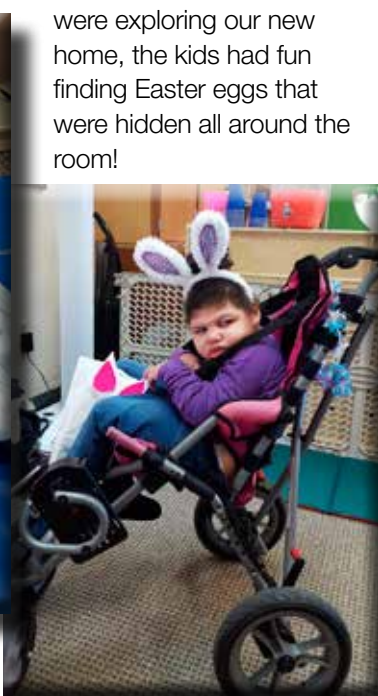
VIPS-Central Kentucky

Easter Party/Open House

We held an Easter Party/Open House in our Little Learners room at our new location at Lexington Hearing and Speech on Wednesday, March 16. Parents and siblings were able to see what the children have been working on in the Little Learners Group, viewing art projects and favorite toys. While their parents



Above: Arianna dropped her doll to explore the egg she found. Right: Michelle makes a precious bunny!



were exploring our new home, the kids had fun finding Easter eggs that were hidden all around the room!

We also had an Easter egg matching game, as well as Popsicle stick puzzles. Each child got to make their own "Bunny Bag" out of plain white paper lunch bags, pre-cut foam ears and felt noses, and googly eyes. These bags were used to collect all the eggs they could carry!

VIPS-Central Kentucky was also fortunate that an employee from Lexington Hearing and Speech was available to give a full tour of their facility to all the families who were interested in enrolling their children in preschool. At the end of the tour, the families took some time to reconnect with each other as the children played together and shared the small toys they found in their eggs.

Meatballs and Masterpieces

On April 18, VIPS held an exciting new event called Meatballs and Masterpieces. Five Central Kentucky families gathered together for a spaghetti and meatballs dinner that was generously donated by Fazoli's. Afterwards, each of the VIPS children and their siblings got his or her own blank canvas to paint, draw, color or glue, creating unique masterpieces for parents to take home and hang on the wall! It was a deliciously messy evening! Thanks so much to Fazoli's for making us all so well fed!

VIPS-Indiana

Winter Play and Learn (PAL) Group

On Saturday, January 23, VIPS-Indiana hosted a Winter Play and Learn (PAL) Group! The day started out with music and circle time with VIPS staff. Afterwards parents and caregivers spent the afternoon learning.

The first parent training session discussed ways to weave early literacy into everyday activities. Ideas were shared for children with multiple impairments as well as for children who are developing fairly normally but may have slight delays due to their blindness or low vision.

A playframe was used to show that Valentine's Day items could be explored by a child with multiple impairments prior to the family reading stories about those items (then the families made a tactile book with textured hearts during the Make & Take Session of the event). Book boxes, book bags, experience stories, tactile books, braille books and auditory books were all made available for the families so they could get ideas about ways they can encourage early literacy in their own home.

Debby Eades, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, led the second portion of the parent training. She covered ways to adapt the home environment so that the child who is blind can navigate his home safely. She also discussed landmarks, cues and mini-routes which are all essential aspects of safe navigation in a child's world. Pre-cane and early cane devices were shared



The families made tactile books with various textured hearts in honor of Valentine's Day.

and the families followed up the training portion of the event with questions they had.

Lunch was provided courtesy of Hot Box Pizza in Broad Ripple. Toward the end of the PAL, families were encouraged to explore the tactile art exhibit reVISION. We thank the families for joining us for the Play and Learn!

Right: Jacob explored art at the reVISION exhibit after the Play and Learn.



Spring Play and Learn (PAL) Group

VIPS Indiana invited VIPS families to join us on Saturday, April 16th for a Spring Play and Learn Group held at the Indiana Interchurch Center. The day started out with a sing-a-long, introduction and sharing of new resources. VIPS staff then asked to watch the children so the parents could make "Shaker Eggs" for the Make & Take. We then enjoyed a *delicious lunch courtesy of Ruth's Cafe with yummy donated potato salad courtesy of Illinois Street Food Emporium. Meijer was so generous for donating a gift card which helped us offer quite the spread.* After lunch and connecting with others, families listened to a presentation given by Arvetta Jideonwo, Director of Development for Bosma Enterprises.

While it may be a while before our VIPS kids will be entering the workforce, we wanted their parents to know there are wonderful



Families made shaker eggs to encourage smart listening.



No Play & Learn is complete without a sing-along with Miss Annie!

companies like Bosma out there that not only hire blind and visually impaired people, but also offer training programs so they can develop critical skills that will help not only in the job field, but in every day independent living as well. We also heard two inspiring testimonials from Mendi and Don who are both adults living with blindness and visual impairment and are now working at Bosma. We owe our gratitude to the ladies of *Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma* for playing with our sweet little VIPS kiddos. As you can see, it was a busy, but good day!

VIPS-Louisville

Easter Party

The VIPS-Louisville Easter Party on March 19 was a hit, with 12 families attending. The rainy weather did not dampen the fun -- inside Kids Town it was a wonderful day for celebrating Easter! After a breakfast of pancakes donated by Scott Revels and Paul Bertram from ConAgra Foods, the work of the day -- a traditional egg hunt -- began. The Sensory Room also provided an interesting backdrop for textured eggs and light-up bunnies that soon found their ways into little hands.



Pyper & Sarah had lots of eggs to open!

It was apparent that spring was ready to pop as Suzanne Bays supervised the making of sun catchers and butterflies with materials she donated, along with Kathy Tobbee.

Thanks so much to the wonderful volunteers who shared their time and energy with this group of candy-saturated youngsters. Mary Bays, Suzanne Bays, Ryan Hack and Caroline Nelson provided helping hands, as did VIPS staff Marchelle Hampton (and husband Fred), Beth Krebs, Kathy Mullen, Diane Nelson, and JCPS instructional assistant Gretchen Cutrer.

"Mommy & Me" Painting Fun

On April 30, VIPS sponsored a program just for Moms and their VIPS kids and siblings. It was a day just to do crafts and have fun!

Layla holds the beautiful artwork she and her Mom Julia made.





Left: Maddie and mom Kristin show off their colorful painting. Right: Missy and son Eli enjoy their painting time!

Donuts with Dad

On Tuesday, May 10, from 7:45 - 9:30 a.m., VIPS staff and children welcomed VIPS dads, grandpas, uncles and brothers for doughnuts before the start of the school day! Doughnuts, milk and orange juice were served in Kids Town to an appreciative group. This event was a way to honor the special men in VIPS kids' lives!

