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VIPS Services Expand to Meet Growing Demand

In late 2015, VIPS staff engaged in a strategic planning exercise to begin to envision the future of VIPS and our services. At the end of the exercise, we identified a short-term goal (to be accomplished within one year) of increasing the number of children we served in 2015 by 50 children and families in Kentucky and Indiana throughout 2016.

One of the keys to accomplishing this goal was to increase the number of contract employees VIPS uses throughout Kentucky and Indiana. As of this writing, VIPS uses eight contractors to see children throughout parts of Kentucky where there are no VIPS offices, and uses 12 contractors to meet an ever growing demand for services throughout the state of Indiana.

We are thrilled to report that Kentucky and Indiana VIPS staff and contractors saw 454 children during 2016, *up 17.6%* from 2015. New referrals totaled 178, *up 43.5%* from 2015 referrals! Not only are more people hearing about the high quality of our services and turning to VIPS for help, but more children and families are receiving the services they need to address visual impairments.

At right: Little Josephine delights in the sounds and textures of a sensory mobile during her first home visit from VIPS Indiana.



VIPS Producing a New Video



Craig Mullins of Hatfield Media videotapes in Kids Town.

The Expanded Core Curriculum for Students Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired (ECC) is the topic for a new video that VIPS has just begun to develop. The video will be geared to parents of children who are visually impaired and professionals who are not in the field of visual impairment. It will take viewers through the nine areas of the ECC and demonstrate lessons to teach skills in each area using teachers and students in Kids Town Preschool as the stars of the show. The video is being produced with a generous grant from the Paradis Foundation. Stay tuned for updates as we progress!

A Day of Celebration

By Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education

On a cold Friday morning in January, one of those days that began and ended with temperatures in the single digits, I started my day in the company of 30+ kindergartners in a school in our local community. The students were participating in a yearlong “dialog” of meeting the unique needs of community members. January’s theme was “community members with special needs.” My time with these excited, inquisitive open minds afforded the perfect opportunity to talk about the abilities of children who learn differently because of their special needs.

I started my presentation with pictures of 15 of our current and former VIPS kids and asked the students to sort them into groups of children who are blind, visually impaired, and those who see just fine. The kindergartners gave the exercise their best shot, but needed help with the task, especially with what they called my “trick pictures.” Children who are blind don’t always wear glasses. All children who do wear glasses aren’t visually impaired. Children who are visually impaired ride bikes and scooters.

The list of discoveries went on and on as the kindergartners learned of the strategies put into place so children who are blind or visually impaired can learn the same things they learn in kindergarten. They thought slant boards at the sign-in desk were genius, as was any person who could actually recognize braille dots for reading. They put their thinking caps on to determine what activities were represented by the objects included on the schedule board. (One child even complained to his teacher that it was no fair to have such a boring schedule board, using pictures only, as the one visible in the kindergarten classroom.)



As I bundled up again to brave the weather, I felt a sense of satisfaction. More than helping the hosts understand that children who learn differently, be they blind or have a different learning style, are much more like their typically-developing peers than they are different, I came away with the

Any day with this bunch is cause for celebration!

satisfaction one feels when they celebrate the gifts of those they love. This particular morning, I celebrated the gift of the open hearts of the kindergartners and their toothless grins as well as the gifts of love and understanding I receive from our VIPS children and families every day.

Upon my return to the office, I tackled the task of developing an observation form to use when visiting our teachers in the classrooms in Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. One of our commitments to our Kids Town students is continuous improvement; classroom observations help us to deliver on this promise. Sometimes when I work on a job such as this, my mind goes to the dark side. I begin looking for the negative. In my mind’s eye, I have already identified areas of improvement to be made. It didn’t take me long to recognize that my observation instrument had taken on the same tone.

I quickly hit the restart button and worked to design an instrument that included the opportunity for our teachers to identify the gifts they bring to the classroom so that I could celebrate them during my observations. I also included some questions that offered the teachers the chance to point out specific needs that they had recognized in their own teaching styles.

Recognizing your own areas for improvement is a skill of successful leaders.

At the time of this writing, I have completed observations on two of our four classroom teachers. I have been humbled by the opportunity to see these amazing women in action. Their classrooms run with the precision of fine-tuned machinery, even when the moods and needs of their students prove challenging. Upon completion of the observations and review meetings with our teachers, my primary hope is that the teachers feel the same sense of celebration that I feel each time I wander down the hallway of Kids Town Preschool.

I ended my still very cold Friday at a high school basketball game. You may ask how this experience related to the other two events of my day. It was not too far into the first quarter when one of the teams executed an amazing alley oop! resulting in a dunk that brought the crowd (or at least half of the crowd) to their feet. There was no doubt a lot of celebrating filling the gymnasium.

There was also no doubt that a lot of work went into the development of the young men’s basketball skills. Many hours of practice, practice, practice to perfect the talents the teenagers had. The same could be said for the VIPS teachers. It takes special gifts to do what our teachers and interventionists do each and every day at VIPS. It takes practice, practice, practice, lots of fine-tuning, and even more heart and soul. It takes practice, practice, practice for our children to gain the independence they leave with when transitioning from VIPS.

Perhaps the hearts of the kindergartners with whom I started my day have the same grit our teachers and the basketball players possess to reach their current levels of performance. Who knows? What I do know is that at the end of the basketball game, I was left with a sense of joy that took me a while to identify. First, I must admit, I was happy with the outcome of the game! Much more importantly, I was filled with the joy that only comes from a day of celebration. Celebration of open minds and hearts, the abilities of those VIPS is honored to serve, the gifts of our amazing teachers and service providers at VIPS, and the talents of physical perfection demonstrated in an athletic venue were all gifts of joy. What a wonderful winter surprise it was to be gifted with a cold day of celebration when it was least expected!

Why Parents?

By Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects
(Reprinted from VISability, 15/5, Sept./Oct. 1999)

Author's Note: *Through VIPS, I was able to meet other mothers of blind babies when my son, Jamie, was just a year old. He is now 32, and I want you to know I still feel the same way about my friends who are Moms of kids with disabilities. We don't seem to outgrow the need for one another.*

Each VIPS office offers a variety of fun and educational events for VIPS parents and families. If you haven't tried one of these, please give it some serious consideration now.

I can't speak for you, but for myself I can say that the relationships I've formed with other parents of children who are visually impaired are like priceless jewels. They glisten with excitement, they are many-faceted (for we always discover that we have more in common than just our visually impaired child), they are enduring, and their value appreciates with time. Over the years, my friends who are parents of children with disabilities have been a continuing source of support, information, and inspiration for me. I don't know how I would have made it without them!!

My advice to you is to get started forming relationships with other parents while your children are still young. Believe me, once they are in school, it is much more difficult for parents to find each other! There are few structured opportunities for parents to become involved in mutually supportive



At a VIPS Family Retreat, Melanie and Erica found they had so much in common.

relationships. And I've found that I've needed my special friends of special children even more as my child has gotten older and we have had to deal with more complex educational and social situations. The friends I made when my child was young are even stronger friends now. We've "grown up" together in raising our children with disabilities, and you know that those formative friendships are the most enduring.

What have I gotten from being with other parents?

I've gotten understanding!!

No one can understand your worries, your heartaches, your anger, or your joys like another parent. Who but another parent could understand your worries that your child may never have a date, may never be able to live independently, might even die due to his/her condition? Who but another parent could understand how much it hurts when people in public places stare at your child? Who but another parent can understand the anger that you feel when a doctor says, "She'll never be able to do anything. Just take her home and love her."? Who but another parent can understand your joy when your child accomplishes something that the parent of a typical kid would take for granted, like gaining head control, or sitting up, or doing a combat crawl, or tracking something visually, or dressing by himself for the first time? Who but another parent can understand how fiercely you love your child, who in the view of some is damaged, a target of pity, or a waste of medical technology to keep alive?

