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UAW/Ford Mobility City Back in the News!

The August 2016 edition of *Louisville Magazine* featured VIPS preschooler, Pyper Buren, as she used her cane to travel the new UAW/Ford Mobility City, at the rear of the VIPS-Louisville campus. You can access the article at loumag.epubxp.com (turning to page 18). Read about Mobility City -- conceived, planned and built entirely from donations from the United Auto Workers-Ford Local 862's ramp team -- and learn how VIPS children are being taught to safely travel using this fabulous environment, that is modeled after an actual streetscape.



Pyper Buren prepares to cross Terri Lane, guided by the audible crossing signal and her trusty white cane.

VIPS Beacon Awards Recognize Outstanding Service

On June 21, VIPS was pleased to publicly thank the people who make it possible for the agency to provide the quality of services it does to children and families across Kentucky and Indiana. The 10th annual Beacon Awards honored top donors,

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Representatives from Trimble County Schools received the Collaborative Partner Award in appreciation for busing a VIPS student from Bedford, KY to the VIPS-Louisville campus for three years, enabling her to attend Kids Town Preschool.



volunteers and civic organization during the VIPS Annual Meeting dinner, held in Kosair Charities Kids Town. This year's recipients were:

Individual Benefactors: George Hocker and Eric Bruun*

Individual Volunteers: Juanita Miles and Deanna Scoggins

Corporate Benefactor: Papa John's Pizza

Corporate Volunteer: UAW Local 862 Ramp Team

Collaborative Partner: Trimble County Schools

Social Services Award: Delta Gamma (Louisville Alumnae Chapter and University of Kentucky Delta Beta Chapter)

Parent Ambassadors: Rob & Meredith Howell

2016 VIPS Ambassador Award: Kosair Charities

(*Eric Bruun's acceptance speech appears on page 21.)



Jerry Ward, Chairman of Kosair Charities accepts the Ambassador Award from Diane Nelson, VIPS Executive Director.



Deanna Scoggins, accompanied by guide dog Virginia, accepts her Beacon award for her volunteer work in Kids Town Preschool.



Delta Gammas received the Social Services Award, in appreciation of the volunteer efforts of Louisville Alumnae and the Lexington Delta Beta Chapter.



Individual Benefactor George Hocker with Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education.

Ready or Not – The School Bell is Ringing!

by Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Kids Town Preschool at VIPS opened its doors to the 2016-17 school year on Wednesday, August 17. New class lists were hung outside the doors. New sign-in sheets were ready in each classroom. The floors were shining. The windows were streak-free. Kids Town had new labels on all items. The playground was wiped down. The audible crossing signal in the new UAW Ford Mobility City was blaring loudly. Household items and dress-up clothes were replenished in each classroom. Lightbulbs were replaced in the Sensory Room. Kids Town kitchen was scrubbed from floor to ceiling. All signs pointed to a physical environment at its very best.

Our teachers and classroom assistants not only had blistered hands from cutting out shapes and tactual symbols as they prepared for the first day, they had heads filled with knowledge from a summer of planning and attending trainings. And they were relaxed. Maybe not totally relaxed, but the slower pace of summer programming afforded our preschool team a brief opportunity to catch their breath. That coupled with VIPS' first ever two- week summer shutdown, and rested they were. Rested and ready to go! Ready to start our new school year on its earliest date. Ready to increase programming to five days a week. Ready to fling open our doors and arms to the wonderful children who bring us to work each and every day!

There is no doubt that the children were ready to return. I only counted two tearful souls on the first day and one of those brave ones had finished crying by the time he made his way to his classroom. The other friend was enjoying her first day in preschool – ever. I may be putting words in her mouth when I say I heard, "You mean I have to walk all the way to Kids Town? They don't make me do this at home!" I am also confident that the smile on her face at the end of the hall told me the walk was worth it!

The parents' reactions to the first day of school were just as varied as the students'. Some were tearful. (You know who you are!). Some were eager to leave VIPS and go out for a cup of coffee with a friend. Others were heading straight home for an end-of-the-summer nap! We at VIPS appreciate the effort our parents made to get their children to school during the period of time when we had no public school bus service. Your commitment is commendable! We also are grateful for the understanding and patience of adapting to our new carpool plan. While dropping your child off at the main door may be a recipe for a smoother morning for some families, it does not mean we do not want you around. It is quite the opposite! Please plan

to continue joining us for our many field trips and special guests throughout the school year. Our family events are designed so all members of our VIPS families can feel at home in the company of others experiencing the same accomplishments and challenges. And the events are FUN!

I must add that by the second day, our students acted as though they had been doing this preschool thing for years. They were observed putting on their own super-sized backpacks, hugging their teachers good-bye as if the next morning was light years away, and rushing to the front door to push the magic button. It is a good thing that preschoolers adjust so quickly, as the adults around them know the final school bell will be ringing next May before we know it!

Notice to All VIPS Families! Don't Be a Stranger! Attend VIPS Events!!

If you are served by VIPS anywhere in KY or IN, then ALL VIPS Family Events are for YOU, too. If you get this newsletter, that means YOU! Your child does not have to be enrolled in Louisville's Kids Town Preschool or Lexington's Little Learners to take advantage of all the learning and fun that happens at VIPS family events. If you live outside Louisville, Lexington or Indianapolis, and if you are willing to travel, you may attend any family event offered by any VIPS office!! Just be sure to contact the individual listed as contact person for the event to let them know you plan to attend. You will be welcomed with open arms and you will leave feeling like you've met your new best friends!

Back to School Bash

The August VIPS-Louisville Back to School Bash was a very successful orientation to Kids Town Preschool and the Twos program for VIPS two year olds who just getting their feet wet in preschool. Twenty four (80%!) of our students' families were represented, including eight families new to our preschool. We took photos of each family in front of the backdrop of the VIPS logo which was created by **Shelby Birchler**, Instructional Assistant and resident artist! **Pizza donated by Papa John's** was served. Children were supervised by teaching assistants on the playground, while parents and guardians learned the nuts and bolts of the day-to-day workings of the preschool. Parent handbooks were distributed along with info on volunteer opportunities, email billing, emergency alert system and school calendar.

One of the biggest changes discussed involved the new traffic pattern for dropping off the children outside the front lobby. This is to help the traffic flow in our parking lot. Teachers will now greet the parents who drop off their child(ren) outside under the covered dock. Parents will then drive to the back of the lot, exiting to the left and returning to Goldsmith Lane by driving the "out" lane parallel to the "in" lane they just traversed. School buses are now also able to drop off children to teachers waiting under the covered dock using the same route as the parents. The same pattern will be followed at the end of the day.



Ms. Marchelle escorts the first child to disembark his bus following the new travel pattern.

Martha Hack, Family Services Coordinator, invited all the families to participate in the upcoming family events.

We are so appreciative of **Teri Isaacs** and daughter **Amanda** who entertained the children, reading and singing, while the parents were busy. **Darryl Issacs**, Teri's husband and Amanda's father, has been a strong supporter of VIPS and we are delighted that his family is also involved.

VIPS-Central KY Family Picnic

by Emily Wiley, VIPS-CK Family Services Coordinator

In May, VIPS-CK families enjoyed a special Saturday at the **University of Kentucky Arboretum**. Besides enjoying time together and sharing a catered meal, the families explored the Children's Garden for a special Arboretum program, "Sew it Saturday." Many thanks to the Arboretum staff and to **Tammy Morris from Bricks4kidz** who taught a lesson about family team building with Legos™. It was great fun for all!



Enjoying gentle sprays at the UK Arboretum.

VIPS-Indiana Spring Play and Learn Group

by Meredith Howell, VIPS-Indiana Assistant Director

VIPS-Indiana invited our families to join us on Saturday, April 16 for a Spring Play and Learn (PAL) 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 portion of the day. 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 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 in the job field and 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. As you can see, it was a busy, but good day!

A Delta Gamma alumnae volunteer played with Maleah.



Aubrianna enjoyed the sensory space!



Parents made shaker eggs.

VIPS-Central KY Summer Sensations Camp

by Emily Wiley, VIPS-CK Family Services Coordinator

This year, VIPS-Central KY held a six-week summer camp each Friday during the months of June and July. There were different themes each week such as Underwater, Out of This World, Super Hero Day, Master Builder, Safari and Camp S’mores. We had many special guests come out to join us for camp!

Lexington Living Arts and Science Center came to visit us several times. They brought a mobile planetarium for Out of This World Day, allowing us to learn all about constellations and planets; they showed that we all have our own unique super powers on Super Hero Day and taught us about forest animals on Safari Day!

Arianna, Faith and Madison really enjoyed playing together!



Firemen demonstrated their equipment; Arabella (right) got a close-up introduction to the fire engine.

They weren’t the only guests we had. **The Lexington Fire Department** stopped by and showed us that they are every-day super heroes! They even let us take a tour of their superhero mobile... ahem... firetruck!



For Master Builder Day, *Tracy from Bricks4kidz* came out; we got to play with Legos™ and use our imaginations to become Master Builders ourselves, complete with construction hats!



Safari was a blast as well. With *Rosie's Ponies* petting zoo, pony rides and forest animals; by the end of the day, we all turned into zookeepers!

Last but not least, our six-week camp came to a close on Camp S'mores day. *Paschal Baute, a professional story teller*, told us stories by the camp fire while we ate our lunch. After that, the *Altrusa Club* generously donated ice cream for all of us! Camp was a raging success this year, and we can't wait to do it again next year!



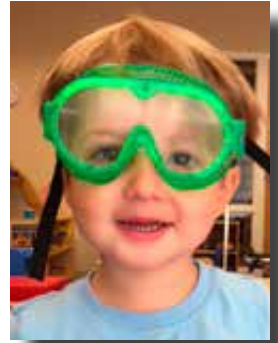
Above: Jubie works at being a master builder; Left: Lucy Anna engages in some pretend ocean exploration.



expressing creatively, interacting with others, listening skills, and many more!