There's A Whole Lot of Learning Going On With VIPS

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Little Learners Update

We are several months into our Little Learners program and we are thriving! With our Mondays completely packed, and Tuesdays growing, there is never a dull moment in our room. The kids have all gotten to know each other very well and have even welcomed new classmates and made some new friends! By far, their favorite time of day is still lunchtime, but the sensory room is a close second. Some of our kids have started exploring new textures and stretched their limits with new tastes and sound. We are having a blast and can't wait to come back each week to play with our favorite kiddos!

We will have lots to report about Summer Sensations Camp in the next issue!!

On The Road With VIPS-Indiana Teachers



Brooklynn (left) liked the shiny beads that were in her Welcome Bag during an initial visit. Brooklynn is quite an explorer, and knows what she likes! Rowen (right) was able to grasp the beads.



Gradually Maleah (left) worked her way through each item in her Welcome Bag. She discarded items behind her when she had finished with them. Here is the final item, her "shaker tube" filled with jingle bells.



Little Lily (above) has difficulty exploring her environment, but during an initial home visit, she was interested in bumping the ball with her left hand, and later gripped the wire whisk. At her next home visit, her VIPS interventionist will be constructing a play frame that will fit over her special pink chair.



Miss Lisa and Timmy enjoy playing with the dancing bear. Timmy can activate lots of the musical sounds.



Jax (above) held on tight to his new Scentsy Giraffe he received during his initial visit with Miss Annie. Kaelyn (left) and her Grandma are already implementing those critical Early Literacy Skills.

VIPS-Louisville Classroom News

Two Day 2s

by Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist/Two Day 2s Teacher

We are always sad to say goodbye to friends who turn three and transition to preschool, but it also opens the door for friendships to develop as new friends enter our class. Since January, we have welcomed Aria, Elliot, Kendal, Levi, Hensley, and Oliver to our class. Each child brings a unique personality, perspective and interests that add to the dynamic make up of our class. Our spring was busy as we learned about plants, flowers, butterflies, caterpillars, bugs, zoo animals, and farm animals. We've experienced watching plants grow from seeds, gone on nature hikes, and explored our sensory garden. A dairy cow visited VIPS, allowing us the chance to pet a cow and see first-hand where milk comes from.

Our Twos learn through hands-on activities and play; therefore, our room is filled with learning centers that provide opportunities to play and explore the environment. Sensory play, an activity that stimulates a child's senses -- touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing -- is embedded in our centers. A high sensory area and one of the busiest centers in our room is the sensory table, where children are allowed to explore different textures, sounds, smells, sights, and sometimes when a teacher isn't looking, a taste-test occurs! Many of our children will enter our room and go straight to the sensory table to investigate what's been added that week. This spring our children were able to explore bird seed, popcorn kernels, oats, shredded paper, water, sand, beans, and rice in our table.

An outsider may peek in our window and assume the sensory table is just a way to keep our 2s busy, when actually it's an area that provides opportunities for tremendous developmental growth. Our kids have strengthened language and social skills as they worked alongside a peer sharing tools, learning boundaries, and sharing ideas. Pre-writing skills have been strengthened as they poured, spooned, grasped, and worked on eye-hand coordination. Creative thinking was shown as the children figured out what to do with the materials and tools in the table. Math and Science skills have been strengthened as they problem solve, test cause

Twos Instructional Assistant Miss Shelby assisted Elliot in a close-up view of the dairy cow during an onsite visit from the Mobile Dairy!



and effect, experiment with different size containers, match, sort, and classify. These are only a few of the skills that are nurtured as our children explored items in the sensory table. Our children daily support the philosophy "Play is a child's work"!

Kids Town Preschool

by Paige Maynard, TVI, Kids Town Preschool Teacher

The second half of the school year were months of excellent growth in the students at Kids Town Preschool. As a teacher, I am always amazed at the maturity that students bring back when they reenter school after the winter break. Staci, Ashley, and I work hard to create learning environments that encourage the children to keep on this midyear upward trajectory toward independence. Each of our teaching personalities shines through the way that we approach the skills the children need to learn, and all of the learners benefit from this type of instruction that is tailored to the individual child.



Lucas experimented with color mixing in the green room.

The green classroom (Ashley) delved deeply into science. They explored magnets and mixing colors. They became expert thinkers by making predictions about the secondary color that would appear when two primary colors were mixed together. The green classroom focused on identifying letters and rhyming words through reading nursery rhymes. They brought Humpty Dumpty into real life by exploring ways to save an egg from breaking

when it was dropped. They worked on counting skills and using refined fine motor movements to manipulate "magic beans" from Jack and the Beanstalk. During March, the green room continued studying numbers and developing their visual and tactile searching skills by going on a scavenger hunt for a collection of shamrocks, numbered 1-20. They practiced working cooperatively as they placed the shamrocks in numerical order.

The red classroom (Staci) learned about winter weather, especially about what different kinds of animals and people do in the winter. The students practiced their systematic searching skills by either examining a page to look for a hidden animal or using their hands to feel along a row of textures to



Children in the red room learned about the parts of the body using Mat Man.

find the matching texture. During the month of February, the red classroom completed their unit on winter weather. The students had a blast acting out the story of *The Mitten* with stuffed animals and a giant mitten and then with their own bodies and a mitten-shaped outline on the floor. The children also wanted to know how to make hot chocolate, so the red group learned how to do that practical living task and got to taste the results when they were finished. During the month of March, the red room celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday, our community helpers, and the coming of Spring. Students explored rhymes through Dr. Seuss books and created their own Seuss-like creatures. Along with the story *Mrs. Brown Can Moo! Can You?*, the class went on a sound hunt listening for as many sounds as we could find around the school.



Caleb was ready for Dr. Seuss's Birthday Party!

In January, the orange classroom (Paige) learned about sounds, especially in one of the children's favorite songs "Hip Hop" by Genevieve Jereb. We listened to the "boom" sound heard throughout the song, and used our critical thinking skills to identify it as a bass drum. We used low vision devices and tactile skills to identify letters and then tap them with a drum stick. The children in the orange room celebrated February as dental health awareness month by exploring what happens at the dentist. Many of the children considered themselves to be almost experts on the dentist, and practiced communicating verbally and with assistive technology to tell their friends a fact that they know about the dentist. They also practiced emergent writing skills, as they made a list reflecting the discussion.