I've gotten support!

How comforting it has been over the years to be able to compare notes with other parents. When I was worried that Jamie, who is totally blind due to retinopathy of prematurity, wasn't walking yet I could call another mom whose child had the same condition and was about the same age, and find out that she had the same concern -- we soothed one another's fears and helped each other be patient. We could compare timetables for accomplishing skills. When our kids entered school, we could vent our frustrations about the often difficult process of drawing up the IEP and determining placement, or of having to fight for our kids to get needed services and materials. We could help each other keep things in perspective when we got out of balance. We could bounce ideas off one another. We could laugh together about the funny ways of our children and cry together over their struggles and heartbreaks, like the first time they realized they had been made fun of by a classmate. We recognized the beauty of each other's children, their potential and their accomplishments, no matter how small they might seem to "an outsider."

I've regained normalcy!!

When you are just getting started as the parent of a child with disabilities, you feel very alone and isolated. Most of us have never really known a person with a disability, until we know our

own child. It is a new, discomforting situation for which we have no preparation. The “normal” life we expected to have flies out the window. Our friends and relatives don’t have children with disabilities. All of a sudden we are out of the mainstream! That’s not the way it really is, it just feels that way for awhile. When we can start associating with other families that are like ours, we begin to regain normalcy. We come to realize that we are not at all alone, that there are lots of other families like ours, for whom having a child with a disability is a perfectly normal part of life, just like it will become a perfectly normal part of ours. We watch one another move ahead with the business of normal life -- having another baby, going back to work, going back to school, managing the daily routines and schedules of all of our children. We can laugh again. We are no longer victims of a cruel trick of fate. We are survivors.

I’ve gotten knowledge!!

Parents of children with disabilities are information seekers and they are eager to share what they find. When you put a bunch of parents together, the information that each individual brings translates into a wealth of knowledge for the whole group. Want to know the best websites? Just ask another parent. Want to know where to get equipment? Ask a parent. Need financial assistance? Bet another parent will have some ideas. Want to know how to deal with a difficult situation at your child’s school? Ask a parent. Want to know what your child’s educational rights are? Ask a parent. Want to know who the best doctors are? You guessed it -- ask a parent!



This past summer and fall, “old” VIPS Moms and some veteran staff were able to get together for dinner a couple of times. We had such a wonderful time catching up on our children, ranging in age from 10 to 32. We hope to make it a monthly date!!



I’ve become empowered!!

We heal with understanding, support, and normalcy; with knowledge, we become empowered. We develop the courage and strength to fight our own battles, and when we need to call

in reinforcements, they are there in the friends we’ve made. We find we have strength and energy left over to be reinforcements for the battles of others. When we learn about a need or injustice for the disabled, we are there, raising our voices in a chorus of advocacy. Together we are confident, assertive, powerful.

I’ve gotten sibling support!!

Not only do we as parents return to normalcy, our other children are able to do so, too, through association with the children of other families. They learn that theirs is not the only family with a child who is disabled. They see other children like their brother or sister, sometimes who are older, and they learn that their sibling is not alone either. They see that they are important, too, because they are included in the fun and learning.

So how about it? Why not get involved in VIPS family activities? What do you have to lose? If you don’t like a meeting or activity, then you’ve just lost a little time. But if you love them, as most families who get involved do, then what you have to gain is immeasurable. Who wouldn’t want a few priceless jewels to adorn their life?

Blindsided

By Anne Redinger, VIPS Mom

Editor’s Note: Anne Redinger, whose son Baxter attends Kids Town Preschool, writes a blog called *themuffinanne.com*. While she typically writes about cooking or craft projects, she recently posted an incredibly poignant article entitled *Blindsided*. The paragraphs below are from that posting in which she describes the fears, worries and challenges relating to the diagnosis and treatment of Baxter’s medical/visual condition. After he lost the remaining vision in his good eye, she writes:

Still everyday I cried. I’m glad he couldn’t see it. I cried every time I looked out the window and saw a beautiful sky that he would never see. I cried thinking about how he loved to go to the movies. I cried thinking about how difficult life will be for him now...I thought of things all the time that made me sad...I had to stay positive. Thank God for my faith and the strength that I get from it. I knew that with God I could do this. I had to keep things as normal as I could and get him used to doing everything without my constant help. It was hard but we had to do it.

I had looked into a new school for Baxter over the summer called VIPS (Visually Impaired Preschool Services). I knew that since he was blind in one eye and had a strong prescription for his seeing eye at the time that he needed special attention with his visual needs. Now that he was completely blind I knew it was the best place for him. He had seen and met his new teacher a few weeks before school was to start and had seen his new school and class room, but now he would be starting blind.

We went to an orientation several days before school with him now blind. I didn't think I was going to be able to hold myself together. They asked the parents to gather in an area to hear information about the school year and said that the kids were welcome to play on the playground with staff. I took Baxter outside to the playground and a teacher approached him to let me go back inside, not realizing that he couldn't see she said "Hey, come play on the playground with me!" Baxter replied with "Um, I'm blind!" She came over and took his hand and said "Well! That's good to know!" It was totally normal here and that put my mind at ease. His teacher came to our house a couple of days before school started. It made him feel super comfortable with her and allowed me to ask all the questions that I had and prepare myself for letting him go to school again. Before she left he whispered in her ear that on the first day of school he wanted puppets to play with. "What kind?" she asked. He told her he wanted a knight, princess and dragon. He really liked her!

On the first day of school Baxter was really excited, I had assured him that the other kids at his new school had "special eyes" just like him. It made him feel good to know he wasn't alone, that there were other kids like him. When we first walked into the school I was blown away with how VERBALLY inviting everyone was. Everyone said good morning or welcome Baxter! And they all announced to him who they were. It was simple but made such a difference. Then upon walking into his classroom his teacher came over to him to say hello. He immediately asked her if she had the puppets they talked about! Her face lit up as she went and got the puppets for him. She put in his hands a knight, princess and dragon and to tell them apart since he couldn't see them, one of his other teachers had taken them home and added long yarn hair to the princess and a tail to the dragon. This was amazing to me. I left and cried. What wonderful people!



[Since that first day of school Baxter has regained some vision.]

We called his doctor and told her the good news. She was shocked. He is only able to see out of a small area of his left eye. But I'll take it! Believe it or not but this has only been a nutshell of what we have gone through. All together over the last 10 months Baxter has been in the hospital and under anesthesia for exams and surgeries thirteen times. The genetics testing that we had done on our new baby girl show that she has this extremely rare

Brittle Cornea Syndrome just like we have found out that Baxter has. It is a progressive eye disease that there is no treatment for. It causes blindness and in half of the people that have this syndrome, it also causes hearing disabilities.

I have learned through all of this that no matter what you read or hear, take each day at a time and only deal with what's in front of you. I have two children now that without medical help will most certainly be blind. Most reported cases of this rare disease the patients lose not only their vision but their entire eyes around the age of 4. It is extremely rare. Doctors don't even know about it and when you look it up there is not much to learn. They just developed the genetic test for it a few years ago. I have been given a second chance at sight with Baxter but I don't know for how long. I thank God every day that he wakes up and has vision and I'll continue to thank Him even if he doesn't because we are a truly blessed family and I am so grateful for all the little things more than anyone would ever know. We have taken Baxter to the aquarium and I make sure that he sees as much as he can everyday. My sweet baby girl will be getting glasses in the next few weeks already to protect her little eyes.

We, with the help of our doctors, have been reaching out to other eye specialists around the country to try to find someone that can help us. So far, no luck. No one will see them. It's too scary for any doctor because no one knows anything about this disease except for how horrible the outcome can be. We need help; we need awareness. I am sharing this small novel to open someone's eyes. Maybe someone with special needs children can relate or it might help a parent raising a blind child that they are not the only ones worried about a public restroom one day! My best friend said that we should be raising funds for research. I totally agree, we should! But currently as far as I know there is no research, no one to send funds to. What I can do now is share my story.