Our weekly themes included:

June 6-9: Summer
June 13-16: Beach/Ocean
June 20-23: Picnic
June 27-30: Fourth of July
July 5-7: Camping
July 11-14: Bear Hunt
July 18-21: Summer Olympics



Zach with his goggles for ocean exploring!

Ms. Greta Gillmeister stopped by each Tuesday and Thursday for both individual and large group music therapy.

The Fourth of July Parade has become an exciting tradition, as all non-teaching staff collect outside to watch the parade and cheer for the parade participants each year.

Right: Alex loves to swing!



Above: Ms. Ashley bears the flag as Lola marches alongside. Right: Grace gets a bit of guidance from Ms. Beth as she pedals her bike in the parade.



VIPS-Louisville “Visions of Summer”

VIPS-Louisville's 2016 Summer Enrichment program: “Visions of Summer” was a great success! The goal of our summer program is to help our students become independent individuals who can interact with others and with their environment in order to become critical thinkers who can learn at the highest level possible. The children were encouraged to practice skills such as making letter/sound relationships, recognizing pictures, working from left to right, thinking critically, reflecting upon experiences,



The children love seeing Ms. Di and her puppies.

Terry King, librarian with the Newburg Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library, stopped by on June 28 and July 19 to read stories to the children, including The Storm Whale by Benji Davies, There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell by Lucille Colandro, and Fish Food by Andy Mansfield and Henning Lohlein. Not only did she read stories to the children, but she also brought a backpack for each child filled with books! We are especially thankful to her for her involvement and for helping instill a love for reading with our VIPS children!



Our visiting librarian, Terry King, was a favorite of the children.

Friday Friends At VIPS-Louisville

Friday Friends is an opportunity for VIPS children to join with children from the community in an atmosphere of fun with a lot of learning and socialization thrown in. Each week the children listen to a story, then make a craft related to the story. In addition to the usual VIPS activities -- Sensory Room, playground and Kosair Charities Kids Town -- children are treated to special guests each week to share a skill or talent.

This summer about 20 children enjoyed many special guests including: *Michael Daniels, Artist* (Drawing) who drew cartoon characters for the children to guess as he was drawing; *Shelby Birchler, Artist* (Mixed Media); *Greta Gillmeister, Music Therapist*; *Deanna Scoggins, Teacher of the Visually Impaired*,



who read a Braille story to the children and then discussed it with them; *Kim Shippey, Musician*; *Jamie Weedman*, who brailled children's names; and *Bo Schuster, from Louisville Fire and Rescue*. Splash Day was a great success as the final Friday Friends event for this summer.

Kids Town Preschool Classroom Personnel

A new school year always brings exciting changes to the classroom and VIPS Kids Town Preschool classes are no exception. Staff members have left, new staff members have been added and familiar faces are in unfamiliar places. This is the schedule and classroom line-up for 2016-17:

- **Preschool** runs, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- **Two Day Twos** has two weekly sessions: Monday-Tuesday, and Wednesday-Thursday, 9 a.m. – noon.
- **Pre-K program**, Monday – Thursday, 1 – 3 p.m.

Green Room (Preschool, afternoon Pre-K)

Lead teacher -- Ashley Emmons:

TVI*, O&M*, IECE*

Classroom assistants -- Shelby Birchler and LaRhonda Locke-Daniels.



Red Room (Preschool)

Lead teacher -- Staci Maynard: TVI*

Classroom assistants -- Ashley May and JCPS assistant Erika Glenn.



Orange Room (Preschool)

Lead teacher -- Paige Maynard:

TVI*, IECE*

Classroom assistants -- Marchelle Hampton and Beth Owens



Blue Room (Two Day Twos)

Lead teacher -- Juanita Miles: IECE*

Classroom assistant --

Kathy Moulden,
M.Ed. (Special Education)

Classroom volunteer --
Fran Woodward



*TVI = Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired;

*O&M = Certified Orientation & Mobility Instructor;

*IECE = Certified Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education Specialist

On the Road With VIPS-Indiana

Just a portion of the services VIPS provides take place in the classroom. Most services are offered in the homes of VIPS children by our dedicated traveling teachers. All three VIPS offices provide in-home early intervention services throughout Kentucky and Indiana. Below are some images shared by VIPS-Indiana Developmental Interventionists.



(Left) Caleb couldn't get enough of the Sensory Activity Belt his interventionist, Lisa West, made for him to use. Lisa got the idea from an Active Learning training she attended.



(Right) Ethan loved playing with the LightAide. VIPS-Indiana won a grant to purchase two LightAides from Perkins School for the Blind.



(Above left) Hunter tickled his leg with the creepy, but oh so tactile, rubber centipede. (Above right) Aurora enjoyed a tactile book from Seedlings during a home visit with a summer reading theme. Nurturing literacy is always a part of VIPS-Indiana home visits. (Left) Sweet Ianna was thrilled to try out the play frame during an initial visit.



Notes of Interest

The **FamilyConnect** (<http://familyconnect.org>) website of the **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)** has always been a fantastic online resource for VIPS families. A recent visit to the website turned up:

- An *interesting article on dealing with difficult yet EXPECTED behaviors* in blind and visually impaired toddlers and preschoolers. To read the article yourself, go to: <http://www.familyconnect.org/info/browse-by-age/preschoolers/growth-and-development-preschoolers/behavioral-issues-in-children-with-visual-impairments-and-blindness-a-guide-for-parents/addressing-difficult-but-expected-behavior-in-toddlers-and-preschooler>
- Interesting videos about *living with specific eye conditions* including stories about Bilateral Anophthalmia, Bilateral Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, Leber's Congenital Amaurosis, Microcephaly, Peter's Anomaly and Retinopathy of Prematurity, along with perspectives from parents and siblings as well as the individual with the vision impairment.
- Information on *gifts and gadgets for children, teenagers and adults who are blind or visually impaired*. A listing of links to fun, accessible games and toys to give for the holidays as well as gadgets appealing to teenagers are available at the FamilyConnect link just by typing in "gift ideas." Links include Access World, Wonder Baby and Toys R Us as well as blogs with suggested strategies for gift giving.

Seedlings Braille Books for Children is offering three free braille books during the year through the 2016 Book Angel Program for Visually Impaired Children. Originally called "Anna's Book Angel Project," it was named in memory of the Director's 19-year-old daughter who was killed by a drunk driver in 2001. The program has expanded from one book per year to three, thanks to the generosity of Seedlings' donors. Just register your child or student at: <http://www.seedlings.org/bkangel2009.php>.

Duck Duck Moose has free educational apps for iPads and tablets that include a very interactive *Wheels on the Bus* version. Check it out at: www.duckduckmoose.com.

Medalists for the 2016 Rio Paralympics can savor the "Sound of Victory" with their medals. This year, medals were inscribed in braille as well as designed with a sound element so that visually impaired athletes could hear their medals! The sounds in the gold, silver and bronze medals were slightly differentiated as well. To see a demonstration, go to: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/paralympic-medals-rattle-visually-impaired_us_57d856dee4b09d7a688039f2.

New Arrivals

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

VIPS Kentucky

Aelynn -- 9 months, Louisville, KY
 Aiden -- 3 years, Louisville, KY
 Anthony -- 15 months, Louisville, KY
 Asar -- 3 years, Louisville, KY
 Baxter -- 5 years, Louisville, KY
 Benjamin -- 12 months, South Shore, KY
 Cade -- 14 months, Crestwood, KY
 Connor -- 15 months, Louisville, KY
 Dalton -- 10 months, Frankfort, KY
 Elijah -- 13 months, East Point, KY
 Ella -- 2 years, Ashland, KY
 Elye -- 7 months, Irvington, KY
 Faris -- 11 months, Lexington, KY
 Hoyt -- 6 months, McHenry, KY
 Jaiden -- 2 years, Somerset, KY
 Jason -- 14 months, Alexandria, KY
 Jessie -- 2 years, Crab Orchard, KY
 Jaxson -- 2 years, Henderson, KY
 Jordynn -- 3 years, Warsaw, KY
 Joseph -- 4 years, Lawrenceburg, KY
 Josephine -- 2 years, Villa Hills, KY
 Lauren -- 8 months, Nicholasville, KY
 Liam -- 9 months, Ekron, KY
 Mallory -- 14 months, Owingsville, KY
 Minerva -- 2 years, Corbin, KY
 Presley -- 2 years, Fort Campbell, KY
 Samaria -- 10 months, Louisville, KY
 Savannah -- 22 months, Junction City, KY
 Skylar -- 21 months, Nicholasville, KY
 Sloane -- 10 months, Louisville, KY
 Tyler -- 2 years, Louisville, KY
 Warren -- 14 months, Cynthiana, KY

VIPS Indiana

Alaina -- 2 years, Carmel, IN
 Asaiah -- 8 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Aubrianna -- 12 months, Noblesville, IN
 Ava -- 23 months, Camby, IN
 Azariah -- 14 months, Charlestown, IN
 Bella -- 21 months, Monroeville, IN
 Beth -- 16 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Brooklyn -- 14 months, Camby, IN

(Right) VIPS-Louisville TVI Mary Lesousky visited Azariah in his home in Charlestown, IN. He was mesmerized by the glowing slinky.



Deliah (above) experienced the joys of playing in beans with VIPS-Indiana DI Lisa West.

Tyler (right), who joined the VIPS-Louisville Kids Town Twos class in August, got a really good look at a glitter stick.



Louisa Mae, started Kids Town Preschool this fall. While Louisa is in class, her mom Donna and big sisters Lucy and Lily have been performing a variety of volunteer jobs for VIPS. Lucy and Lily are home schooled and also spend time doing lessons while at VIPS.