Though strange to some, we spent time in March with the students' choice in topics: "How does the water from the potty get to the ocean?" Exploring this topic helped the students practice their critical thinking skills to make predictions and to look for an expert on plumbing (the versatile Mr. Maury, who told us all about pipes!). We



*Above right: Eli wrote on the Perkins Brailier.
Right: Aubrey used a stylus to poke holes in "blue raindrops."*

also expanded the topic to learning about the water cycle. Two of the students' favorite activities were using their vision, hands, and ears to explore a real potty, and using a braille stylus to poke through blue "rain" dots on a piece of paper.

Kids Town Preschool would like to thank the Louisville Metro Mounted Police Officers for visiting in February with their horses and for doing a Q&A session with the students. We also express our gratitude to the Newburg Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library for coming to read to us in March. The Mobile Dairy, who gave us the opportunity to learn about a real dairy cow, also deserves a round of applause for visiting our school.



Pyper tried on a fireman's hat while Evie looked out the window of the fire truck.



The kids loved getting to experience the traveling dairy cow!

The end of April and early May featured many activities inspired by the Kentucky Derby. An especially favorite one was the Run for the Roses. Each child got to name his or her horse and race with a partner around the bike path in Kids Town. The winner of each heat got to wear a mantle or roses (artificial) just like the Derby winner, until the winner of the next heat got a turn.



Maddie and Maycin prepared for their heat.

The children have continued to enjoy the art program through the Louisville Arts Society sponsored by Art for Kosair Kids and the Fund for the Arts.



Alex and Lucas were proud of the swirly snakes they made.

Artist Ehren Reed worked with Judah and Jazmine on carving clay tiles, as Instructional Assistant Ms. Marchelle watches.



Pre-K in the Spotlight

by Ashley Emmons, Pre-K Teacher

Our Pre-K students, Bronson and Hailey, have been busy working on a variety of skills from the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC):

Compensatory Skills: Pre-K students have been busy reviewing positional and directional concepts. Students had the opportunity to practice placing objects in a cup, on a tray, or under a washcloth on command. Students also practiced locating parts of the page including top, bottom, left, and right side of page. The Pre-K students also created individual texture books where the students also chose an action to represent each texture (i.e., bumpy=tickle, soft=knock-knock, fur=pet the cat, etc). They used these "actions" to read the book versus reading print/braille words or interpreting the pictures in the book.

In the area of braille reading, we have been working on marking the beginning and end of a braille line. We have also been working on comparing two braille lines and identifying which is long and which is short. In the area of braille writing, students have been practicing pushing each embossing key separately and in combination with other keys on the braillewriter.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M): While celebrating both St. Patrick's Day and Easter, the students were encouraged to deliver foam shamrocks and/or Easter eggs to a variety of locations in the school (i.e., classroom, sensory room, braille room, lunchroom, etc). As always, our students are encouraged to use the hand trailing technique when traveling down the hallway. Our students are also encouraged to use self-protection

techniques that I like to call "bumpers," and we have worked extremely hard on using proper arm and hand placement for this technique, and learning the difference between a straight arm and one that is bent.

Independent Living Skills: Our Pre-K students have been busy working on their independence in the lunchroom. When given a place setting (plate, spoon, fork, cup, napkin, etc.), students were encouraged to name/identify each item. Once each object was identified, the students were then asked to determine if it was an item that needed to be washed in the sink or thrown in the trash. Students then proceeded to carry each item to the appropriate location.



Bronson learned about teeth brushing.

Recreation and Leisure: The students explored an InReach Bell Ball. This ball has built-in bells which is great for auditory tracking for students with visual impairments. We also used APH's portable sound source to assist the students with locating a toddler sized soccer goal.

Career Education: We read *Oh, The Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Suess. We discussed a variety of jobs and explored tactile objects representing each profession. At the end of the week the students were asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Sensory Efficiency: Students are encouraged to systematically scan the classroom environment to locate various targets. These targets are often pictures related to that week's topic. For example, when discussing the parts of a snowman, students were encouraged to scan (visually and/or tactually) the classroom to locate pictures of a snowman. During St. Patrick's day, shamrocks of various sizes were strategically placed around the classroom for the students to locate.

Our Pre-K students spend at least 20 minutes each afternoon working on math skills. These skills include but are not limited to sorting skills, creating patterns, one-to-one correspondence, understanding number concepts (i.e., give me two), counting skills, abacus exploration, dice



Hailey broke her cookie into thirds.

exploration (tactile and audible), concept of more/less, etc. My favorite math lesson this semester was all about fractions! We read the story, Give Me Half, by Stuart J. Murphy. Students had the opportunity to explore the concept of whole, halves, thirds, and fourths using paper plates, shapes, cookies, and even small individual pizzas. At the end of the week, they created individual fraction books. We had a “whole” lot of fun (pun intended)!

Expanded Core Curriculum, Part 9: Orientation and Mobility

by Jan Moseley, Vision Impairment Specialist/Newsletter Editor

Orientation and mobility (O & M) appears to be one of the most misunderstood and perhaps undervalued components of the Expanded Core Curriculum. Yet it is absolutely one of the most vital. All of the academic skills in the world will do you no good if you cannot get out INTO the world. This is our goal at VIPS—to develop basic skills that lead to independence in all areas. Just as our teachers build the basis of each student’s academic skills, they also lay the groundwork to build independent travelers.

Locomotion is considered by many experts to be one of the two primary skills affected by blindness (the other is communication). We want our children to grow up to be safe, independent travelers and not to be limited in their lives because they are not as independent as they could be.

What exactly are Orientation and Mobility skills? They are all the skill sets needed to move safely through the environment, whatever that environment may be. No one can learn how to deal with all of the travel hazards presented in today’s world (think unplowed snow drifts, building or sidewalk construction, heavy rain that masks the sound of vehicles, even electric cars whose silent engines provide no clue to their presence, etc.) but by beginning young and building the necessary skills, we want each VIPS kid to have the confidence in past successes to tackle and hopefully, surmount whatever challenges with which she may be faced in the future.

With the completion of the new UAW/Ford Mobility City, VIPS-Louisville now has a streetscape where children can learn many outdoor travel concepts (i.e., street curbs, curb cuts, cross walks, and audible crossing signals) in a very protected environment.

So what do we do to build an independent traveler? Obviously there are physical skills that must be learned -- walking, grasping, holding and manipulating a cane in an appropriate position. But there are also language concepts that must be learned such as basic body and spatial concepts (up/down, in front of/behind, on top of/below, left/right, etc.) This occurs during circle time but is also enmeshed throughout the day. VIPS teachers verbalize and describe various sounds along with flooring textures experienced as we travel to the kitchen, playground, sensory room, music room, in short, everywhere we go. The children use this information to develop important visual and tactual reference points as well as being able to recognize familiar landmarks.