VIPS Family Events Provide Fun For All !!

VIPS Central KY

Charlie Brown Christmas Party

*"Christmas time is here,
happiness and cheer.
Fun for all that children call
their favorite time of the year."*

Central Kentucky VIPS families celebrated their favorite time of the year at the Charlie Brown Christmas Party on December 15th. Over 60 people attended the event and

enjoyed dinner courtesy of **Babe's BBQ**. Dessert was courtesy of **Gigi's Cupcakes** and former VIPS parent **Nina Vail** who made an AMAZING Charlie Brown themed snowglobe cake. Children of all ages enjoyed playing in sensory snow, decorating Snoopy's felt doghouse, creating reindeer footprints and Charlie Brown Christmas trees, playing Snoopy's Santa hat toss and Charlie Brown's Snowball Slam, and having their name written in braille on a snowflake ornament.

Jack Pattie was once again our wonderful Santa, taking photographs with all of our VIPS families and finding out what the children wanted for Christmas. Each VIPS child received a goodie bag that looked like Charlie Brown's iconic yellow and black shirt, filled with a book or coloring book and other holiday treats.

We are so thankful for our wonderful volunteers from **UK's Delta Beta Chapter of the Delta Gammas**, members of the **Tates Creek High School softball team** and the **friends and family of VIPS staff** who helped out with everything from decorating to clean up.

Pancakes with Santa

We are so proud of the impact VIPS makes on the lives of children, but it's even more special when a member of our community appreciates our work and plans an event to support our mission. **Forcht Bank** hosted the 2nd Annual Pancakes with Santa to benefit VIPS on Saturday, December 10th. This free event, held at their Hamburg location, was open to the community and offered families a delicious breakfast of pancakes, fruit, donuts from **North Lime Donuts** and coffee from **Nate's Coffee**.



Nina Vail's amazing snowglobe cake.



Left: Kinsey plays in sensory snow. Right: Santa visits with Harper; Bottom: Santa hears a surprising wish.

Children made Christmas ornaments, played reindeer games, learned how to braille their name and got their picture taken with Santa. Buddy the Elf helped children write down their Christmas list and upload it directly to Santa's workshop at the North Pole, via a helpful elf and an Interactive Teller Machine (ITM). Over \$650.00 was donated for VIPS Early Intervention services. What a wonderful early Christmas present! We are so appreciative of the hard work Forcht Bank put into making this event a success, with special thanks to **April Larkin, Forcht Bank Training Specialist** and volunteers from **Delta Gamma**.



Harper and Buddy, the Elf, shared a special time to get to know one another.



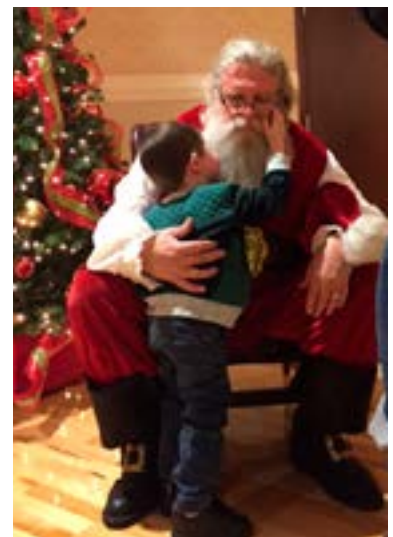
Kelly Easton, Regional Director for VIPS Central KY, with Terry Forcht, Debbie Reynolds, Tucker Ballinger, April Larkin, Santa and Buddy the Elf.

VIPS Louisville

U of L Community Band Holiday Concert

The University of Louisville Community Band presented a special concert again this year just for VIPS families at the Kosair Shrine Temple. Very well attended by current and former VIPS families, the concert set the stage for an evening in which the children made ornaments and everyone enjoyed pizza, courtesy of Papa John's

Anthony and Santa shared a tender moment as Anthony checked out Santa's beard.



Pizza. It doesn't often get much better than music, fun and food but this evening was topped off with a visit from that man in a red and white suit! Thank you Shrine Temple!

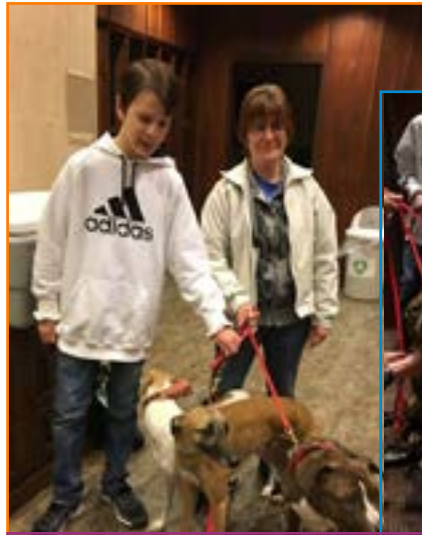
KaLightoscope!

Our sincere thanks to the Galt House for providing discounted KaLightoscope tickets to VIPS families again this year, allowing each family to attend when it was most convenient for them.

VIPS Indiana

Winter Play and Learn

What a wonderful time we had welcoming VIPS families to our Winter Play and Learn on Saturday, January 28. It was a morning filled with fun and meaningful conversations. After the music circle and introductions, wonderful volunteers and VIPS staff cared for the VIPS children while the parents participated in a tactile Make & Take activity. The arrival of three beautiful therapy dogs gave the children an opportunity to touch, smell and hear the gentle animals. With *refreshments from Starbucks*, families had snacks and beverages as they shared their stories and made connections. Thank you to everyone who joined us, especially the ladies from the *Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma* and our amazing volunteers!



Patricia Hudson and son Jordan brought wonderfully gentle therapy dogs.



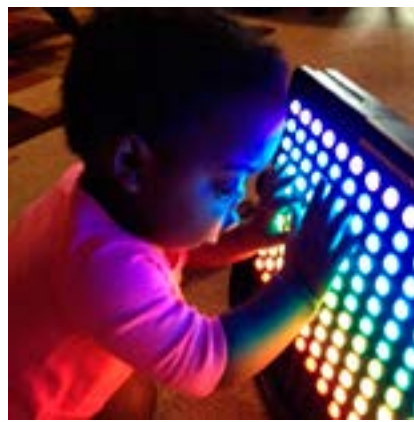
Lauren holds daughter Petra while she looks and then touches one of the dogs.



VIPS Children Learning Through Home Visits and In the Classroom

VIPS Indiana

All VIPS Indiana children are seen through home visits, since VIPS Indiana does not yet have an office with classroom facilities. These home visits are life lines for parents struggling to understand how to help their children; and they offer the children a headstart in all areas of development.



Addyson enjoyed the Perkins LightAide!



Eli worked with Play-Doh, matched colors, read books, and identified shapes, all during an initial home visit!



Above: Evelyn, with Shaylee Susemichel, placed ornaments on a Christmas Tree.



Above: Yeheli and her mom Maribel.



Left: Jase needed a bit of support to sit, and "baby in a box" makes it possible for him to explore items on the play frame.

VIPS Central Kentucky

Little Learners Class

By Lesley Lusher, Little Learners Teacher

We have been exploring the book *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats. The children have been enjoying activities centered around this book including making puffy paint, playing with real snow, learning about cold weather animals and using shovels and buckets in our wintery sensory bin. We have also been working on fine motor skills, using chalk, crayons, markers on different textures including sandpaper and textured paper. Learning colors with a sorting game is also a favorite activity in our room. The children have enjoyed using music for large motor movements. Recently, we had a special visit from VIPS Louisville teacher and O&M specialist, Ashley Emmons. The kids had lots of fun with her learning about positional concepts and travel skills. Circle time is a favorite for this group! We are welcoming several new kiddos to our group this month and are so excited to have them!