Bronx -- 2 years, Bloomington, IN
 Caleb -- 21 months, Terre Haute, IN
 Camren -- 15 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Christopher -- 8 months, Middlebury, IN
 Dajin -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Delilah -- 14 months, Bloomington, IN
 Elizebeth -- 2 years, Roachdale, IN
 Emmalee -- 2 years, Fort Wayne, IN
 Emery -- 21 months, Berne, IN
 Enzo -- 16 months, Westfield, IN
 Fifi -- 22 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Grace -- 12 months, Huntingburg, IN
 Greysen -- 21 months, Ridgeville, IN
 Ianna -- 2 years, Osceola, IN
 Jae'yauna -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Jax -- 14 months, Pittsboro, IN
 Jeremiah -- 16 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Jessie -- 21 months, Butlerville, IN
 Jesus -- 2 years, Fort Wayne, IN
 Lily -- 15 months, Decatur, IN
 Kala -- 11 months, Terre Haute, IN
 Kegan -- 2 years, Fort Wayne, IN
 Lincoln J. -- 22 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Lincoln R. -- 21 months, Carmel, IN
 Louisa Mae -- 4 years, Borden, IN
 Maleah -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Martize -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Mavaya -- 2 years, Hammond, IN
 Max A. -- 2 years, Fishers, IN
 Max T. -- 16 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Miracle -- 11 months, Hammond, IN
 Morgan -- 3 years, Fort Wayne, IN
 Peyton -- 3 years, Plymouth, IN
 Preston -- 15 months, West Lafayette, IN
 Quincy -- 20 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Rowen -- 16 months, Westfield, IN
 Ruby -- 7 months, Edinburgh, IN
 Ryker -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Sebastian S. -- 2 years, Columbia City, IN
 Sebastian E. -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Stella -- 15 months, Hartford City, IN
 Theodore -- 3 months, Greenville, IN

The VIPS/KSB Family Retreat Weekend!!

Registration is now open for as many as 50 families for the annual VIPS/KSB Family Conference and Retreat, sponsored by Visually Impaired Preschool Services and the Kentucky School for the Blind, for families of children who are blind and visually impaired, birth through high school. Experts will present at sessions on independent living, orientation and mobility, services from the Office for the Blind, Michelle P. Waiver and others.

All events and childcare will be held at the Kentucky School for the Blind, 1867 Frankfort Ave., in Louisville. There is a non-refundable \$25 registration fee. Families traveling farther than 50 miles from home will be offered a one-night hotel room free of charge! Register online at www.vips.org. Contact Martha Hack, mhack@vips.org or Mitch Dahmke, Mitch.Dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us for more information.

Friday, Nov. 4

- 4 - 6 p.m. -- Registration
- 6 p.m. -- Dinner and Meet & Greet with Dr. Stephen Pruitt, Kentucky Commissioner of Education

Saturday, Nov. 5

- 8 - 9 a.m. -- Registration/Check-in
- 9 a.m. -- Welcome
- 9:15 a.m. - 8 p.m. -- Sessions throughout the day

Day long fun activities will be provided for school age children and little ones in childcare and respite care.

Third Annual Eye Opening Symposium

The Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) presents their Third Annual Eye Opening Symposium, 9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Thursday, October 6, at the Fayette County Extension Office, 1140 Red Mile Place in Lexington. Topics will include glaucoma, accessibility in action, coping with vision loss at a young age, retinal treatments, macular degeneration, and coping with vision loss later in life. Speakers include Kathy Mullen, VIPS; Dr. Sheila Sanders, VA Medical Center; and Dr. Romulo Albuquerque, Retina Associates of Kentucky, University of Kentucky.

The symposium is free and open to the public thanks to the generosity of Retina Associates of KY and Vanda Pharmaceuticals. CEUs approved for CRC, ACVREP, and Social Work. To learn more and to register for this free event please go to eosymposium.wordpress.com.

Conference Reports

VIPS staff were in attendance at two major conferences this past summer. Reports of their experiences follow.

AER International Conference 2016

by Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education

On Wednesday morning, July 20, 2016, I boarded a plane heading south to the Sunshine State to attend my first conference hosted by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation (AER) of the Blind and Visually Impaired. (What a tongue twister!) Florida's motto did not disappoint – there was plenty of sunshine! But more importantly, the conference lived up to everything I hoped it would be. I must pause here and confess that I have always loved going to conferences. I'm a nerd, I know. Even when I attend sessions where the presenter makes a better sleeping aid than trainer or prefers his own thoughts and voice over others, I always leave enlightened in one fashion or another. Sometimes the enlightenment comes in the form of "Oh, I'd never do that at VIPS!" I am delighted to report this was not the case at AER 2016!

To the contrary, I learned of strategies for embedding the goals of the Expanded Core Curriculum into the preschool classroom and home visits providing early intervention. I learned how statewide agencies are supervising service providers from a distance using videotaping. I was assisted with enrolling VIPS Kentucky and VIPS Indiana as the lead agencies for the Babies Count data collection effort. I heard a mother speak of how the great services received through her state's school for the blind impacted her son in immeasurable ways. I learned about the efforts in place to increase employment opportunities for adults who are blind or visually impaired (and I took the opportunity to remind the presenters that career education begins in preschool!). I learned of websites that will help with research as VIPS learns of new grants for which we can apply. I even learned of new strategies for telling the story of VIPS – even better!

But the learning did not just take place during the sessions. Some of my greatest education during the four days took place spending time with adults who are blind or visually impaired. Just as they loved to hear tales of VIPS and our mission to empower families of young children, I loved to hear their stories. One morning on the 6:30 a.m. "Start Your Day Right" walk on the waterfront, I found myself in the company of a delightful lady about 10-15 years my senior and her dedicated dog guide. This amazing woman told me her tale of making it all the way through private Catholic education as the only blind student in her schools until she went to Seton Hall University to work on her master's

degree. My new friend explained that her community decided to take care of their own and find a way to make school work for her with the support of the Office for the Blind in her home state. (She recognized this as a gift of days gone by – before the restrictions of public funding in private schools.) The most powerful thought she shared during our walk was a quote from her mother. When this six-year-old child was offered a seat in the first grade classroom, her mother said, “We will do it until we can’t.” What a philosophy! As we finished our walk, wiping the sweat from our faces and stopping for the dog to get a drink from the hotel fountain, I knew I had my mantra for the school year (maybe even longer) – WE WILL UNTIL WE CAN’T!

I am already looking forward to the AER Conference 2018 in Reno, Nevada. Along with new things to learn, there will be new presenters sharing new strategies. Our VIPs teachers and early interventionists are already coming up with training topics of our own! We have a lot to share about the importance of a strong start through early intervention and developmentally appropriate preschool experiences. And we have just as much to learn.

I hope there’s a waterfront in the Nevada desert!!

The American Conference on Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment (ACPCVI) 2016

by Rebecca Davis, VIPs-Indiana Development Director

On July 8-9, 2016, the 5th annual American Conference on Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment (ACPCVI) took place at the Omaha Marriott in Nebraska. In 2012, Dr. Richard Legge, a Pediatric Neuro-Ophthalmologist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, convinced his hospital’s foundation to sponsor the first CVI conference, citing a pressing need to raise awareness about the #1 pediatric visual impairment in the western world. Five years later, the ACPCVI continues to bring together professionals from the fields of medicine, therapy, and education, as well as parents, to increase interdisciplinary understanding of CVI in children.

The conference is steadily growing into a movement and a catalyst for changes in the treatment and education of children with CVI.

This year’s conference welcomed presenters from many states in America and international presenters from India and Scotland. Several presentations offered a great deal of information for both parents of newly diagnosed children and parents of school age children with CVI. Dr. Christine Roman-Lantzy presented “The Implications of CVI on Social Skill Inclusion” with information from her forthcoming second book. Dr. Sandra Newcomb from Maryland presented on “How to Access the Common Core with CVI Students”. Dr. Tanni Anthony from Colorado presented

“Orientation & Mobility for Young Children in the Preschool-Kindergarten Years”.

This year’s ACPCVI included more parent involvement than earlier years. Parents from New York to Texas and many states in between came to Omaha to meet other parents and learn how to help their children. There was a problem solving and advocacy forum for parents led by Alisha and Cullen Waugh, parents of a CVI child from Ohio. Anna Ault, her daughter Olivia and family have been key fundraisers for this conference. If you are on Facebook, check out “Olivia’s Pediatric CVI Society Fundraising Page” to donate, or to get ideas about how your family can help keep the momentum going for raising awareness about CVI.

This year’s conference unveiled the Pediatric CVI Society, a membership group of families, medical professionals, therapists, and teachers who want to improve educational outcomes for children with CVI. The Pediatric CVI Society needs members! By joining, you can become a force to advocate and to raise awareness. To learn more, go to <http://www.pediatriccvisociety.org/>.

Next year’s ACPCVI will be held in June 2017 in Omaha, Nebraska. For more information, contact Sara Olsen at info@pediatricCVIsociety.org or solsen@ChildrensOmaha.org.

Hope to see you there! **CVI parents, let’s build this momentum!**

Expanded Core Curriculum, Pt. 10: Assistive Technology

by Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist, VIPs-Louisville



The area of assistive technology is one of the fastest changing areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum. We have indeed come a long way from my early years as a teacher of the visually impaired in the early ‘70s when, because we had no other options, we hand copied daily class work in large letters using fine-line black markers, a task that was not particularly time-

Above: Trenton uses a light table as he builds using translucent blocks with magnets that helps him stack them-- examples of assistive technology in the preschool classroom.

efficient and sometimes also ineffective due to time delays in obtaining the original. I remember how thrilled (and relieved) I was when the copy machines in every school could produce enlarged photocopies of each teacher's daily worksheets. Fast forward forty years, and today's technological advances are too marvelous for words!

We are fortunate that VIPS classrooms are well stocked with equipment, tools and devices of varying sophistication and uses, from simple to more complex. We have hand-held magnifiers for examining interesting objects close up. When greater magnification is needed or the object might be difficult to touch (such as a dead wasp or a small animal skull-neither of which would allow for involved tactile exploration), VIPS children use a closed circuit TV to get a clear look at the object. They might choose favorite books, animal replicas from the science center or even an object retrieved from the sensory table to place under the camera.

VIPS teachers have used Smart Boards for circle time for several years but now the children use an iPad to get a close-up view of what appears on the white board rather than moving closer to it. The join.me app allows the teacher to "synch" the children's iPad displays to what she puts on the Smart Board.