“Mr. Maury” Weedman is our current Kids Town Preschool O & M instructor. Other VIPS staff, including “Ms. Ashley” Emmons, “Ms. Barbara” Merrick and “Ms. Debby” Eades, have also received specialized training to be certified as O & M Specialists. Each of our Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) has had basic instruction in O&M and work diligently to reinforce travel skills and concepts that students work on with their O & M Specialists.

So what’s the big deal about O & M? Imagine if you will, a blind/visually impaired adult with good job and interpersonal skills whose mother leads him into the room for a job interview. Would you hire that person? You’d likely have questions about his abilities when actually all you’ve seen demonstrated are his poor independent travel skills. But you might choose not to even look at his resume once you’ve seen how dependent he appears to be.



Silas got his first cane before he could walk! His parents, both of whom are blind, know the importance of O&M and want him to have exposure to the cane, which he will be using before long.

Now we’re not saying we’re going to hand a cane to your three year- old child and drop her onto the crosswalk of a four lane highway but we DO have to begin to build the skills so that ultimately she is able to make that crossing safely someday. This can be most difficult when the natural parental response is to cloister and protect that precious little one.

As Mr. Maury wrote, “We need to keep our blind kids moving and exploring. It can be so slow and frustrating. We can help parents, most of whom are utterly stressed and over protective at the preschool stage. We do not have to risk significant injuries to stretch our kids’ mobility.”

So, help the professionals working with your child -- we cannot

lay that foundation without your buy-in. Ask questions and voice concerns you may have about your child's travel. Together we can build the foundation for an adult with visual challenges who has independent travel skills!

UAW/Ford Mobility City: A Travel-Friendly Place for Little Ones

Kids Town Preschool students are on the move, thanks to the opening of an amazing new space at VIPS-Louisville. "Mobility City" was the vision of the UAW Local 862 Community Service Team, a group of local Ford employees who design and construct projects for those in need. Located along the back property at VIPS, Mobility City is a realistic streetscape that includes intersecting sidewalks, curbs, audible crosswalk signals, fire hydrants, a bus stop, sewer grate and other things that one might encounter on a city street. The capstone of the project is the Town & Country Ford dealership, a façade that was constructed to look like a real-life showroom! Mobility City will be used to teach important Orientation & Mobility skills, helping children to become safe, independent travelers.



Mobility City was the outcome of collaboration by many dedicated and generous individuals and organizations.



Addy spent a moment practicing advocacy by chatting with Mayor Greg Fischer.

This project was initially conceived by UAW president Todd Dunn and then-board member Jim Conklin and brought to life by the leadership of Nick Reid and his supportive team members, including Gary Barr, Riley Bayes, Jessee Calhoun, Travis Hunt, Jerrod Pratt and Onsite Manager Jeff Redden.

A ribbon cutting was held on April 15 and attended by local and state dignitaries, including

Lt. Governor Jenean Hampton, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, District 10 Metro Council member Pat Mulvihill and District 17 Metro Council member (and VIPS board member) Glen Stuckel. A representative from U.S. Congressman John Yarmuth's office was also on hand to read a statement of support.

Mobility City was the collaboration of many local companies and people who saw the importance of teaching children with blindness critical life skills. Thank you to each and every person who made this vision come to life!



VIPS kids prepared for ribbon cutting with the assistance of the many dignitaries who attended

Seventh Grader Works On Developing a New Type of Cane

Volcano models and potato batteries are a thing of the past when it comes to Will Ballantine's science fair project! This year, after watching an elderly neighbor trying to maneuver a sidewalk using her newly acquired white cane, Will was concerned when he saw the woman slip on wet spots on the pavement. Will decided to put this concern into action and adopted his neighbor's dilemma as his 7th grade science project.

Will attends St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School on Bardstown Road, where science fairs are taken very seriously! Fred Whitaker, or "Mr. Fred" as he is known to his students, makes science fair preparation a year-long event. This year was no exception, and as a result, many individuals who use white canes to help with independent mobility may prove to be the beneficiaries.

Will and his parents, Mariam and Doug Ballantine, visited Kids Town Preschool one March morning to demonstrate how Will's cane works. The VIPS team thought Will might like to meet some

of the Kids Town Preschool students who may someday benefit from his invention. Bob Belknap from the American Printing House for the Blind joined the visit as well.

Will's initial prototype of his "sensored" white cane is a little rough. Picture a broom stick with wires and sensors attached with duct tape on one end. The wires lead to a laptop computer that analyzes any temperature change to the tip of the cane. Since water is a conductor of hot and cold temperatures, any change will indicate the cane has come into contact with wetness. The sensitivity of the sensor helps the slightest change to be picked up. Will's efforts have been supported by two science whizzes -- Josh Jacobs of St. Xavier High School and Ben Douglas, a graduate student at the University of Louisville's Speed School -- who served as his mentors.

To say that Will's invention was impressive is an understatement. The VIPS team was not only fascinated by his creativity, but also by his interest in the students served through VIPS. The future is looking bright for Will Ballantine and for all who come in contact with him along the way. And it's not just the VIPS team who thinks so -- VIPS just heard from Will's mom that he placed 2nd in the state science fair! Congratulations, Will!



Will and his mom Mariam visited VIPS to show his cane.

VIPS Staff News

VIPS-Central Kentucky Has New Regional Director

We are thrilled to announce that VIPS-Central Kentucky has a new Regional Director, *Kelly Easton*. Kelly will be joining our team after the July break from her current role as Executive Director of Youth Development at the YMCA of Central Kentucky. Kelly has 20 years of experience in the non-profit world, most recently implementing policies and strategic planning, leading an annual campaign, writing grants and grant reports, cultivating relationships with donors and clients, recruiting volunteers and speaking on behalf of her agency during media events, community forums and to civic organizations.

A UK graduate, Kelly has been involved in the Lexington community her entire career. She is everything we hoped to

find in a new director and the icing on the cake is an exuberant personality and shared value system.

Kelly and husband Todd (a Lexington Firefighter) have two daughters

(Shelby, 13 and Tinley, 10). They attend Crossroads Christian Church, and love watching the girls play Fastpitch softball, visiting Disney World, and spending time outside as a family.



VIPS Hires Part-Time Human Resources Director

A warm welcome goes out to our new Human Resources Director, *Deepti Advani*, who joins VIPS as a part-time employee shared with Big

Brothers, Big Sisters. Deepti is a native of Mumbai, India who came to the U.S. in 2009 with her husband, Jignesh ("Jigs"), when he accepted an inter-company transfer to work as a senior manager business analyst in Louisville. Her degree in business management studies from Mumbai University and certification from Bellarmine University have enabled her to gain varied job experiences in banking, manufacturing, customer service and sales, call centers and human resources. We are pleased to reap the benefits of her background.