Above: Stella practices the positional concept of under with Ms. Ashley. Below: Jubie loves the Sensory Room.



VIPS Louisville

Two Day 2s

by Juanita Miles, Twos Teacher

Since our last newsletter, the twos visited Santa at Bass Pro Shop. A couple of the children were excited about the idea of going to see Santa but the excitement turned to uncertainty after seeing Santa's physical body. But after some reassurance, all enjoyed sitting on Santa's lap.



Twos are very busy! Tyler did some sweeping while playing one day.

Over the next few months the focus in the classroom will be on learning shapes, numbers and colors. The children will learn to count by rote and by touch. They will learn colors by associating them with things in the environment. For example, we will associate the color white with snow, cotton, marshmallows, teeth, clouds and milk.

Lastly, the twos are excited about the new indoor play equipment, donated by the Bender Family. The slide, bikes and basketball goal are very popular.



Above: Saphira did some "scribbling" on the braille writer.



Right: Sam enjoyed riding a bike in Kids Town with Ms. Juanita's help.

Kids Town Preschool

By Staci Maynard, TVI in training, Kids Town Preschool Teacher

Late fall and early winter are always two of my favorite times of learning in preschool. There are so many sensory experiences to explore during fall and the holiday season that follows. Students can hardly contain their anticipation and make for eager learners. It's no wonder there's so much to do, see and feel when observing at Kids Town Preschool in November, December, or January.

In the month of November, preschool students learned about the fall season. The students sorted leaves by color, visually and tactually scanned for leaves outside, and learned the letters L-E-A-F. They also used leaves to identify and match letters while focusing on learning and writing the letters F-A-L-L.

Classes had the opportunity to go to the local Kroger's to

Leo helped Mr. Maury bag leaves around the playground.



purchase ingredients for a cooking project during a unit on making healthy food choices. While at the grocery store shopping for ingredients to make friendship mix, children were able to work on visual scanning and daily living skills. The pizza-making cooking project was an opportunity to work on concepts such as making choices, measuring ingredients, making a grocery list, locating what you need at a store, and going through check out at the grocery. In math, the children practiced estimating and testing the accuracy of their estimation skills by making their best educated guesses of how much water children their age should drink to be healthy.



Eli did "Turkey Math."

The children practiced daily living skills like gift wrapping and sorting Christmas tree branches by size. Students learned about how to write a letter in order to communicate with Santa, whom they were excited to visit at Bass Pro Shop. The classes continued their participation in the American Printing House for the Blind's Building on Patterns field test by reading the What's the Weather book. After reading The Twelve Days of Christmas, the red room wrote its own version of the song using items that students chose as making the best gifts.

The preschool has been studying about the season of winter in January. When we first returned from our break, we focused on what animals do in winter. The students talked about what it means to hibernate. They also worked on scanning at a distance for animal tracks and created a tactual project of some places where animals go to stay warm in winter.

One important aspect of winter learning in preschool is for students to know what they should wear when it is cold and how to put on and take off winter clothes. The students practiced how to put on hats, scarves, mittens, and their coats. We also used winter clothing in our math and literacy groups by working on measuring mittens using Unifix cubes and pretending to be the animal characters from The Mitten while telling the story in a giant painter's tape mitten on the floor. The children practiced scanning left to right to search for snowman pictures and to use all of their senses to collect data as they observed ice before and after it melted.

In literacy, the children worked to recognize their names from a set of dissimilar words, and they learned the letter G, the first focal letter in the APH test curriculum in print and braille.

In closing, Kids Town preschool would only be a shadow of its five star brilliance were it not for all of the educational support staff that make what we do in the classroom possible. November 16 was National Education



Lucas painted a Fall pumpkin.

After Election Day, children talked about what it means to vote and went to the VIPS polls to cast a ballot for class mascot.

In December, students got to explore the winter holidays of Kwanzaa, Hanukkah and Christmas. Classes used a kinara and a menorah to practice one to one correspondence (by placing candles in the slots), to count candles, and to scan visually and tactually left to right while examining the candlesticks. The specific days of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa also provided

an opportunity to work on ordering events. The students used traditional holiday items to practice expanded core curriculum concepts as well as typical academic content.

In science, children made hypotheses about what would happen to a candy cane when submerged in water and then performed the experiment to see if they were correct. They also experimented with jingle bells to learn about magnetism and the sense of sound. It was fun to use gelt (Hanukkah coins) to practice visual and tactile searching.



Lena and Pyper worked on friendship skills while sharing the big rocking chair in the Sensory Room.



Pajama Day in December was a favorite of all the children. Caleb wore super hero PJs, while Aubrey and Maddie sported snowflakes and snowmen on their PJs.



Support Professionals Day, and in that spirit the teachers would like to make some acknowledgments. Thank you to Ms. La Rhonda, Ms. Shelby, Ms. Erika, Ms. Ashley, Ms. Marchelle, Ms. Beth and Ms. Kathy for your help keeping students safe, happy and focused during every school day. Thank you to Ms. Greta who instills our students with a love of music while stealthily using songs to teach math, literacy, and other concepts. Thank you to Ms. Elena (who provides ballet lessons through VIPS' partnership with the Louisville Ballet through Arts for Kosair Kids) for getting the children moving in ways that will develop not only their bodies but their minds. Last but not least, thank you to our amazing and faithful volunteers such as Ms. Deanna and Ms. Fran, who choose to take time out of their schedules to come here to ensure students have the best experience possible. VIPS is a family, whose members have a varying degree of visibility, but without these women, who fill in so many of the details, this family could not hold together. You are appreciated and loved for your service, my friends. If I have not told each and every one of you lately, "Thank you!"

Pre-K in the Spotlight

By Ashley Emmons, Pre-K Teacher, COMS, TVI, IECE

During the week of January 9-13, two of our Pre-K students had the opportunity to spend a week at the Kentucky School for the Blind's short term program. They participated in many different activities with the kindergarten class including math, social studies, science, arts and humanities, and adaptive physical education. Thank you, KSB, for allowing our students to participate in this wonderful program! They really enjoyed it!

Over the past several months, VIPS has been participating in the American Printing House for the Blind's Building on Patterns Prekindergarten Field Test. Each lesson of the curriculum includes a print and braille copy of the book, tactile storybooks related to the book, braille reading and writing lessons, and much more! Listed below are the some of the books we have recently enjoyed reading:

Plant Secrets

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

What's it like to be...a BUTTERFLY?

Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree

We have incorporated areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) into our daily schedule. Listed below are just a few detailed activities we have worked on the past couple of months!

Orientation & Mobility – We are learning a variety of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) skills. Students have practiced sighted guide/protective techniques (proper grip when walking with adult,

trailing, bumpers, etc). Students also explored a long cane and learned the parts of the cane. We discussed the purpose of using a cane, and learned about proper care and storage when using a cane. One of the main goals of O&M is independence. The Pre-K students are able to travel to 2 or more locations in the school building independently!



Compensatory Skills –Reviewing letter sounds, dot focus, and shape focus for the braille letters /g/, /y/, /c/, /v/, /l/, /a/, and /h/. Students have also practiced reading and writing each letter to add to his/her letter bank. The letter bank is a collection of the letters that he/she has mastered reading and/or writing.

Vance uses the Swing Cell to learn about braille dots and their placement.

Independent Living Skills –The Pre-K students were encouraged to show more responsibility during mealtimes such as lunch and snack. They were required to independently clean up their mess, placing trash in the garbage can, dishes in the sink, etc. They also helped wipe down the tables after mealtime using a soapy water filled spray bottle and paper towels. Each student also practiced using a hand held broom and dustpan to clean up any messes on the floor.