Our preschoolers enjoy "reading" stories and practicing the alphabet on computers with touch screens while some technologically savvy children are beginning to use the mouse! There are increasing numbers of computer programs of interest to young children that actually teach or reinforce valuable skills and concepts. Motivating programs enable the children to learn how to use the computer to accomplish even more tasks!

Individual differences can be addressed when VIPS preschoolers learn how to write the Braille they are learning to identify. We have available a variety of braille writers with differing levels of touch, a key factor for little hands to gain strength and independent finger movement. Some braille writers even have auditory feedback to the delight of some children and the dismay of others. The prototypical mechanical Perkins braille writer, used for years by braille readers of all ages, is now available with enlarged braille cells, powered by electricity or with computer capabilities.

A recent young visitor to VIPS demonstrated his invention - a temperature sensing cane that can warn the user that there may be ice underfoot! While his model is still a prototype, it does seem possible that there could be a commercial model available some day. There are already electronic travel sensors used by blind and visually impaired travelers but these typically require more advanced orientation and mobility skills than our preschoolers have.

Using the tools needed to adapt the visual environment to the individual learner means a lot of extra learning for the children at VIPS or for that matter, in the schools they attend as they grow

in skills and years. Their teachers have to learn how to use the devices and tools as well for they frequently have to troubleshoot problems the child may encounter with the equipment as well as oversee daily usage. Making certain there is adequate time to train both students and teachers can become increasingly difficult as the students age and tackle increasingly more sophisticated tools.

This article has highlighted only a few of the many marvelous new tools and devices available to people with visual limitations. It is mind-boggling to think of the many wonderful tools now available to bridge the gap between sighted and non-sighted tasks. A recent email discussed the use of a 3-D printer to produce objects previously difficult for most blind and visually impaired people to access.

It seems the technological world is rapidly expanding in ways that can only make it easier for blind and visually impaired students to grow and progress!

The Negative Effects of Fluorescent Lighting

A recent Facebook story written by Grant Hermes of *Oklahoma's Own News 9* described some of the varied health issues created by fluorescent lights. One study by the National Institutes for Health found that a 12 percent increase in eye diseases was linked to prolonged exposure to fluorescent lights. The flickering of fluorescent lights could also cause eye strain and fatigue according to a study by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

Hermes quoted Oklahoma City special education teacher Mary Preston, of Ridgeview Elementary, who stated that fluorescent light exposure can also produce symptoms that cause behavioral difficulties for children with autism and other sensory disorders. Some children were distracted by the noise the lights make while others had difficulty focusing on tasks, had poor behavior or complained of headaches due to their exposure to the light. The Foundation for Oklahoma Public Schools received a \$120,000 donation that in part, funded magnetic light covers for four classrooms, including Ms. Preston's. A darker tint produced by the light covers helped cut down the harshness of the lights and Ms. Preston was already noting big differences.

(Editor's note: In the original renovations to the VIPS building, "egg crate" covers were added to each fluorescent light to cut down the negative effects. This was done based on recommendations from Elaine Kitchel of the American Printing House for the Blind who researched the negative effects

of fluorescent lights and blue lights in particular. For more information, read her article on the Texas School for the Blind's website, tsbvi.edu, Articles on VI, Resources, The Effects of Blue Light on Ocular Health.)

Get a Jump on Holiday Shopping: Toy Favorite & Gift Ideas from VIPS Staff

Annie Hughes, TVI/Director, VIPS-Indiana

"Sibling Santa Surprises"

When the holidays arrive excitement is in the air. It's a very special time of year for family and friends. Though children do love to receive gifts, parents love to teach their children about giving. A perfect opportunity is for children to buy or make something special for their very young brother or sister with blindness or low vision. It doesn't need to be expensive to be fun, so here are some ideas for things to consider using your local dollar store (for instance *Dollar Tree*™, *Dollar General*™, *Family Dollar Store*™).

Using a package of 2-3 pairs of socks from the dollar store, parents can help a big brother or sister to make "sensory socks." Fill each sock with something different, and tie a knot at the top of the sock, or if a sewing machine is available, sew it closed. Ideas for what to put inside include; things that feel good to squish or hold when inside the sock (such as dry beans or dry rice), things that make sounds (such as jingle bells or crinkly paper), things that smell good (such as scented candles or potpourri), and things that have different weights (such as heavy river stones vs. light cotton balls). All of the objects are encased within each different sock, so this can be a surprise for any young child and fun for big brother or sister to make.

Another toy for a big brother or sister to make for a baby brother or sister is a "sensory hula hoop." After purchasing the hula hoop, a variety of textures and objects that are fun to explore are attached all the way around the hula hoop. Ideas include: fuzzy balls, scratchy netting, a loop of buttons strung on strong fishing line,



different kinds of yarn and textures of fabric wrapped around the hula hoop, little toys/shapes/objects tied to the hoop, shower scrubbers, decorative ball trim from the fabric store, jingle bells strung with fishing line or zip-tied to the hoop, etc. It will be fun to put the hoop on the floor, put the baby in the middle, and see what is interesting to those little hands and feet.

There are lots of items at the dollar store that are great for bath-time and water play. For \$1, a big brother or sister could buy a colander that will "make rain" in the bathtub. Items that squirt include; a small plastic squirt bottle, bright red and yellow ketchup and mustard dispensers that are easy to see...especially for children with CVI, or a classic turkey baster. There are also plenty of bright red and yellow plastic nesting bowls or cups from which to choose. Just pull up your nice bath rug and put a large beach towel on the bathroom floor in case there is a high tide.

Jumbo Bell Balls™ are the perfect size for little hands, they also make a great sound and are really fun to play with in lots of different ways. They can be hung from a play frame, used for container play (in and out of a metal bowl or coffee can,) or rolled back and forth in cooperative play with a sibling. Because there are lots of bells inside, even if a child has no vision, he or she can hear where the ball is rolling.



If lights are enticing due to very low vision, big brother or sister could buy a *Push Light*™, an *LED Animal Push Light*™, or a little flash light. If little brother or sister has low vision and is beginning to want to make marks to "write," a dry erase board and high contrast wipe-off markers would be perfect, and all available for just a dollar!

Young children with blindness or low vision are frequently and understandably given lots of things. But they also need to learn about feeling the joy of giving and that "it is much better to give than to receive." As that little child with blindness or low vision grows, he or she, just like older siblings, also needs opportunities to select and purchase or to make gifts for siblings and other family members.

Lesley Lusher, DI/Little Learners Teacher, VIPS-Central KY

I want to recommend two great toys. *The Baffat Sound Puzzle Box*™ is a great one for working on cause and effect. There are three different shapes. When the correct shape is placed into the puzzle, a unique sound is made as it falls into the tube. Children can also work on matching the colors. It is available on Amazon for around \$20.

Munchkin Mozart Magic Cube™ is a great toy if you have a child who loves listening to different instruments. By pushing the large buttons, you can listen to one instrument at a time or experiment by combining instruments. Adults can even appreciate the musical sounds of this toy! There are variations of this toy on Amazon, ranging in price from under \$20 to over \$50.



Mozart Cube (left) and Sound Puzzle (right).

Pam Mattox, MS, IECE, VIPS Contractor, DI for Gateway and Buffalo Trace Regions

I would like to share with you about my favorite toy, *Pop Tubes™*! Many areas of development can be supported with these simple plastic tubes! I love that Pop Tubes are inexpensive (\$11.00 for a pack of 6 on Amazon), do not require batteries and are easy to pack and store. The learning activities families and teachers can do with these tubes are endless!



To support imaginative pretend play skills, the tubes can be used as telephones, elephant trunks, hats, cowboy lassos, pirate telescopes and countless other props. To support cognitive skills, the tubes can be used for measurement (they quickly change size), size comparison, color recognition, and matching. To support motor skills, children can jump in and out of hoops made from the tubes. Small hands can work to connect and disconnect them. The tubes can be connected into a circle and tossed like a Frisbee. Little fingers can work hard to place small items such as jingle bells inside the tubes before connecting them to provide cool sounds when they are shaken. When the tubes are stretched out and swung through the air, they make a loud “whooping” sound.

Even the youngest kiddos enjoy running their hands along the ridges of the tubes for lots of tactile stimulation. To support social-emotional skills, families and teachers can encourage children to whisper secrets to each other through the tubes. The tubes can be tossed back and forth for a simple game. Children can work together and build fun creations when they have several tubes to connect and loop together. And of course, children love talking and making sounds with their mouth to support their communication skills. The tubes amplify their voices and often encourage vocalizations.

As an early intervention teacher, I use these tubes frequently with children and love watching families participate in many

giggle-inducing activities with the tubes. Pop tubes can be found online and sometimes in retail stores. Pop tubes are great tools for supporting children’s development and for having fun!

Paige Maynard, TVI/DI/Preschool Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

“A Christmas Thank you letter from your baby”

December 26, 2016

Dear Family,

I had so much fun on Christmas morning eating Santa’s leftover cookies and finding gifts under the tree! I just wanted to say thank you for some of my favorites!

Thank you so much for my Ruff’s House Teaching Tactile Set™ * (\$20.99, available at https://www.amazon.com/Learning-Resources-Ruffs-Teaching-Tactile/dp/B004DJ1EH2/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1467142420&sr=8-1&keywords=texture+dog+house+toy). I love playing with the small dog house



and textured dog bones. They help me learn to use my hands to learn about textures.

Do you want to play a game with me where we try to find two textures that are the same? Or maybe we could let the plush puppy that lives in the doghouse pretend to eat the bumpy bone! I bet my baby sister would have fun taking all the bones out and then putting them back in! Thanks, family!