Deepti and Jigs have a 15-month-old daughter, Shanaya. Deepti has bravely joined our workout group and outside of work, enjoys dancing and reading to gain knowledge. She is rapidly becoming a vital part of the VIPS family. Glad to have you join us, Deepti!



The Staff That Works Out Together Gets Healthier Together

Speaking of the VIPS workout group, our recent team weight loss challenge has resulted in winners all the way around! We collectively lost 131.2 pounds, the equivalent of an entire person! It's amazing what a little extra focus on nutrition and additional workouts can do!

Summer Fun Activities

FUN CRAFT -Marshmallow Cannon

Several years ago the Central Kentucky staff made marshmallow cannons to celebrate the Fourth of July. They were fairly simple to make and the marshmallows would not hurt. In fact, you could actually eat what came out of the cannon!

Materials needed:

Plastic cup
Rubber balloon
Scissors
Mini Marshmallows

1. Using your scissors, cut off the bottom third of the cup, transforming the cup into the “barrel” of your cannon.
2. Tie a knot in the neck of an un-inflated balloon.
3. Using your scissors, snip off about 1/8 of the balloon’s air chamber, the bottom part of the balloon that holds air if you were to blow it up. This is the “slingshot” of your cannon.
4. Assemble your cannon by stretching the open air chamber over the narrow end, formerly the bottom, of the cup. Keep the knot on the outside of the cup.
5. To use your cannon, place a mini marshmallow in the “barrel” of the cannon, and push it into the “slingshot”, until it is flush against the knot you tied.
6. Hold your “cannon” with one hand, then pull back on the tied end of the balloon and let go, sending your marshmallow flying!

This was a big hit for the kids in Lexington! Try using a solid colored black or red balloon and white marshmallows for better visual contrast.

Make a Braille American Flag

A unique way to celebrate the birth of our country and a fun activity that can lead to increased braille and map reading skills is to make a braille American flag. This was created and developed by Jacqueline Goodstall and featured in the Paths to Literacy online newsletter in July, 2014. For full directions, enter “braille art Goodstall” into your search engine and pull up the article. The article provides fun facts and instructions for the child who has access to a braille writer.

Make An Environmental Sounds “Album”

by Pauletta Feldman, VIPS-Louisville

If you have a child who absolutely delights in sounds, you can make an album of his or her favorites! For my son, favorite sounds were thunder, airplanes, lawn mowers, cars with rumbling mufflers. Not my favorites necessarily, but they brought him such pleasure we would try to capture them for him on audio tape so he could listen whenever he wanted.

Summer does present great opportunities to gather environmental sounds. From lawn mowers and weed eaters, to crickets chirping and birds tweeting. Perhaps you can go out on walks and have your child listen for sounds that capture his or her imagination. Identify the sound and record it.

You can make different types of sound albums and these can be springboards for conversations that help your child build concepts about the world and how it works.

Bird sounds -- the particular ones in your yard or neighborhood. As your child learns to identify the different bird calls, you can talk about what the birds are doing (splashing in a bird bath or puddle, building a nest, protecting their territory). Help your child locate from where the sound is coming -- left/ right, the ground, up high. You can talk about what size the bird is, what it looks like, what it eats. You can go to the library and check out a book about birds to find out more about their habits and habitats.

Machine sounds -- cars, motorcycles, planes, lawn equipment, and other machines you hear in your neighborhood. You can talk about LOUD and quiet machine sounds and the smells that are associated with different machines. If you hear a plane going overhead, you and your child can make up a story about where the people on the plane are going and what they are going to do. Or, if you hear a lawnmower near your house, you can talk about who is using it:

“Mr. Jones is mowing his yard. Can you smell the fresh-mown grass? Mr. Jones usually cuts his grass on Saturday mornings, doesn’t he? That’s when he does not have to work, so he has time to do it. He does it in the morning before it gets too hot.”

Environmental sounds -- thunder, light rain, hard rain, wind blowing, the swish of walking through tall grass, the crackle of dry leaves underfoot, the trickling of water in a stream or backyard pond, the scattering drops of a sprinkler.

Sounds for each room of the house

Bathroom -- water running, toilet flushing, teeth brushing
Kitchen -- pots banging, table setting, silverware clattering
Living Room -- TV, family members talking
Bedroom -- bed springs creaking, Dad snoring, mobile playing music.

Indulging my son’s love of sounds gave me such joy. It took away the sting of him not being able to see all the wondrous things of the world, because he was so darned good at hearing all the wondrous sounds that created his “pictures” of the world and how it works.

(There are many free apps for recording sound as well as apps of different sound libraries.)



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

VIPS-Central KY

Alexandra – 9 months, Lexington, KY
 Blake – 34 months, Richmond, KY
 Chloe – 12 months, Grassy Creek, KY
 Connor – 11 months, Lexington, KY
 Dominique – 29 months, Nancy, KY
 Eilam – 16 months, Hazard, KY
 Enrique – 16 months, Monticello, IN
 Gabriel – 13 months, Lexington, KY
 Gage – 8 months, Jeffersonville, KY
 Harleigh – 10 months, Olive Hill, KY
 Hosanna – 7 months, Wilmore, KY
 Jamiyah – 20 months, Harrodsburg, KY
 Joshua – 29 months, Corbin, KY
 Josiah – 7 months, Paris, KY
 Kiley – 31 months, Lexington, KY
 Landon – 23 months, Lexington, KY
 Mackenzie – 8 months, Lexington, KY
 Mason – 17 months, Morehead, KY
 Matthew – 22 months, Southgate, KY
 Mya – 8 months, Campbellsville, KY
 Natalan – 9 months, Berea, KY
 Noah – 30 months, Greenup, KY
 Nyielle – 15 months, Richmond, KY
 Raiden – 12 months, Independence, KY

Stella – 13 months, Lexington, KY
 Tara – 16 months, Pikeville, KY
 Timothy – 15 months, Mt. Sterling, KY
 Veralissa – 12 months, Salyersville, KY
 Yanni – 35 months, Southgate, KY

VIPS-Louisville

Athena – 21 months, Louisville, KY
 Aubrea – 12 months, Louisville, KY
 Carson – 17 months, Louisville, KY
 Davey – 17 months, Louisville, KY
 Elizabeth – 40 months, Madison, IN
 Ellie – 11 months, Clarksville, IN
 Fredrick – 13 months, Louisville, KY
 Jeremiah – 10 months, Bardstown, KY
 Justice – 19 months, Louisville, KY
 Kya – 19 months, Louisville, KY
 Lane – 22 months, Louisville, KY
 Lucas – 8 months, Anchorage, KY
 Maddie – 27 months, Louisville, KY
 Olive – 44 months, Louisville, KY
 Wyatt – 18 months, Shelbyville, KY
 Tenley – 24 months, Madison, IN