Assistive Technology

– Students were encouraged to select a different type of AT device to access different Gingerbread Man activities (e.g., sound book, computer, iPad, listening center, etc.).

Anthony and Charlotte listen to an audio book using headphones so they do not disturb other students.



Social Interaction Skills – Using the Second Step curriculum to learn more about "feelings" students learned more about what it means to feel happy, mad, sad, surprised, afraid, disgusted, etc. Students learned about these "feelings" through music, role-playing, puppet shows, videos, etc.

In math, our Pre-K students have been busy working on patterns, counting, and sorting, building their skill sets for the

demands of kindergarten. Besides identifying values of coins and learning about the concepts of more and less, they also worked on matching counted numbers of objects to written numerals in print and/or braille.



Anthony, Baxter and Vance make scared faces when talking about feelings.

Ballerina Strikes a Pose with VIPS

VIPS is delighted to be part of a collaborative Art for Kosair Kids five-year grant, with Kosair Charities and the Fund for the Arts. During the 2015-16 school year, artists from the Louisville Visual Art Association worked with VIPS students, ultimately producing tactile ceramic tiles, which are proudly displayed in the VIPS Louisville lobby. In 2016-17, our collaboration is with the Louisville Ballet and ballerina Elena Diehl who provides bimonthly movement sessions with the Kids Town preschoolers.

The goals of the sessions are improving body awareness, fine and gross motor coordination and proprioception (the unconscious awareness of movement and spatial orientation as detected by nerves in the muscles, tendons, joints and inner ear). An admiring crowd typically gathers around the glass doors to “ooooh” and “aaaah” at each activity performed by our precious little ones. Many thanks to Kosair Charities, the Fund for the Arts and the Louisville Ballet for such a creative use of funds.



Left: Ms. Elena (left) helps a student with a balancing exercise. Right: Children use different gross motor skills through a colorful, tactile obstacle course.



In Memoriam

This issue of the VIPS Parent Newsletter is dedicated to the memories of:

Maud Fliegelman,

of Louisville, a founding board member of VIPS, who passed away on December 16, 2016, at the age of 93.

~ and ~

Beau Coin,

son of Tom and Connie Coin of Louisville, who passed away peacefully at home on January 4, 2017 at the age of 22.

~ and ~

Ryanne Allen-Brown,

daughter of Eurika Allen of Louisville, who passed away on Feb. 6, 2017 at the age of two years.

Our hearts go out to all who knew and loved Maud, Beau and Ryanne.

In Honor of Maud Fliegelman

Maud Fliegelman was a founding board member the first President of the Board of VIPS. She continued to be a strong advocate and benefactor of VIPS going forward.



During the majority of her life, Maud volunteered her time and was an advocate for civil rights and child care. She was a member of The Temple and very active with NCJW, locally and at the national level. She was a co-founder and board member for CASA, as well as VIPS, co-founder and past president for Keystone Learning Academy, and a board member for both The Family & Children's Place and Home of the Innocents. On two occasions, she was invited to visit the White House: once during the Kennedy administration for civil rights, and during the Johnson administration for child care. Throughout her career she received many awards and citations, including the Distinguished Citizen Award from both the city of Louisville and the state of Kentucky, the Woman of Excellence Award from the Center for Women & Families, and many others. Her caring and generosity will be deeply missed.

She is survived by her loving family, her daughters, Ellen Prizant (Bruce) and Anne Oppenheimer (John) of Chicago; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Ellen has followed in her mother's footsteps in serving on the VIPS Board.



New Arrivals

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

Amador – 2 years, Salt Lick, KY
 Aria – 12 months, New Haven, KY
 Benjamin – 12 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Braden – 2 years, Sellersburg, IN
 Bradley – 22 months, Charlestown, IN
 BrayLynn – 10 months, Santa Claus, IN
 Brihanny – 21 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Bryleigh – 17 months, Medaryville, IN
 Callie – 2 years, Brownsburg, IN
 Charice – 9 months, South Bend, IN
 Delaney – 4 years, Mt. Washington, KY
 Eleanor – 11 months, Middlebury, IN
 Eli – 2 years, Sunman, IN
 Harper – 13 months, Highland Heights, KY
 Ignacio – 2 years, Louisville, KY
 Jase – 11 months, North Manchester, IN
 Karrington – 18 months, Lexington, KY
 Kyle – 2 years, McCordsville, IN
 Lavani – 8 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Liam – 6 months, Jeffersonville, IN
 Lily – 2 years, Nashville, IN
 Madelyn – 19 months, North Vernon, IN
 Nyjah – 8 months, Manchester, IN
 Peggy – 15 months, Somerset, KY
 Riley – 14 months, Fort Wayne, IN
 Serenity – 20 months, Mt. Washington, KY
 Truitt – 13 months, Lexington, KY
 Wyatt – 8 months, Lawrenceburg, KY

Riley enjoyed the smell and texture of her new Scentsy Buddy.



Braden is new to VIPS Louisville and is attending the 2s classroom in Kids Town Preschool.

VIPS Staff News

VIPS Indiana

Welcome Rita!

VIPS Indiana is happy to welcome Rita DeVore (AKA Meredith Howell's mother) to the staff. Born in Battle Creek, Michigan, Rita partnered with her parents in one of Battle Creek's busiest restaurants, Shrank's Cafeteria & Catering Company, for almost 25 years. During that time she was also the group fitness manager for Gold's Gym. She retired from both locations in 2007 to move to San Jose, Costa Rica to open up a bed and breakfast with her husband of 30 years, Steve. Casa Bella Rita was rated one of the most successful B&B's in Latin America by Trip Advisor for several years in a row.

But after almost 10 years of being away from family, they decided to move back to Indiana in 2016. Rita now divides her time working at Starbucks and as a respite care provider for her granddaughter, Lola, who is a VIPS graduate. Rita was an active volunteer for VIPS for many years. While abroad, she donated a stay at her B&B to the Tennis Ball auction. She has raised money through Walking for Dreams and now volunteers her time at Play and Learn (PAL) sessions. It seemed like a natural fit for Rita to begin working part-time as VIPS Indiana's Administrative Assistant since she is passionate about helping other children like her granddaughter. In addition to Lola, Rita has four other grandchildren and two daughters. She also brought two dogs from Costa Rica with her.



Rita plays with Benjamin during PAL.

VIPS Louisville

Paige, Ria and Elizabeth

Congratulations to Paige Maynard who has completed her Endorsement as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) along with her Masters of Science in Education!

After several years as preschool teacher at Kids Town Preschool, Paige has decided to go back on the road, serving VIPS children in their homes, preschools and child care centers. Paige is assuming the caseload of Ria Baker, who recently left VIPS to pursue other options. We wish Ria the best of luck in her endeavors and are thrilled to have Paige back on the road!

We are tickled to welcome Elizabeth Underwood to fill the Preschool Teacher position for the Orange Classroom. Elizabeth did her student teaching in Paige's classroom last fall when

still a student at Campbellsville University. Elizabeth is a native of Louisville and comes to us as a “preschool veteran” having worked as a teacher assistant at the University of Louisville Early Learning Campus and in the JCPS-YMCA’s Child Enrichment Program, providing before and after school care.

Elizabeth is very active in her church, serving as a greeter, Sunday school teacher and member of the church choir. She enjoys singing and reading, especially historical Christian romance, and along with her mother, volunteers as an usher at Actor’s Theater.

Elizabeth says she is excited to have the opportunity to work at VIPS! And we are most pleased to get to know her better as a colleague!



Elizabeth working with Ian and Trenton.

Notes of Interest



Visit teachingvisuallyimpaired.com and you will find a treasure trove of info about TVI-ing. It actually has units for the expanded core curriculum areas besides everything you ever wanted to know about everything connected to teaching children with visual impairments. It seems to be very well organized and useful for writing grants, planning lessons, understanding eligibility, etc. for teachers as well as parents.