I’m so happy you put the Helping Hands Fine Motor Tool Set™ (\$8.81, available at https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00I0CEAZG/ref=s9_simh_gw_g21_i2_r?ie=UTF8&fpl=fresh&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=desktop-1&pf_rd_r=SJCRKE0WHQ0D6QGQ2XJK&pf_rd_t=36701&pf_rd_p=6aad23bd-3035-4a40-b691-0eefb1a18396&pf_rd_i=desktop) in my stocking. When can I play with the handy scooper, gator grabber tweezers, squeeze tweezers, and the twisty dropper? It will be so much fun to try to pick up small things with them! The way the handy scooper works reminds me of scissors! I liked it when we used the gator grabber tweezers to clean up the gift wrapping trash off the floor – Can you tell I’m getting really good at using my hands? Do you think using the Fine Motor Tool Set will help me do a good job at using other tools like scissors, markers, or a braille stylus?



I love my Wingbo Swing™ (\$239.99, available at <http://www.wingbousa.com/buywingbo.html>), appropriate for children ages 6

weeks to 6 years)! I used to be afraid of being on my tummy, and sometimes it made me really tired since my body had to work so hard. Now I love swinging on my tummy! I like how I can raise up my head if I want to, and prop myself up on my elbows. Look at me swing with no help when I push with my feet! Rocking myself in my Wingbo helps me learn where my body is in space. This swing has made me so strong and brave, maybe I will try crawling and walking all by myself now!



Thank you so much family for a perfect Christmas! I loved all my gifts, but my very favorite part was spending time with you!

XOXO,

Your Gingerbread Baby

**Special thanks to Cierra Brettnacher for connecting us at VIPS to the Ruff's House Teaching Tactile Set™. It's such an awesome tool that it now has shelf space in Kids Town Preschool!*

Staci Maynard, TVI/DI/Preschool Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

10 Gifts Your Child May Want for the Holidays

It's hard to believe that it's that time again: time to wonder if you can put off holiday shopping a little bit longer. Whether or not you are a procrastinator, here are a few gift ideas that have been popular with the students with whom I have worked over the past year. Maybe something will catch your eye to please the special child in your life.

As always, I am a strong advocate for giving books as gifts. My students were really into books that made sounds this year. The two favorites were *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* by Bill Martin Jr. (\$14.95 retail price) and *Sesame Street's Listen & Learn: In Your Neighborhood* by Erin Rose Grobarek (around \$17 on Amazon). One of the best parts about sound books is that the American Printing House for the Blind's *Point Symbols Feel 'n Peel Stickers*™ (\$24 for 1,200 stickers available from aph.org) can be used on the sound pictures and the matching pictures on the book pages to help children work on tactile matching. Ask your child's teacher or developmental interventionist if he or she can give you more details or help with this process if you need it.

The website www.seedlings.org has some great economical braille books. One of my favorites is *I Like It When...* by Mary Murphy (\$7). This book has bold print and pictures in black, white, red, and yellow; the text is also really sweet. Seedlings has also restocked the excellent book *The SENSEsational Alphabet*

(\$20). This book helps children explore each letter of the alphabet through sound, touch, smell, print, braille, and sign language.

If you are interested in a do-it-yourself project, create a story box to go with any classic children's book. Read through the book and think about what objects, textures, sound effects, and even tastes may best represent what happens in the story. Store these items along with the book in a container such as a small plastic tote or a basket. Your child can enhance her or his literacy and concept development skills while exploring these objects along with the story. Again a VIPS teacher or DI may be able to help with ideas if you need a helping hand.

I've already taken up a good amount of time and space talking about books, so I will only offer a few toy ideas for you to consider this year. The *Lamaze Octotunes*™ (approximately \$32) is an adorable, brightly colored octopus with multiple textures to explore. Each leg plays a different note when squeezed.



The *Baby Einstein Baby Neptune Ocean Orchestra*™ musical toy (\$19.99 retail price) draws a child's attention with sound and colored light-up panels.



While learning cause and effect, your child can activate individual buttons to hear isolated instruments or listen to all of the instruments play a tune together.

For preschool children, toy cash registers, such as *Learning Resources Pretend & Play Calculator Cash Register*™ (\$25-\$40) can be great for building pretend play and math skills, especially if braille stickers are placed on the numbers and symbols. For children with more developed fine motor skills, transparent colored magnetic building tiles (\$20 and up) can be a great way to work on shapes and creativity. These are an especially cool toy if you have a light box, since the light will shine through the tiles. Finally, for some sensory fun, try kinetic sand (\$8 and up), which comes in a variety of colors and play sets. The metallic or bright colors may be easier to see, and the texture is less messy and easier to mold than traditional sand. Try hiding objects for your child to find in a box of kinetic sand.



With these suggestions and those of my colleagues, I hope you are able to locate a gift that your child finds meaningful and enjoyable, a toy, book, or tool that provides a new experience or enhances an old one. Since this is my only article in this newsletter, I want to take a moment to thank you for the gift of your children and for your advocacy to help them become their best. Have a blessed holiday season!

Juanita Miles, IECE/Two's Teacher, VIPS-Louisville

Fun with Playdough

Did you know that *Play-Doh*™ started out as a wall paper cleaning compound? Did you know that it was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame in 1998? The National Toy Hall of Fame recognizes toys that allow creativity and have sustained popularity over time. While *Play-Doh*™ can be purchased at most retail outlets, I prefer the home made version. When making homemade playdough, one can add various extracts (almond, lemon, peppermint etc.) to give it a scent or you can add texture by adding some sand to it. If stored properly the homemade version seems to last longer than store-bought playdough. Either way, store bought or homemade, playdough makes a nice gift for children. Playdough allows children to be creative while also strengthening the hands and fingers.

I have had success with the following recipe.

Ingredients:

1 cup flour	1 cup water
½ cup salt	1 tablespoon oil
2 teaspoons cream of tartar	food coloring

Mix all of the ingredients in a large saucepan. Cook over medium heat stirring intermittently, until the dough comes away from the edges of the pan, becoming so thick that it is difficult to move the spoon. Remove from heat. Let the dough cool until it can be handled. Turn dough out on a counter or wax paper and knead 3-4 times. Store in air tight container.

Giving suggestion: You might also think about adding some cookie cutters to your gift for more fun.

Dixie Miller, IECE, TVI, VIPS Central KY

One tool that I use often when working with our preschoolers and toddlers who are visually impaired are picture flashcards. Flashcards of real objects are a great way to work on picture identification before introducing picture identification in books. There are several great flashcard products out there or use photos of the child's favorite toys, objects, people, and activities. Start out by holding up two cards in front of the child and work on picture recognition by saying, "Get the ____." As the child starts recognizing the pictures make it more difficult by adding a third picture or by putting pictures together that are very similar (such as pictures of a cat and a dog or a red ball and a fire truck).

See also Notes of Interest (page 7) for the American Foundation for the Blind's FamilyConnect links to listings and blogs about gifts appropriate for children who are blind and visually impaired.

Hand Over Hand? Or Hand Under Hand?

by Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist, Newsletter Editor

You may never have thought about these instructional strategies, let alone which one is preferable for your child with visual impairments but amazingly, there are some considerations you may wish to address.

Back in graduate school, I learned about using the hand over hand technique. I would place my hands over the top of the child's hands so the child would be touching the materials. Then my hands would guide her to actually perform the activity. This strategy worked –most of the time- but occasionally, a specific student or specific task might not turn out as I had intended. I don't recall ever analyzing why that might be the case.

A recent request from one of the preschool teachers (Thanks, Ms. Paige!) for information about hand under hand caused me to search online. I found a well-written article in the American Foundation for the Blind website, *Hand Over Hand and Hand Under Hand* that pointed out the subtle differences in my learned technique. Could it be that giving the child more control by allowing her to place her hands on top of mine while I complete the activity would result in a higher success rate than I previously achieved? I don't have a conclusive answer, but it makes sense to me.

A plus of the hand under hand strategy might be to give a reluctant child more of a secure touch since I'd be touching the "foreign" materials. She could pull her hands away any time she chose rather than feeling "forced" to touch something new that might be unsettling. She might be able to feel more clearly exactly what my hands were doing. Either way, her level of comfort might increase and allow for more successful completion of the task-benefits I never considered!

Intrigued? I certainly was. Visit the AFB website (<http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/professional-development/experts-guide/hand-under-hand-and-hand-over-hand/1235>) for the full article. I also checked the National Federation of the Blind to see what they were saying about hand over/under teaching. Check out: <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr19/Issue1/f190106.htm> and <https://nfb.org/Images/nfb/publications/fr/fr34/1/fr340101.htm> "Talking the Language of the Hands to the Hands" in the National Center on Deaf-Blindness's website (nationaldb.org). I am certain there are probably many more helpful articles but these made me a believer! The consensus appeared to be that hand under hand could be a much more successful technique for children with blindness or visual impairments than hand over hand ever was!

VIPS Staff News

Meet Carla Vied

We would like to introduce Carla Vied to our VIPS family. Carla began serving as the VIPS developmental interventionist (DI) for western Kentucky and southwest Indiana during the summer. She has a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education/Special Education (IECE) from Murray State University. Her background includes six years as a public school preschool teacher, a childcare center director for one year, a children's ministry director for eight and a half years and 30 years as a preschool and children's consultant.



She and her husband, Steve, have three children and four grandchildren. Carla enjoys creating activities for children, making baskets, sewing, reading and spending time with her family. She is very excited to be with VIPS and serving young children and their families during the crucial first years of life.

So Long, Gretchen Cutrer (Ms. Gretch)

We are so terribly sad to say adieu to "Ms. Gretch," the teacher assistant assigned to VIPS-Louisville Kids Town Preschool by JCPS. Gretchen has been a fixture in the preschool classrooms for several years now and her innate understanding of young children and her gentle, loving ways have endeared her to staff and children alike! She and her husband, Ken, are relocating to Tennessee and that state's gain is truly our loss. We will miss you but wish you well in all you do!



Gretchen Cutrer (center) with Brittany Clarkson and daughter Addy.

Welcome Aboard Brittany Clarkson

Brittany Clarkson's face is well known at VIPS-Louisville as the mother of recent graduate Addy. A Shepherdsville native and current resident, Brittany has a communications degree from Bellarmine University and has previously worked as a paralegal. In her new role at VIPS, she will be researching and identifying potential funding sources, adding extra assistance to VIPS development staff.