VIPS-Indiana

Brooklynn – 12 months, Camby, IN
 Caleb – 18 months, Terre Haute, IN
 Delilah – 12 months, Bloomington, IN
 Emmalee – 31 months, Fort Wayne, IN
 Emery “Emmylou” – 19 months, Berne, IN
 Enzo – 13 months, Westfield, IN
 Fifi – 18 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Jax – 12 months, Brownsburg, IN
 Jeremiah – 13 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Jesus – 36 months, Fort Wayne, IN
 Kegan – 22 months, Fort Wayne, IN
 Kennedy – 11 months, St. Anthony, IN
 Lincoln – 19 months, Carmel, IN
 Logan – 12 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Martize – 28 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Maleah – 31 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Miracle – 8 months, Hammond, IN
 Mavaya – 34 months, Hammond, IN
 Morgan – 30 months, Fort Wayne, IN
 Peyton – 29 months, Plymouth, IN
 Presley – 36 months, Linton, IN
 Preston – 11 months, West Lafayette, IN
 Rowen – 12 months, Westfield, IN

Lexington Legends and VIPS

The Fourth of July weekend is going to start off with a bang for VIPS-Central KY. The Lexington Legends have chosen VIPS-CK as the Community Organization of the Night (CON) during their July 1 game against the Rome Braves. As the CON, a VIPS representative will do a brief on-field interview prior to the first pitch. During the top of the 2nd inning, the representative will be taken to the radio booth and will be interviewed for about a half of an inning. VIPS-CK has been given a limited number of tickets to sell for this game to raise funds for VIPS programming. Tickets are in Section 212, and are only \$10 each. The game is on July 1, at 7:05 pm. Enjoy watching the Lexington Legends as they take on the Rome Braves, and support VIPS at the same time. For more details, or to purchase your tickets please contact Mary Smyth at (502) 498-6712, or vipslex@vips.org.

Notes of Interest



The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), an international professional organization of special educators, publishes an online newsletter *SmartBrief on Special Education* with links to articles dealing with all aspects of exceptionality from widely varied local and national sources. There were several recent articles that dealt with different aspects of children and blindness.

- The first article, *Seeing Through Music*, appeared in the CDAPress.com from Coeur D Alene, ID, and described how fourth grade students constructed gadgets with soundboards that are triggered by vibrating sensors, funded by their teacher's receipt of a \$287 grant. The gadgets were to be installed close to the floor where a totally blind second grader could touch them with his cane, triggering the playing of one of his favorite songs. By associating each song with a separate location within his elementary school, he could build a school map in his head. The fourth graders were excited to be able to help another student and the blind student was thrilled to gain independent skills through their projects.
- Another article of interest appeared in a magazine called *School Library Journal*. Google that title and the phrase "braille's new age" to read about the decline in teaching braille and the various options and resources available. The Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Academy is a summer program of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) that provides instruction and opportunities for blind children. An iPad app, *Exploring Braille with Madilyn and Ruff*, works with an iPad connected to an electronic braille-writing device. Additional braille tablet technology is in development at the University of Michigan and at Polymer Braille, a company in North Carolina. Both are developing prototypical tools to improve blind users' abilities to work with mathematical and/or musical information.

The Kentucky School for the Blind recently announced that Jacob Hack, a tenth grader at the school, was selected by Actors Theatre of Louisville to produce his 10-minute play in the 2016 New Voices Young Playwrights Festival. Jacob's play was one of the eight plays selected for production, out of 870 submissions! It will also be published in their yearly anthology of plays, providing Jacob the opportunity to work with dramatists, producers, set designers, costume designers and actors to ensure that his play "comes to life" exactly how he imagined it while he was writing! The performances were held at Actors Theatre of Louisville on April

25 and 26. If you would like to read the official press release from Actors Theatre go to <http://actorstheatre.org/new-voices/>.

It can be quite a challenge for blind and visually impaired people who enjoy going to a movie when the theater's audio description technology is old or their companion is less than capable of describing the on-screen action. Sighted viewers often place importance on things that blind people don't find as significant.

Animation giant Disney-Pixar hopes to ease these challenges with their smartphone app that will enable viewers to better "see" its movies. The narration app automatically syncs with films from Pixar and Disney to voice additional descriptions of on-screen action through headphones. The audio script goes through multiple changes and multiple "editors" before it is approved, with accessibility emphasized as part of the film production. The narration focuses on objectivity so the viewers can draw their own conclusions about the characters and actions. The process was also "field tested" with more than 200 visually impaired people. The app will kick off for the summer hit movie *Finding Dory*!

If your child needs a simple red light to focus upon to "practice looking," consider the Nite Ize SlapLit LED Slap Wrap bracelet. It can be put around your child's wrist or ankle, and has two settings; solid red, or blinking red. It was designed to be worn by joggers or bikers, but can be used as a way to foster looking behavior by children who have light perception. The price ranges from \$7.95 to \$11.95 and this item can be found on Amazon, Google, or at Home Depot. Once you begin to consider LED products, you may find other items that are just perfect for hanging on a play frame or from the carrier handle of your child's safety seat.

Paths to Literacy is an interactive website that is a joint project between Perkins School for the Blind and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). This website helps educators and families identify literary experiences for children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities or deaf-blindness. The information ranges from basic overviews of literacy to stages of development and special challenges and also explores print, braille, and auditory media. Links are provided to free information with web addresses/URLs listed for commercial materials. More information is available at pathstoliteracy.org.

Perkins Solutions has a new product, LightAide™, to take advantage of light perception and give kids a variety of experiences with light. It can be programed for different

colors and is similar to a giant Lite Bright. Up to four learners can control and activate lights at a time. It is simple to set up and use. For more info, go to: www.perkinsproducts.org/store/en/learning.../1311-lightaide.html.



Allie, a former student of VIPS-Indiana, enjoyed a "Red Letter Day!" with the LightAide! (VIPS-Indiana wrote a grant to get a couple of these -- see article on page 19.)

Applaud your child's efforts with tactile stickers! Available from Tactile Vision Graphics, tactile stickers come in a variety of themes and colors. The company also produces tactile coloring books and greeting cards with braille. Prices are reasonable, too! Check out: <http://tactilevisiongraphics.com/tactile%20stickers/>

Buddy Break Offered by Middletown Christian Church

Middletown Christian Church is the first partner church in Kentucky to offer Buddy Break, a program of Nathaniel's Hope. Buddy Break is a free monthly respite program offering friendship and activities for children with special needs from age two up to 5th grade. Specially trained youth volunteers provide activities, offering caregivers a break from their responsibilities, for three hours once a month beginning in the summer of 2016.