Sight: The Story of Vision is a one-hour documentary narrated by Sir Elton John that tells how vision works, the leading causes of vision loss worldwide, glasses and innovation and research in the field. The DVD is available for sale online. For more information, go to the.storyofvision.com.

Did you know that VIPS has a new YouTube presence? If you type Visually Impaired Preschool Services into the search bar on YouTube, you will find several short videos including newly developed “**VIPS Tips,**” brief explanatory videos with a common sense approach to specific issues impacting blind and visually impaired youngsters. Learning how to make a Christmas Counting Book, the first VIPS Tip, and adapting an unfamiliar environment when Traveling to the Relatives for the Holidays, the second, are both short, user-friendly suggestions to make busy parents’ lives a little less frenetic and help educate and entertain their children at the same time.

VIPS Central KY Featured in Local Magazine

“My wish is that no one ever has to use our services; however, if a parent or family receives a diagnosis that their child is blind or visually impaired, I want to be sure that VIPS is the first resource that they think of to call.” That memorable statement by regional director Kelly Easton appeared in the January issue of *Tops in Lexington*. You can read this marvelous story on VIPS Central Kentucky online at topsinlexington.com. The article begins on page 98 of the January, 2017 issue.

Special Gifts of Time and Talent

VIPS Central Kentucky

Our Central KY office would like to thank the **Delta Beta Chapter of the University of Kentucky Delta Gammas** for continuing to provide wonderful volunteers for our family events and assistance in the office. We are so grateful to **Cecily DiPenti** for her work on our tactile birthday cards and **Amanda Landherr** for preparing our Parent’s Night Out activities. We were delighted to have **Savannah Carter, Angel Logan, Alexis Littrell, Walden Baunach, Olivia Goatley and Kaitlynn Callahan** help us with our Parent’s Night Out by being buddies to children and assisting them with crafts, games and snack. **Remy Filippo, Jenica Terry, Karlie Brown and Addie Meiners** helped children create



Above: Cecily DiPenti makes tactile birthday cards for VIPS children. Below: Remy Filippo, Jenica Terry, Karlie Brown and Addie Meiners helped children make ornaments at Pancakes with Santa.



Christmas ornaments and write letters to Santa at our Pancakes with Santa event hosted by Forcht Bank. Even after finals week had ended at UK and most students had left for the holidays, Delta Gamma's **Natalie Vish, Taylor Arnett and Anna McMahon** volunteered to assist with our Charlie Brown Christmas party. We truly could not do all of our family events without these fabulous volunteers!

VIPS Louisville

Thank you to **Heather Burns & Darren Harbour** from Commonwealth Theatre Center for reading books to the preschool students.



Darren Harbour captures the children's attention with an exciting story.

Every year the **Delta Gamma alumnae** faithfully provide an invaluable service in signing a personal message on each holiday card prior to mailing. We greatly appreciate the time and talents of **Lisa Bajorinas, Julie Campbell, Corinne Clark, Judy Davenport, Leslie Doms, Ginny Fuller, Chris Gary, Martha Hemminger, Geri Huff, June King, Christy Morgan, Mary Frances Pack and Luly Reinhardt.**

Thanks so very much to **Kosair Charities** and especially to **J.R. Riggs, Kosair Circus Chair**, for providing VIPS families with free tickets to the Kosair Shrine Circus!

Thanks to our perennially wonderful volunteers **Fran Woodward** for her help in the Two Day Twos and **Deanna Scoggins** who models excellent braille reading skills and works with the Twos as well as the preschoolers.

Atherton High School's **Alyssa Shippey**, daughter of VIPS Controller Kim Shippey, once again helped with completion of office tasks. We are thankful for her able assistance.

We greatly appreciate the work of **VIPS mom Donna Dangler and her daughters, Lizy, Lilly and Lucy**, who did outstanding work cataloging and shelving a huge influx of new books for the VIPS Parent Library, as well as many other tasks requested by teachers and admin staff.

VIPS Indiana

We owe our gratitude to **Larry Ledford from WHAS Crusade for Children** for producing a news story about one of VIPS Indiana's very own stars, **Rhylee**, and her journey with retinopathy of prematurity. We thank Rhylee's family for sharing her story of perseverance as she is truly an inspiring young lady.

VIPS Indiana would like to say thank you to the **Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Indianapolis (YNPN Indy)** for braving the extremely cold temps on December 15th, 2016 to make World Braille Day cards. We will be giving these cards to Indiana legislators as we begin our advocacy efforts once again on behalf of the children and families we serve.



Many thanks to the wonderful members of the **Purdue University Circle K** as they made scratch mats for the children we serve.

A special thank you to **David Sterne** for facilitating the opportunity for VIPS to participate in the **Northview Church of Brethren Alternative Christmas Fair** on November 12th. Annie manned the booth as VIPS sold brailled pottery ornaments and raised almost \$200 from the event.

Happenings Around VIPS

VIPS Louisville

PNC Bank Dedication

A special cutting of the "signature PNC orange ribbon" was held on December 6th in Kosair CharitiesKids Town to officially open the newest bank branch in town. Kids Town preschoolers sang songs to representatives from PNC Bank, including those who oversee the local PNC Foundation, a long-time generous funder of VIPS. Students will use the newly-branded space in Kids Town to learn important life skills.

Cutting the ribbon are John Anders, of PNC Bank & VIPS Board Member; Maddie Horlander, Kids Town Preschool Student; and Norman Horlander, of PNC Bank & Maddie's Grandfather.



JCPS Honors VIPS Louisville for Our Five Star Rating

The first day back from Christmas Break, Kids Town Preschool staff were treated to a wonderful surprise! A group of enthusiastic administrators and TVI's from Jefferson County Public Schools showed up bearing a cake and heartfelt congratulations for Kathy Mullen, Beth Krebs and Kids Town Preschool teachers and aides for all of their hard work in achieving a 5-star-rating! Thanks to Mary Anne Reynolds, Coordinator of JCPS Vision Services and Lorraine Cunningham, Placement Specialist, for organizing the celebration!!

A delicious cake shared among appreciative colleagues.



VIPS Central Kentucky

Education Outreach in Central Kentucky

Central Kentucky Regional Director Kelly Easton was invited by the parent group Build Inclusion to present information on blindness and visual impairments at several Fayette County elementary schools as a speaker for **AIM! Advocacy+Inclusion on a Mission**, a disability education program. Over 1000 students learned how children who are blind or visually impaired are able to do the same things that they do, but maybe in a different way. Kelly used vision simulation goggles to show them how someone with low vision might see the world, shared examples of different types of assistive technology that are available and showed them how to write in braille using a slate and stylus.

Build Inclusion was formed by parents of children with varying abilities, who know that true inclusion must move beyond "awareness." It is "experience" that produces empathy and



A student tried a pair of visual impairment simulators.

AIM! Advocacy + Inclusion on a Mission is a disability education program. Through a week-long experience in their PE, art, music, computer, etc. classes students learn that disability does not equal inability.

AIM! is endorsed by the LFUCG Mayor's Commission for Citizens With Disabilities, the Fayette County Public Schools Special Education Department and the 16th District PTA Exceptional and Gifted Student Council.



Kelly demonstrated the braille cell using a muffin pan & balls to represent the six dot positions.

EnVISIONing the Future

VIPS provided a resource table at the **17th Annual EnVISIONing the Future Day** held on November 16th in Ashland. Presented by the Kentucky Educational Development Special Education Cooperative, this was a day set aside to bring students with blindness/visual impairments, their families, teachers, and service providers together to gain new learning experience, to network and to learn from each other. The day's events included hands-on learning activities and collaboration with representatives from various related organizations and agencies.