Brittany and husband, Nathan, have a new baby girl, Kennedy. Currently, Brittany is pursuing her real estate license. She and Nathan enjoy running and family activities, which do seem to

fit together! We are very pleased to welcome Brittany to the VIPS staff and look forward to her keeping us abreast of Addy's progress at the Kentucky School for the Blind and at Brooks Elementary School in Bullitt County.

Say Hello to Ria Baker

We are pleased to welcome Almaria (Ria) Baker to VIPS where she will be a developmental interventionist (DI), taking the position vacated by Ashley Penn. A native of Cadiz, KY, Ria now lives in Louisville where she is a single mother to Audrey, age 11, a student at Jefferson County Traditional Middle School.



Ria has over 20 years of experience working in the field of Early Childhood Education as a child care worker, child care director/owner, state child care licensing regulator/representative, teacher (early childhood, preschool, Head Start, kindergarten and preschool SPED resource), state early childhood trainer/consultant, developmental interventionist, and adjunct professor. She holds a BS in Sociology, M.Ed. in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education, Ed.S. in Leadership and Ed.D. in Administration (Early Childhood).

Ria says, "I have enjoyed working with and serving as a valuable resource to children and families of diverse backgrounds. I look forward to working with all the children, families and colleagues of VIPS!"

Welcome Juanita Miles!

We say a hearty welcome to Juanita Miles, who originally came to VIPS as a volunteer. However when the position of Twos Class teacher came open, Juanita was a logical choice, given her extensive background in early education.



Juanita received a Beacon award, presented by Kathy Mullen, for her volunteer work at VIPS

Juanita has a BA in Sociology and Masters in Early Childhood Education. She worked as a teacher at Family & Children's Place, eventually becoming program coordinator, then program director, and finally lead teacher. After 23 years, she left to work as a consultant and Head Start teacher with JCPS.

A lifelong resident of Louisville, Juanita is married with a 20-year old son. She is active in her church, and enjoys the outdoors, cooking, getting together with friends, and weekend visits to her parents' farm in Meade County.

It's the Annual Stampede for VIPS!!



This year, the Annual Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS will take place on October 15, which happens to be White Cane Day. So in observance of this special occasion, we have added a few, fun features to the Stampede. In addition to the 5K course for runners and walkers, there will be a shorter course that will have White Canes posted which will also be Trick-or-Treating stations for children and adults alike!

There are so many fun things about the Stampede for VIPS families. They can put together teams of family and friends and compete with other families to claim the prize for the largest group of supporters. We welcome VIPS kids who have graduated and their families to participate as well. It is a great way to get some exercise while enjoying the company of old friends.

And alumni over the age of 18 can compete for prize money that is awarded to the three fastest visually impaired runners in the Men's and Women's division. VIPS grads have won these prizes in the past! There are also prizes for sighted runners in all age divisions.

Festivities include a DJ, photo booth, face painting, a balloon artist and games for kids.

The Stampede is held at the Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn Soccer Stadium on Floyd Street. Registration begins at 6:30 a.m. The Stampede begins at 8 a.m., with the Kids' Fun Run taking place at 9:30 a.m. Registration for children is \$5; \$35 for adults. All paid participants receive a Stampede T-shirt.



The Schurr Family last year



Team Addy was well over 50 supporters!

Wonderful Gifts of Time from Special People

Thanks to Our Volunteers!

VIPS-Louisville

Help Around Kids Town Preschool

Kids Town Preschool expresses our gratitude to *Boys and Girls Haven* for allowing us to explore their barn and letting us get to know their horses and pig during our April field trip there.

We are also grateful to *Subway*, our next door neighbor, for allowing us to explore their facility and practice ordering and paying for our own food in April and May. We would also like to thank *Kosair Charities* for allowing us to use their lovely ballroom for graduation.

Classroom volunteers are most especially appreciated, particularly when they bring excellent professional skills with them. The ever faithful *Fran Woodward* continues to help weekly with the Two Day Twos. She was joined this spring by *Juanita Miles*, who demonstrated such skills that we hired her to teach the Twos! *Deanna Scoggins* continues to be a regular volunteer teaching braille skills. Thanks so much to these wonderful ladies!

Friday Friends sets the scene for an unusual situation since we never really know how many children will attend. We rely on volunteers to help meet the needs of the children attending and in some cases, to actually provide entertainment or activities for the children to enjoy. Our gratitude to the volunteers who helped "man" the Friday Friends: *Skyler Downs, Ainsley Duncan and Shiann Miller from Assumption High; Sarah Cecil of Ballard High; Jon Daniels from Barret Traditional Middle School; William Cecil from Crosby Middle School; Ryan O'Shea of DeSales High School; Ally Doctrow of DuPont Manual High School; Michael Daniels from Louisville Male High School; Alexis Cammack and Ava Rowan from Presentation Academy; Lauren Garrett of Sacred Heart Academy; Julia Elder, Eliza Gallagher and Madison Hardwick from St. Francis of Assisi; Savanna Shaw from St. Gabriel; Sam Boarman, Jude Canlon, Zack Graas, Ryan Hack, Justin Hamilton, Patrick Herp and Adam Prys, all from St. Xavier; Brian Parks from Seneca High School; and Josh Dobson from Trinity High School.* Thanks to all of you who gave up some of your summer vacation to help VIPS!

Help Caring for Our Grounds

A great group from the Louisville Association of Realtors volunteered to prepare and plant the Sensory Garden in the spring. We are grateful to *Rebecca Smith from Berkshire Hathaway; Jamie Roth from Century 21; Karen Bhatt, Shelby Freeman, Nicole Raymond, Bennett Reynolds and Brittany Reynolds, all from Keller Williams; Kelly Hammens and Laura Johnston from the Skelton Company; and of course, long-time VIPS Board member and volunteer Lester Sanders.*

We were delighted as always to have volunteers from *Middletown Christian Church* share their time and incredible energy re-mulching our beds and re-doing our landscaping. We greatly appreciate the hard work of *Tomara Brown, Jennifer Coffey, Madison Coffey, Amy Hall, Max Hall, Tim Hall, VIPS graduate Abby Hitzelberger, VIPS graduate Alex Hitzelberger, VIPS mom and former staffer Brandi Hitzelberger, Linda McCarty, Jennifer Pack, Taylor Pack, Harrison Rodgers, Hallie Rodman, Kelli Rodman, Jackson Rodman and Mike Rodman along with the Sisters in Christ Women's Group.*

Help With Fundraisers

As always, large fundraisers like the Yum! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament require the energies of many more people than just the small VIPS staff. We were so blessed to have a willing band of helpers to perform sometimes not so glamorous tasks. We owe our gratitude to *Morgan Fasteen and Christina Stone from ARGI; Paresh Gupta from Kumar Eye Doctors; Larry Birchler from UPS; Kensie Bovinet, Monty Mehra, Laura Perkins and Joyce Walker from Yum! Brands; and Diane George from Zurich. Special thanks to "Colonel Sanders", Raymond Frye, for his willingness to share his image in many of the photos of the day! A heartfelt thanks to all!*

One of the most incredible things about working at VIPS is the sheer dedication of the staff members to support every type of activity, whether it applies to their job or not, because we recognize in the end, it all applies to our mission. This holds true especially for our large fund raisers. *VIPS staff members and their family members volunteering at the golf tournament included Deepti Advani, Ashley May, Gretchen Cutrer, Ken Cutrer, Beth Krebs and Mary Smyth. Those helping at the Tennis Ball were Deepti Advani, VIPS mom Missy Browning, Jon Daniels, LaRhonda Daniels, Michael Daniels, Ashley Emmons, Greta Gillmeister, Beth Krebs, Jack Krebs, Mary Lesousky, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Jan Moseley and Beth Owens.*

We had a great group of volunteers for the WHAS Crusade for Children cookout, including *Board members Terri Connolly, Joe Donohue, Mike Johnson, and Mark Stiebling, as well as Aggie Nelson and Ryan Hack, family members of VIPS staff, and St. Francis of Assisi students Julia Elder and Madison Hardwick.* We appreciate their time and energy!

Help Around the Office

We enjoy the assistance of many elementary, middle and high school students, a number of whom volunteer to fulfill requirements at their schools. We are delighted to have these young folks help out! Summer is the time when we benefit the most for student volunteers.

Providing office help were *Bailey Doctrow from DuPont Manual High School and Alyssa Shippey of Atherton High.* Thank you for your time.

Thanks to *Donna Dangler, and daughters Lily and Lucy,* for fulfilling so very many different volunteer needs, including office help, making items for preschool, and working in the library. Thanks also to *Mary Bayes of Presentation Academy* for her work in the library!

VIPS-Indiana

We owe our gratitude to the ladies of the Indianapolis *Alumnae of Delta Gamma* for volunteering to help out with our Play and Learn (PAL).

VIPS-Central KY

The Little Learner's Enrichment program and the Summer Sensations Camp could not have been so successful without the assistance of many volunteers. We couldn't have done it without you!! VIPS would like to thank each and every one of our great volunteers for taking time out of their day to devote to our children: *Riley Anderson-Lusher, Eddy Andrade, Ashley Bias, Elizabeth Edelman, Clay Ferguson, Keriann Ferguson, Lucy Harding, Christina Pistilli, J.T. Salyer, Matthew Salyer, Mady Wiley, and Eric Wiley. Thanks also to the Altrusa Club, Dr. Paschal Baute, Tracy from Bricks4kidz, Lexington Fire Department, Lexington Living Arts and Science Center and Rosie's Ponies Petting Zoo.*

Many thanks to *Scott & Jenifer Duncan, and Lesley Lusher* for volunteering on behalf of VIPS at the Children's Charity Golf Classic June 25th.

Thank you to *Nancy Reed* for helping with administrative tasks. Her assistance was greatly needed and appreciated.

When your vision is big enough and your commitment to serving others is strong enough, there are no obstacles to manifesting what is needed to fulfill all your dreams. Your service to the universe is so important that when you are completely clear and determined to make an impact, miracles will happen that are beyond your wildest imagination. -- Ted Murray

Spreading Awareness and Development Activities

VIPS-Central KY

Golfing for a Cause!