Volunteers aged 14 and older will be provided two hours of training to become Buddies. Contact Miriam George, Children's Minister, at 502-245-9793 or mgeorge@middletownchristian.org for additional information.

Special Gifts of Time from Special People

VIPS-Louisville

Thanks to the *Louisville Metro Police Department* mounted unit who brought their horses to share with the VIPS preschoolers and Twos on March 17.

We also appreciate *Mobile Dairy* who visited Kids Town Preschool on March 30 to show the children how to milk a cow.

Thanks to the members of *Middletown Christian Church* who once again pulled weeds, spruced up the exterior landscaping and laid down mulch. We are so grateful for their continued interest in VIPS and to *Brandi Hitzelberger*, mother of two VIPS graduates, for her continuous commitment to VIPS.

We owe a debt of gratitude to *VIPS Mom Missy Browning* for taking wonderful photos of the kids on a recent field trip.

We consider ourselves so fortunate that several retired professionals take their time to work with our youngsters. Thanks to *Deanna Scoggins*, a retired Teacher of the Visually Impaired, who volunteers weekly with the preschoolers, building interest and skills in braille. *Fran Woodward* has been a life-saver, showing up weekly to work in the Twos classroom. *Juanita Miles* has been helping in the preschool as well as in the Twos room. We are so appreciative of your willingness to share your time and talents with our children!

Heather Schoolcraft volunteered her assistance with Friday Friends and we are thankful for her help.

Ryan Hack has again distinguished himself as a volunteer, assisting at family events, including the Easter party and Cookout for the Crusade for Children.

VIPS Night at the Louisville Science Center found *Sydney Haydon* volunteering his time with our families and children. Thanks so much!

Stuffing plastic Easter Eggs was the tedious job that *Samantha Johnson* and *Abigail Walsh* took on. We thank them for their kind help. Easter Party volunteers included *Mary Bays*, *Suzann Bays*, *Ryan Hack* and *Caroline Nelson*. Many thanks to all of you for your interest in helping VIPS families.

Our Sensory Garden got a sprucing up thanks to the hard work of volunteers from the *Louisville Board of Realtors*, as part of the *Mayor's Give A Day* project. Thanks go to the following people: Karen Bhatt (Keller Williams), Shelby Freeman (Keller Williams), Kelly Hammens (Skelton Co.), Laura Johnston (Skelton Co.), Nicole Raymond (Keller Williams), Bennett & Brittany Reynolds (Keller Williams), Jamie Roth (Century 21), and Lester Sanders (Louisville Association of Realtors). Bennett Reynolds is the brother of a VIPS graduate.



Former VIPS Board President Lester Sanders participated.

Thanks to Mary Bays for spending a good part of her Spring break at VIPS, entering library books into an online catalog!

The dirty job of cleaning out the garage and washing all of our windows fell to Emily Alexander, Zunayr Asad, Connor Caudill, Allie Dudgeon, Colin Ferguson, Annie Harrison, Jake Latts, Daisy Miller, Mick Smith, Alisya Solankni and Jenni Williams. We cannot thank you enough for taking time to help us!

Thanks to Janene Grants from TARC for helping us get TARC Bus signs donated for Ford/UAW Mobility City & for Kids Town.

VIPS-Indiana

Thanks so much to Beth Young for her help with assembling a very tedious volunteer project.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Thank you, Ashley Bias, for your weekly commitment to helping in the Little Learner's Enrichment program.

Jenny Youngberg, social work student at the University of Kentucky, has been volunteering her time throughout this spring semester. Thank you Jenny!

Many thanks to Nancy Reed, Stephen Smyth, and Christina Pistilli for their assistance with the Easter party/Open House.

Special thanks to the Delta Gammas from the University of Kentucky. They selflessly spent many hours and days calling and picking up items from restaurants and businesses for VIPS-Central KY's Golf Outing. What an amazing group of young ladies!

VIPS Offices & Their Communities

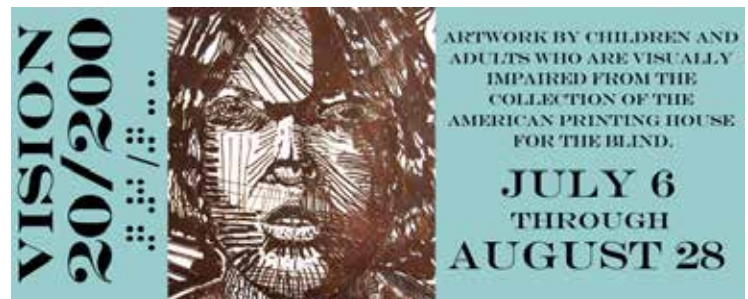
(The many fund-raising events of May will be reported on in the next issue of VISability.)

VIPS-Central Kentucky Events

United Way Young Leaders Society and Rotaract Tailgate for VIPS

United Way Young Leaders Society (YLS) and Rotaract joined forces and tailgated on what is lovingly called "the Hill" at Keeneland for VIPS. A larger than life TV screen to view the races was set up on the field next to a tent where onlookers could place bets and purchase items from the gift shop. Tables and chairs were strategically placed in front of the big screen for those that chose not to sit next to their vehicles in sports chairs. Though it was opening day at Keeneland, the cold and drizzle kept many people from tailgating. The YLS and Rotaract were not deterred, however, and braved the bitter weather for several hours to support our children and families. Thank you, YLS and Rotaract, for battling to stay warm and dry in order to support VIPS.

Lexington Museum to Highlight Visually Impaired Artists



The Headley-Whitney Museum of Art, 4435 Old Frankfort Pike, will be having an exhibit, July 6 to August 28, featuring art by children and adults who are visually impaired. "Vision 20/200" is an innovative exhibition of two and three dimensional art produced by children and adults who are legally blind. The exhibit includes at least 40 selections from the "InSights" competition, a juried competition of legally blind artists held by the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, KY for the past 25 years.

Accompanying "Vision 20/200" will be the "Sense of Touch" exhibit featuring two and three dimensional artworks designed to be touched. Go beyond your visual sense to experience art this summer. The Museum also plans to host speakers during the course of the exhibition that may be of interest to VIPS families and friends.

VIPS-Indiana Events

VIPS Indiana Exhibits at the IAEYC Conference

VIPS-Indiana is very familiar with the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) because our Director/TVI Annie Hughes was recognized by them in 2014 as the Preschool Educator of the Year. So when presented with the opportunity to exhibit at the IAEYC Conference, we eagerly jumped at the chance. The conference was held on Friday and Saturday, April 8 - 9 at the Indiana Convention Center located in downtown Indianapolis. With over 3000 individuals attending, who either teach or care for young children, it was great exposure for VIPS and the important work we are doing in Indiana. As a result of the conference, we received a referral, met people whose lives have already been touched by VIPS, and have been asked to consult with a number of individuals needing resources and advocacy advice. VIPS is looking forward to being a part of the IAEYC Conference in 2017.