VIPS Indiana

Partners in Policymaking

Submitted by Rebecca Davis, parent of VIPS graduate and former VIPS Indiana Development Director

Partners in Policymaking (PIP), an advocacy course funded by the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, invited Rebecca Davis, former PIP student and parent of a VIPS graduate, to present to the current class of advocates about **her community project, now known as VIPS Indiana**. Rebecca spoke about her experience as a PIP graduate and shared some of the VIPS story to approximately 35 current PIP students at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Indianapolis.

Rebecca participated in the 2010-11 class of Partners in Policymaking to learn about the services for children with disabilities

in Indiana and to learn how to affect changes in legislation. The resources and education from PIP seminars were critical to Rebecca's work in advocating for the launch of a new VIPS office. The community project assignment gave her a foundation upon which she could approach Executive Director, Diane Nelson, and the VIPS Board of Directors.

It was a pleasure to share the VIPS Indiana story with the current PIP class.

Many thanks to *Christine Dahlberg, Executive Director of the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities and to presenter, Robert (Bobby) Silverstein.* Mr. Silverstein was the "behind-the-scenes architect" of more than 20 bills enacted into law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). His presentations at Partners in Policymaking were particularly inspirational to this VIPS mom from Bloomington.



Rebecca and Bobby Silverstein.

VIPS Indiana Collaboration with IUPUI

Lauren Wherry and Ellen Webb, Service Learning students from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), finished their donated time with VIPS in Indiana by making tactile scratch mats for the children who are just beginning to explore tactually. The purpose of the collaboration was to allow college students to explore a variety of employment opportunities in the health and education fields. They were also provided with specific training about the impact of vision loss upon learning and development in young children. The good news is that the collaboration was so successful, Professor Keely Floyd of IUPUI plans to send more students our way next semester!



Grants, Fundraising, and Donations

VIPS Central Kentucky

Lexington Lions Charity Night

On November 14th, *Regional Director Kelly Easton and Advisory Board President Scott Duncan* attended the *Lexington Lions Club Charity Gifting Night* to accept a donation of

\$10,000. We are so thrilled with this generous gift that will go towards providing early intervention services to children in Central Kentucky. In appreciation, our office is collecting bottle caps for the Lexington Lions Club that will be recycled into benches that will be placed at Masterson Station Park for the Lexington Lions Bluegrass Fair. For over 55 years the Lexington Lions Club has presented the Bluegrass Fair that raises funds for community organizations to provide vision and hearing services to people who cannot afford them. Mark your calendar to join us at this year's fair from July 13th-23rd at Masterson Station Park, 3051 Leestown Rd!

Thank You Walmart!

Walmart's Community Grant Program provided recent grants to VIPS Central Kentucky for early intervention services. Each store was presented a special framed "Thank You."

Grey Lag Way Walmart #3894 - \$500

Saron Drive Walmart #4413 - \$1000

Nicholasville Rd Walmart #2628 - \$1000.



VIPS Indiana

Indy Santa-Fred and Lincoln Square Pancake House



Our heartfelt gratitude goes to *Indy Santa-Fred (thanks to Fred Imhausen)* and the *Lincoln Square Pancake House in Historic Irvington* for their collaboration to raise money for VIPS Indiana and the children we serve. On December 21st, Indy Santa-Fred and Lincoln Square Pancake House hosted "Lunch with Santa." Indy Santa-Fred

gave children an opportunity to have their picture taken and offered a suggestion to their parents to make a small donation to VIPS in exchange. This effort meant a lot to our agency because we can't do what we do without the community support from individuals and businesses such as these!

Lebanon Key Club's "Dinner in the Dark"

On Wednesday, November 9th Annie Hughes teamed up with the amazing students from the *Lebanon Senior High School Key Club* as they hosted their fourth annual "Dinner in the Dark" to benefit the children we serve. After a PowerPoint presentation and opportunities to participate in completing tasks without their vision, the lights went out, participants again donned their sleep

shades and dinner was served. This effort of these wonderful high school students made \$500 that will be used to provide early intervention home visits.



Grants

- **Smithville Charitable Foundation:** \$10,440 will go towards the Direct Services Program benefiting children living in south and central Indiana.
- **3Rivers Credit Union Foundation:** \$4,600 will provide 25 home visits to children living in the 3Rivers Credit Union Foundation community.
- **Nicholas H. Noyes, Jr., Memorial Foundation:** \$3,000 to support critical early intervention services to infants and toddlers with blindness or low vision in Marion County.
- **Subaru of Indiana Automotive Foundation, Inc.:** \$2,400 will purchase two LightAides with two Visual Efficiency Activity Sets.
- **NineStar Connect:** \$1,600 will go toward early intervention services for children living in the NineStar Connect community.

VIPS Louisville

USTA Southern Award

The United States Tennis Association Southern Section recognized the VIPS Tennis Ball & Tournament on January 21st with an award for "2016 Special Event of the Year". Tournament Founder Jay Hatcher, along with Martha Hack, VIPS Events Manager, and Heather Benson, Director of Development, accepted the award at a special luncheon held in Atlanta. The USTA Southern section represents nine states including Kentucky. It was truly an honor



(L-R) Jay Hatcher, Heather Benson, and Martha Hack.

to receive such special recognition for an event that has grown more than 600% since its inception and raised nearly \$1 million!

By the way, mark your calendars for the 2017 Tennis Ball & Tournament for June 3rd & 4th at the Louisville Boat Club!

Kosair Holiday Luncheon

Executive Directors of 50+ non-profit agencies were invited by Kosair Charities to a Making Seasons Bright Luncheon at Audubon Country Club to celebrate the agencies Kosair assists that serve children. We were once again overwhelmed by the support we receive from Kosair Charities when they presented each agency with a surprise gift ranging from a few thousand dollars to \$50,000!



This pretty box held a very special gift for VIPS!

This was such an unexpected, life changing, amazing gift \$50,000 worth of holiday charity! We thank Kosair Charities and especially our board member Glen Stuckel for this extremely generous blessing. The total that Kosair gifted that day was \$1.6 million!

Grants

- Kosair Charities: \$50,000 for various programs.
- Fred B. & Opal S. Woosley Foundation: \$25,000 for Family Services
- Irvin F. & Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation: \$15,000 for various capital needs
- The Community Foundation of Louisville: \$7,350 for new VIPS promotional Video

Holiday Campaign

Many thanks to those who so generously donated to VIPS during its 2016 Holiday Campaign. At press time, donations totaled over \$92,000 agency-wide, which will have a tremendous impact on the children and families served by VIPS. Individual donors are listed beginning on page 19.

Simple Ways You Can Help VIPS

Kroger Community Rewards Program

Just by shopping for groceries, you can give back to VIPS! All you have to do is go online to connect your Kroger Plus Card to

the VIPS account (Louisville #10771; Central KY #30423; Indy #74094) and a percentage of your grocery bill will be donated back. Visit Kroger.com and select Community/Kroger Community Rewards to get started. To date, VIPS has received nearly \$19,000 in donations from this program!

Amazon Smile

Another easy way to support VIPS is connecting your Amazon account to VIPS. The online shopping giant gives back to charity through Amazon Smile. Just log into your account at smile.amazon.com and search for Visually Impaired Preschool Services. Once you connect to us, shop away!

Nanz & Kraft

VIPS-Louisville has been selected as one of the supported charities in the Nanz & Kraft Helping Hands program. The floral company created Helping Hands as a way to continuously give back to the community all year long. If you select VIPS when ordering flowers, Nanz & Kraft will make a \$2.00 donation to the agency. For more information, visit nanzandkraft.com.

Gifts from the Heart

The Hales Family -- Ginger, Mark, Sophie, Christian, Judah, and Abby -- are so very grateful for the donation of a piano from a friend of VIPS!

Judah and Abby playing a piano duet.



Each year, wonderful folks adopt VIPS families for the Holidays. We are very thankful for the **Beechmont Women's Club, Delta Gamma Alumnae, and Norton Healthcare Ancillary Services** for making the holidays happier for three VIPS families.