VIPS-Central KY hosted its **13th Annual Golf Outing** at Keene Trace Golf Club on May 10th. The threat of severe thunderstorms loomed over the course, but the golfers played on reaching their goal of 18 holes. At the very end of the event, the sky could not contain itself any longer. The wind and rain whipped around the patio causing chaos as golfers were trying to check out. Earlier in the day, however, when the sun was shining and the clouds were smiling the children from the Little Learner's program joined the golfers at the clubhouse. The children participated in a few activities, ate lunch, and even putted on the green with Scott Duncan, Advisory Board President. *Special thanks to the sponsors: The Lexington Clinic Foundation and Window World. VIPS would also like to express much gratitude to Scott Duncan and George Hocker for their hard work in helping to make this event successful for the children and families of VIPS.*



Top: Blake got a golf lesson from dad Chris. Middle: Teacher Leslie Lusher showed Harper around the venue. Bottom: Rory got a driving lesson.

VIPS-Central KY was also involved in the **Children's Charity Golf Classic** on June 25th. Children's Charity Fund of the Bluegrass raised \$567,000 from their Golf Classic, and will disburse the funds to 30 charities that provide services to children, including VIPS. We are grateful to the dedication and commitment of the Children's Charity to raise funds for children in the Commonwealth.

VIPS-Indiana

Walking for Dreams

On May 22, VIPS-Indiana participated for the third straight year in **Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk**, an Indianapolis event sponsored by the Sycamore Foundation. Because of the dedication of our supporters, we were able to raise over \$22,000

which makes this year's Walking for Dreams VIPS-Indiana's largest fundraiser ever!

It was a picture perfect spring day for the walk that took place along the canal in downtown Indianapolis. VIPS joined 24 other area nonprofits all trying to raise awareness and critical funds to support each agency's mission. Many of the VIPS families we serve and local service organizations like the **Washington Township Lions Club and the Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma** all raised money and walked on our behalf. They were joined by many committed friends of VIPS-Indiana.



Washington Townships Lions showed their support.

For the very first time, VIPS-Indiana received the award for Most Sponsor Funds Raised! We owe a special thank you to our **Walking for Dreams sponsors** for helping us make this event a true success for the families we serve: **Eric Bruun, Delta Gamma – Theta Chapter at Indiana University, Diversified Mail Services, The Goddard School (City Center), Gordon Holmes of MetLife Center for Special Needs Planning, Indiana Pediatric Ophthalmology, Midwest Orthotic and Technology Center, and Ossip Optometry & Ophthalmology.**

We'd also like to thank our **in kind sponsors** who donated items for our exclusive VIPS raffle: **Ambre Blends Oil, Conner Prairie, Crackers Comedy Club, Hollyhock Hill, Indianapolis Colts, Just Pop In, and Shedd Aquarium.**



VIPS dad Ryan holds Preston, who was tucked out.

And a big thank you to **Papa John's** for donating pizza for our walkers to enjoy after the event was over!



The whole VIPS-IN Group

IndyVolved

On June 9, VIPS-Indiana joined 100 other area nonprofits at the Central Library in downtown Indianapolis to participate in IndyVolved. IndyVolved is a community event hosted by IndyHub which is a platform for 20-/30-somethings to plug in and become involved within causes around Indianapolis. IndyVolved was a great opportunity for VIPS-Indiana to promote our cause,

recruit new board members, find volunteers, and collaborate with other organizations and agencies. We were excited to be a part of it and we hope to participate next year as well.

Hughes, VIPS-IN Director and Asst. Director Meredith Howell spread the good word about VIPS at IndyVolved.



VIPS-Indiana Co-Hosts Special Training

On May 17, VIPS Indiana helped sponsor a wonderful training called **“Supporting Infants and Toddlers with Multiple Disabilities, Including Combined Vision and Hearing Loss,”** organized by Indiana Deaf-Blind Services. The presenter, Barbara Purvis, M.Ed., discussed understanding sensory loss, the impact of sensory loss on learning, and strategies for successful intervention. First Steps service coordinators and providers, special educators from local schools, and, of course, VIPS-Indiana interventionists, all benefited from the specialized information and it will be used to provide best practice early intervention to the children we serve here in Indiana.

VIPS-Louisville

Yum! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament

For the 28th year in a row, VIPS-Louisville held its annual golf tournament on May 16th at the prestigious Persimmon Ridge Golf Club. This year’s slate of competitors, 25 teams in all, spent a sunny, warm afternoon on the golf course for a day of friendly competition. Along the way, they encountered some fun (and challenging) contests, including the “Chris P. Chicken” hole – which stems back to the days when KFC was the founding sponsor of this event. Players even got the chance to take a



Top left: Board Members Scott Duncan and Nathan Holladay head toward the greens. Top right: Pyper seems to think she can do better if she drops in the ball. Right: Colonel Sanders greets children as they lunch with the golfers.



picture with “Colonel Sanders” himself! Golfers wrapped up their day with a taco bar and ball toss contest from the balcony of the clubhouse. ***Congratulations to the day’s overall champion team, Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates! And, of course, thank you Yum! Brands, including co-chairs Andy Steinbach and Debbie Baldwin, for helping to raise \$51,409 for VIPS!***

5th Annual Tennis Extravaganza!

It’s hard to believe that this was our fifth year of holding our weekend-long tennis extravaganza at the Louisville Boat Club (LBC)! On May 21st, we started with the **Tennis Ball, presented by Brown-Forman**, which brought guests together for an elegant evening of dinner, auctions and live music. *VIPS parents Matt and Sarah Vanderpool* spoke to the crowd about their daughter, Evie, born in Ethiopia, and the impact that VIPS has made in each of their lives. VIPS founder, *Sharon Bensinger*, then eloquently spoke about what ignited her passion to the cause back in the mid-80s when VIPS was created and that has carried into 2016. Bidder cards flew as the auctioneer held a live auction, followed by a request for financial gifts to the Fund-A-Vision Program, for which guests were very generous again this year.



Board Member Glen Stuckel and wife Joy posed for a photo on their way into the Tennis Ball.

The following day, doubles teams competed in the **Tennis Tournament** at the LBC and with overflow into the Louisville Country Club, which VIPS began using a few years ago when the tournament grew to 40 teams.

In just two days, the Tennis Ball & Tournament raised a record \$140,810 for VIPS!

Special thanks to our *Presenting Sponsor, Brown Forman*, and to the following supporting sponsors: *Aguiar Law; Bardenwerper, Talbott & Roberts; Bluefin Seafood; Boice.net; Bradford & Galt; Creation Gardens; Huey Family; ISCO; Kosair Charities; Learning House; Papa John’s Pizza; Phoenix Processing; Rhawn Enterprises; Republic Bank; Samtec; Stites & Harbison; Ullom Properties and Yum! Brands.*

Also, thank you to *Brandi Hitzelberger, Tennis Ball Chairman, and Jay Hatcher, Tennis Tournament Chairman*, as well as the committee members for both events. And lastly, thank you *Louisville Boat Club* and *Louisville Country Club* for being so accommodating for the last five years.



Michael Cunningham was co-winner in the Men’s A Division.

VIPS Reverse Raffle

There were six chances to be a winner in the annual VIPS Raffle this year, which was restructured as a Reverse Raffle -- instead of the winning ticket being the first drawn, the grand prize ticket is the last drawn. The drawing was held during the VIPS Tennis Tournament on May 22. The 1st, 50th and 100th tickets drawn were each for a \$100 prize; the final three tickets received (in order drawn) \$500, \$1,000 and \$5,000! The *Grand Prize went to Eric Stoer with Chubb Insurance from NY. Eric most graciously donated his entire \$5,000 prize back to VIPS in support of our mission!* Eric said that he and his colleagues at Chubb “admire and value everything that VIPS does to bring quality care, activities and early childhood development/ curriculum to visually impaired children in Kentucky and beyond.”

Thank you to everyone who purchased a Reverse Raffle ticket this year. If you didn't win, remember, there's always next year!

Crusade for Children Cookout

The VIPS parking lot was damp, but wonderfully busy, as VIPS-Louisville hosted a cookout to benefit the WHAS Crusade for Children on Wednesday, May 25. Standard cookout fare -- burgers (including turkey and bean burgers), hot dogs, and chips -- was available for just \$5; for a little additional you could also get a drink and home-made dessert. This year's cookout netted \$650 (combined with VIPS employees' payroll contributions, the total donation VIPS made to the Crusade was \$2,000). This annual fundraiser benefitting the Crusade was staffed by VIPS Board members *Terri Connolly, Joe Donohue, Mike Johnson, and Mark Stiebling as well as Aggie Nelson and Ryan Hack, family members of VIPS staff.* Thanks to each of them for their help! We could not experience the success we have had without the energy and dedication of volunteers such as these!

Grants and Donations

Thanks to all VIPS donors, large and small. The VIPS budget is donation driven, so all of the generous individual donors who make personal contributions throughout the year help us accomplish so much for children with severe visual impairments and their families. Even if your name is not listed in these pages, please know that we value your generosity and each and every donation you make to VIPS in honor or memory of loved ones, or just because your heart has been touched by our mission.

VIPS-Louisville

We are so very grateful to the following for their recent grants to the Louisville office:

- **Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation:** \$51,500 for Direct Services, Family Services & Stampede Sponsorship;
- **PNC Bank Foundation:** 3-year pledge of \$30,000 total for Continuing Education;
- **Gheens Foundation:** \$20,000 for Kids Town Preschool at VIPS;
- **Louisville Metro Government:** \$8,000 for Music Therapy;
- **Eric Stoer with Chubb Insurance from NY:** \$5000 (Eric most graciously donated his entire \$5,000 Reverse Raffle prize back to VIPS in support of our mission);
- **Jacob C. Koch Foundation:** \$4,607 for equipment improvement needs;
- **William E. Barth Foundation:** \$3,000 for Family Retreat;
- **Norton Healthcare Foundation:** \$2,500 for Kids Town Preschool at VIPS;
- **Fleet Feet Louisville** hosted a give back night for VIPS during which ten percent of all purchases were donated to VIPS. We appreciate the opportunity and especially to the funds that the event garnered!