VIPS-Indiana Director Annie Hughes greeted visitors to the VIPS booth at the



VIPS staff had fun and learned a lot to take back to VIPS families at the Active Learning Training.

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child. ~Carl Jung

Recent Grants and Donations

VIPS-Louisville

Legislative actions

We are so very grateful to *Kentucky legislators and Governor Bevin* for keeping VIPS in the 2017-18 biennial state budget. Thanks to the advocacy of our numerous supporters, legislators and the governor were convinced of the benefit of continuing to appropriate funds for VIPS to see children all around the state. *We encourage our families to thank their legislators for the support they provided VIPS.*

Kroger Cards

Each quarter, VIPS is earning \$\$\$ because our families and friends are enrolled in the Kroger Community Rewards Program. To sign up and help VIPS, go to <https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow>. The number for VIPS-Louisville is 10771; for VIPS-Central KY it is 30423; and for VIPS-Indiana it is 74094. Easy Peasy!!

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](https://www.amazon.com/smile).

Donor Luncheon

On March 29, VIPS hosted a special luncheon for our dedicated board and donors, treating them to an inspiring talk by a familiar friend about overcoming adversity. You may remember *Travis Freeman*, a Corbin, KY native, who went blind as a preteen but beat the odds and managed to pull off a successful high school football career (the movie 23 Blast was based on his life story). Following Travis' talk, Kids Town Preschool students sang their hearts out, winning over the group, and *VIPS mom, Ashley May*, shared how VIPS has changed her family's life. In an hour's time, nearly \$4,000 in donations were given to VIPS. Thank you to everyone who joined us for this special event.

Sacred Heart Model School Students

Sacred Heart Model School students visited VIPS for a field trip in April. And they came bearing gifts of lots of supplies that we use in the school and classrooms, as well as the Administrative Side of the VIPS Building. In addition, the students worked with

VIPS children in the preschool classrooms. The students also got to participate in an Orientation & Mobility hands-on presentation with Mr. Maury.



Above: Canes and walkers donated by Patty Wheatley (see below) and boxes of supplies donated by Sacred Heart Model School Students. Left: Girls practicing the technique of "sighted guide."

Most Blessed Sacrament Parish

Thanks to the parishoners of Most Blessed Sacrament Church in South Louisville for their generous donation of classroom and office supplies.

VIPS-Central Kentucky

The *Lexington Clinic Foundation* thoughtfully donated \$2,000 for general programming.

The *Children's Charity of the Bluegrass* graciously donated \$15,000 for direct services to children in Central Kentucky.

A party isn't a party without cupcakes, and lots of them! Thank you to *Nina and Brian Vail* for making the delicious cupcakes for our Easter party/Open House.

Patty Wheatley graciously donated ten canes and two walkers to VIPS-Central KY. The O&M staff were excited to receive them. Patty also donated some mobility items to VIPS-Louisville. Thanks Patty!

Thanks to the generosity of several staff members at the *Council of State Governments*, VIPS-Central KY is enjoying the use of much-needed printers, binders, folders, and a copier! Thank you to *Wade Littrell, Doug Hager, Kevin Wallace, and Stephanie Burke* for your kindness.

Buddy Horn, who is seven years old, wanted to do something special for the children at VIPS. He carefully went through some of his favorite toys from when he was younger, selecting ones that he felt would be loved by VIPS kids as much as he had loved them. With a smile he donated the toys to VIPS. Thank you Buddy! You have a big heart!

VIPS-Indiana

VIPS-Indiana was honored to be awarded \$2000 by the Sertoma Club of Broad Ripple to be used to buy two new LightAides. The LightAide is a cool product from Perkins to take advantage of light perception and give kids a variety of experiences with light. It can be programed for different colors and is kind of like a giant Lite Bright. See pg. 15 or the Perkins site for more info: www.perkinsproducts.org/store/en/learning.../1311-lightaide.html.



Andrew was mesmerized by the LightAide when VIPS-Indiana Developmental Interventionist David Sterne took it on a home visit.

VIPS Wish List

Baby wipes
Paper towel rolls
Goldfish crackers
Items for family activities

- Disposable bowls
- Disposable cups (various sizes)
- Plastic cutlery
- Paper napkins



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

Monday – Thursday, June 6-July 21

VIPS-Louisville Summer Enrichment

Program will be held for children ages three – six years. Tuition is \$120/week (\$40/day), with early drop-off (8 a.m.) and after school care (1-5:30 p.m.) available for \$5/hr. Children can attend for the entire summer, or for individual weeks or days. Two Day 2s children can attend either Monday-Tuesday or Wednesday-Thursday sessions. A few spots remain. Contact Beth Krebs at 636-3207 to enroll your child.

Friday, July 1

VIPS-CK will be the Community

Organization of the Night during the Lexington Legends game against the Rome Braves, 7:05 p.m. VIPS-CK has a limited number of tickets for sale for this game. Cost is \$10 per ticket. Come support VIPS and enjoy watching the Legends play ball.

VIPS BLIPS

You can receive a bi-monthly VIPS online newsletter -- VIPS Blips -- in you email inbox on the 1st and 15 of each month to keep you informed about what's coming up and going on at your local VIPS Office. To receive it, just make sure we have your email by contacting pauletta at pfeldman@vips.org.

Contact Mary Smyth for details and tickets: vipslex@vips.org

Fridays

VIPS-Louisville will host Friday Friends on Fridays during July through July 22, 10 a.m. Suggested donation is \$5 (\$10 per family). VIPS children are free.

VIPS-Central Kentucky will host Summer Sensations Fridays in July through July 22. Contact Emily Wiley for more information, ewiley@vips.org

Wednesday, July 13

Join VIPS Indiana for a summer Play and Learn Group at the Indiana Interchurch Center, 10 a.m. - noon! Take part in a sing-along with VIPS staff, participate in a Make-and-Take activity to create a special sensory something for your VIPS child, learn during the training portion of the event and connect with other VIPS families. Light snacks will be provided. We hope you can join us!

Monday, July 25 through Friday, August 5

All VIPS Offices (Louisville, Central KY and Indiana) will be closed for summer break.

Saturday, October 15

The Stampede for VIPS 5K Walk/Run will be held at the Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn Soccer Stadium featuring elite visually impaired runners from across the US. Start getting your friends and family together to participate. The family with the largest team wins a prize!! Registration begins soon for all runners.

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

VIPS-Louisville

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