The **WHAS Crusade for Children** has once again reached into its coffers to award all three VIPS offices grants totaling \$128,000 for early intervention services and center-based programming for children. VIPS-Louisville received \$75,000, VIPS-Central KY received \$38,000, and \$15,000 was pledged to VIPS-Indiana. The Crusade was there for VIPS when we started 30 years ago and continues to be steadfast in supporting our mission. Thank you Crusade and thank you to all throughout KY and IN who reached deep in your pockets to make the 2016 Crusade a success for our communities and VIPS!

VIPS-Central Kentucky

Thank you to the following donors who so generously and thoughtfully supported VIPS-Central KY services:

- **The E.O. Robinson Mountain Fund:** \$8,000 for early intervention services to VIPS children residing in Eastern Kentucky;

- **The Orphan Society:** \$5,000 for early intervention services to children living in Fayette County, Kentucky.
- **The United Way of the Bluegrass:** \$3,000 for family events and supports.

In-Kind Donations

- This past April VIPS families enjoyed an evening together creating beautiful pieces of artwork and dining on spaghetti and meatballs. Many thanks to **Fazoli's** for donating the delicious spaghetti dinners and breadsticks.
- **Bricks4Kidz** joined VIPS families at the Children's Garden and provided a fun-filled hour of structured play with Legos. Thank you so much!

VIPS-Indiana

- Thank you to the **Lebanon Senior High Key Club** for their generous check of \$690 that was raised during their third Dinner in the Dark to benefit the children and families of VIPS-Indiana.
- Many thanks to the **Brown County Lions Club** for awarding VIPS Indiana with a grant of \$305 to go towards early intervention services.

Crossing "Terri Lane"

As you may know, at the Tennis Ball VIPS auctioned off the naming rights for "main street" in UAW/Ford Mobility City at VIPS-Louisville. And -- drum roll, please -- it is now known as "Terri Lane," named for former VIPS teacher and current board member Terri Connolly, whose family purchased it in her honor. Terri is not only a board member and former teacher, she is a guardian angel who's always dropping off interesting "finds" for the teachers to use in addition to small gifts for the entire staff. We are absolutely delighted to honor her in this way!

Now, the children can hear the audible crossing signal saying, "Crossing Terri Lane!"

Terri and husband Bob.



Easy Giving Without Feeling the Pinch!

Kroger Community Rewards

VIPS earns money each quarter 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 when shopping at Amazon. Just select Visually Impaired Preschool Services from the list of participating organizations before you check out. The website is <https://smile.amazon.com>.

Why I Give to VIPS! Very Important People Services

By Eric Bruun

(Text of speech presented June 21, 2016 by Eric Bruun, co-winner of VIPS Individual Benefactor Beacon Award)

Sustainable, Scalable and Impactful

For me to support a non-profit, it must clearly exhibit the following three characteristics: Sustainability, Scalability and Impactful. Sustainability (a well run delivery model with a great team and infrastructure in place); Scalability (efficient model that allows more recipients to receive goods and services without adding excessive overhead); and lastly, the non-profit must be Impactful for all involved

Eric Bruun with good friend and inspiration Meredith Howell, VIPS Mom & Asst. Director of VIPS-Indiana.



(recipient, staff, family members, etc.) VIPS exhibits all three!!! But I only know this because of two people - Meredith Howell and her daughter, Lola. It is because of Meredith and her daughter Lola that I became aware of VIPS and the wonderful support and services that VIPS provides to families and their children.

Why support VIPS, Meredith and Lola?

To understand why I support VIPS/Meredith/Lola you need to know about another person – my mom. My mother always supported those in need, locally, in her community. She did this each and every day, whether donating food and money from our restaurant or providing jobs to those who simply wanted to work. Through her actions every day she taught me that an empowered woman who takes an active role, whether in a for-profit or non-profit, in her community is a person you want to invest in and support. When I met Meredith, she immediately reminded me of my mom and the type of empowered woman that my mom would have supported. I met Meredith at her prior job and over time she shared with me that Lola would be faced with many challenges in her life. And Meredith, like any parent, was initially saddened by this reality...BUT Meredith chose to not only help Lola, she chose to help other parents and children who were having similar experiences. Meredith left her job where we'd originally met and reconnected with me a few years later. She asked to meet so she could talk about this amazing organization she was working with called VIPS. She was so excited to discuss VIPS and as anyone who knows Meredith, her passion and commitment came through in the story she shared. I was excited for her. She did not sit on the sidelines and accept the way the world is. Quite the opposite - Meredith chose to be an active participant for change each and every day in Lola's life and others just like her. Meredith is not driven by accolades or rewards but simply to make the lives of Lola, and other children and families better.

The aforementioned is why I wanted to help VIPS, Meredith and Lola and why I will continue to do so going forward. Without knowing it, when Meredith was sharing her and Lola's story she was conveying to me why VIPS was Scalable, Sustainable and Impactful. To everyone at VIPS, you, like Meredith are making not only Lola's life better and helping her to achieve and reach her highest potential, you're providing other children and parents the same opportunities. I love that! It is really that simple. You're making our community a better place every day. My mother did that every day of her life and I plan to continue to carry on what she taught me.

The following quote from Maya Angelou simply and powerfully captures why I support VIPS, Meredith, and Lola:

"When you get, give.

"When you learn, teach."

I try to live up to this everyday. Together, we are getting and giving and learning and teaching...Seems like a good combination don't you think?

Thank you and keep doin' what you do!!!

VIPS Wish List

Wish List VIPS-Central KY

Paper towels
Scotch tape
Hand sanitizer

Wish List VIPS-Indiana

Pressboard Classification Folders
Two hole punch
Printer Paper
Baby Wipes

Wish List VIPS-Louisville

Rolls of paper towels
Clorox/Lysol wipes
Empty Pringles cans
Empty tennis ball cans
Shaving cream
Baby wipes
2-3 solid color 3' X 5' rectangular area rugs
(solid color so as not to be visually distracting)
Pringles or tennis ball cans
Scented markers
Kinetic Sand
Clear contact paper
Small bowls with suction cup bottoms
Paper/Dixie cups small size
Large (2-4") plastic toy pop beads
Large bibs with pockets (plastic or nylon)

Families can order VIPS wear online!

If you are interested in purchasing a VIPS t-shirt or hoodie for yourself or for a friend or family member, you can now do so online. Visit <http://kytshirts.com/Vips> and select from several colors and styles for men, women and youths.



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

Saturday, October 15

The Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS will be held at the Mark & Cindy Lynn Stadium on Floyd Street in Louisville. Register online at www.vips.org. (More info on pg.17.)

VIPS Indiana will host a "Spook-tacular" Play and Learn, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m at the Indiana Interchurch Center. Dress up your kids (yourselves too!) and join our sensory friendly, Halloween-themed PAL. For more details call (888) 824-2197 or email mhowell@vips.org.

Wednesday, October 19

The Kentucky Office for the Blind McDowell Center, 8412 Westport Rd. in Louisville, will hold its 4th Annual Open House for the public, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. It is a wonderful opportunity for VIPS families to learn what OFB does for adults with visual impairments and to meet guide dog teams, watch braille demos, learn about bioptic driving and talk to adults who are visually impaired.

Friday, October 21

Operation: Chili for Children will be held at the National Armory in Bloomington, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. Hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Bloomington, this is an all-you-can-eat chili supper, benefitting VIPS-Indiana. For more details call (888) 824-2197 or email mhowell@vips.org.

Saturday, October 29

VIPS-Louisville will host a Halloween Trunk 'N Treat, 10 - 11:30 a.m. Light snacks will be provided, including some you create yourself! And of course there will be Trick or Treating! Be sure to come in costume!!!

Friday & Saturday, November 4 - 5

The VIPS/KSB Family Retreat will be held on the campus of the Kentucky School for the Blind, 1867 Frankfort Ave., in Louisville. Register online at www.vips.org. Contact Martha Hack, mhack@vips.org or Mitch Dahmke, Mitch.Dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us for more information. (See article on pg. 9.)

Monday, December 12

The U of L Community Band will give a concert for VIPS children and families at Kosair Shrine Center, 4120 Bardstown Rd., Louisville, 40218, 6:30-8 p.m. Enjoy fabulous holiday music!

Do You Receive VIPS Blips?

VIPS Blips is a bi-monthly news blast that can appear in your inbox on the first and fifteenth of each month. To make sure you receive this news blast and stay abreast of all the latest happenings going on at your VIPS Office, send your name and your email to pfeldman@vips.org.

It's Survey Time

VIPS-Louisville parents whose children received VIPS services during 2015 are asked to complete a quick, online survey. Your responses help us ensure we are meeting your needs, know how to improve services, and demonstrate to funders that investing in VIPS benefits our community.

If your child received VIPS services in your home, at childcare, or preschool (including Kids Town Preschool), go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q2CCGWG>

If your child was a sighted peer at Kids Town Preschool, go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q85PPGP>

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VIPS-Louisville

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Brittany Clarkson, Development Assistant
Sarah Cocanougher, After School Care
Carol Dahmke, Office Manager
LaRhonda Daniels, Preschool Instructional Assistant
Ashley Emmons, O&M/TV/Preschool Teacher
Pauletta Feldman, Administrative Support
Greta Gillmeister, Music Therapist
Erika Glenn, JCPS Instructional Assistant
Martha Hack, Event Coordinator/Family Services Coordinator
Marchelle Hampton, Preschool Instructional Assistant
Dani Harper, Receptionist
Beth Krebs, Preschool Assistant Director/Instructional Asst.
Mary Lesousky, TV/Developmental Interventionist
Ashley May, Preschool Instructional Assistant
Paige Maynard, TV (in training)/Preschool Teacher
Staci Maynard, TV (in training)/Preschool Teacher
Juanita Miles, Two Day Twos Teacher
Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist
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