Members of the Beechmont Women's Club wrapping packages for the family they adopted. (At left is VIPS grandmother & BWC member Vicki May.)

We so appreciate **Donna from Hometown Pizza** who donated 100 coupons for free pizzas for our VIPS families! Thanks so much!

Thanks to **Dr. Furman Glenn and Lester Sanders, of Omega Psi Phi - Theta Omega Chapter**, for the donation of Kroger Gift Cards for VIPS families for Christmas. Thanks also to Lester and the Louisville Board of Realtors for the donation of a variety of small gift items that VIPS used to set up a Holiday "Store" for the children to use for shopping for family and friends.



(L-R) Dr. Glenn, Vance (in a very prayerful pose), Baxter, Diane Nelson, Lester Sanders.

Kids in Ms. Ashley's PreK Class made lists of people they wanted to shop for and then went to the little VIPS store to make their selections.



Thanks to **Jim Schindler's third grade class from Collegiate** for the donation of tactual cards. We love the concept of children helping other children!

VIPS Wish List

VIPS Louisville

* From school/office supplies department:

- Elmer's Glue
- Glue sticks that start out blue but dry clear
- Binding rings that open and close (all sizes please!!)

* From party favors department:

- Small plastic bangle bracelets – usually found with party favors

* From crafts department:

- Elastic String - usually found with jewelry/beads
- Small wooden letters

* From the hardware department:

- Door hinges

*** From the kitchen utensils department:**

Measuring cups that are connected with a ring
 Basting brushes
 Small mesh strainers
 Small funnels
 Bottle brush (sometimes in infant department)

*** From the cosmetics/toiletries departments:**

Hand Sanitizer
 Sponge hair rollers
 Small combs
 Hand Sanitizer
 Fingernail brushes
 Very small cosmetic bags with closures
 Bendable hair rollers – perhaps foam on the outside and metal on the inside (anything that looks easy for kids to handle, but is not sharp or otherwise dangerous)

VIPS Central Kentucky

Foam stickers
 Baby wipes
 Clorox wipes
 Cardstock in various colors
 Laminating sheets
 Powdered tempera paint
 Rolls of butcher paper

VIPS Indiana

Manila file folders
 Classification folders with 2 partitions
 Red and yellow slinkies
 Bell bracelets
 Small jingle bells for shaker tubes
 Grocery store gift cards for PALs

Thanks to Our Donors

Thanks to the kind individuals and organizations that have supported VIPS so generously over the past few months.

Mr. & Mrs. Les Aberson
 Mr. Joe Ackerman
 Ms. Ann Adams
 Ms. Deepti Advani
 Reshma & Rahul Aggarwal
 Jim & Patti Aigner
 Ms. Julia H. Allen
 Jamie & Nicole Allen
 Ms. Susan Ament
 Mr. Matt Ammerman
 Mr. & Mrs. Saul Anhouse
 Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Anthony
 Dani Aramouni
 Mr. David Armstrong
 Ms. Gayle Arrasmith
 Joe F. Arterberry, M.D., F.A.C.S.
 Dr. S. Pearson Auerbach
 Brian & Kellie Bagnick
 Mr. & Mrs. Sam B. Baker
 Ms. Sarah Baker
 Megan & Aaron Barnes
 Mr. & Mrs. Randy Barnett

Dawn & Steve Bauccho
 Lou Bayens
 Colleen B. & Jim Beach
 Ms. Jill Beasley
 Mr. William Beavin
 Mr. & Mrs. John W. Bell, Jr.
 Bob & Leslie Bender
 Steven & Kristen Bennett
 Chip & Samira Bensinger
 Ms. Robin Bensinger
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Bensinger
 Donnie & Karen Benson
 Heather & Aaron Benson
 Ms. Susan Berman
 Ms. Amber Bertram
 Mr. & Mrs. Randy Bertram
 Josh & Megan Betz
 Sister Barbara Bir
 Dr. & Mrs. Jerry Bizer
 Dr. & Mrs. Wayne Bizer
 Mr. & Mrs. Blackburn
 Ms. Susan Blois

Ms. Mary J. Boling
 Mrs. Christy Bookhout
 Mr. & Mrs. Booth
 Sarah & Landon Borders
 Ms. Kelley Scroggin & Mr. Jim Bosworth
 Mrs. Patsy Bourke
 Mr. & Mrs. Bradley Bowman
 Linda Brassell
 Dave & Linda Brewer
 Tom & Sabina Briggs
 Donna & Brian Lee
 Mr. & Mrs. Damon Brown
 Jack Brown
 Ms. Joyce V. Brown
 Ms. Carol Browning & Mr. Winston Miller
 Jan & Cliff Browning
 Ms. Judith Browning
 Joe & Robin Bryant
 Patty & Joe Burkland
 Mrs. Vicki Bussard
 Maggie & Dave Cajka
 Mr. & Mrs. John G. Campbell

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Campbell
 Mr. Daryl Carlson
 Bill & Sandy Carroll
 Nichole Carter
 Mr. & Mrs. William Catlett, Jr.
 Mr. Brad Char
 Troy & Rachel Chester
 Ms. Patricia Chevalier
 Debbie & Herbie Clark
 Chris Clark
 Ms. Suzanne Clarke
 David & Brittany Clayton
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Cleary
 Mark & Mary Clements
 Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Coan
 Mr. & Mrs. Stewart Cobb
 Edwin H. Cohen & Dafna Schnurr
 Dr. Linda Lee Cohen
 Mrs. Lauren Coleman
 Ms. Cheri Ann Collins
 Bob & Terri Connolly
 Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Cooper
 Mark & Chris Corrigan
 Ms. Victoria S. Costello
 Mrs. Judy Burkhardt Cottongim
 Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Cromer
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles J. Cronan, IV
 Mr. & Mrs. Crutchfield
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Visually Impaired
Preschool Services

1906 Goldsmith Lane
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VISability is made possible through grants from the Linda Neville Foundation and the Fred B. and Opal S. Woosley Foundation.

Upcoming Events

VIPS Central Kentucky

Tuesday, May 9

Central Kentucky Golf Outing at Keene Trace Golf Club. For info, contact vipslex@vips.org.

Thursday, July 13 - Sunday, July 23

Lexington Lions Club's Bluegrass Fair at Masterson Station Park, 3051 Leestown Rd.

VIPS Louisville

Saturday, April 15

Buns with the Bunny Breakfast to celebrate Easter. Contact Martha Hack, mhack@vips.org or 502-498-2926 for details.

Wednesday, April 19

Donuts with Dad, 7:30 - 9 a.m., before the start of preschool.

Wednesday, May 10

Muffins with Mom, 7:30 - 9 a.m., before the start of preschool.

Monday, May 22

Yum! Brands Golf Tournament at Persimmon Ridge Golf Club. Contact Martha Hack, mhack@vips.org or 502-498-2926 for specifics.

Saturday, June 3 & Sunday, June 4

2017 Tennis Ball & Tournament presented by Brown-Forman at the Louisville Boat Club. Contact Martha Hack, mhack@vips.org or 502-498-2926 for info.

VIPS Indiana

Now through April 28

reVISION, an exhibit of fantastic, touchable art will continue at the Interchurch Center, 1100 W. 42nd St., 9 - 4 daily.

Saturday, April 22

"Concert for a Cause" to benefit VIPS Indiana. Contact Meredith Howell at mhowell@vips.org or (317) 902-0931 for more details. See pg. 23.

Saturday, May 6

Spring-themed Play and Learn (PAL) event for VIPS families and children. A sing-a-long, story sharing, speaker, and refreshments. Stay tuned for more details!

Sunday, May 21

Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk, downtown Indianapolis. Registration 2:00 pm, walk 3:00 pm from 337 West 11th Street along the canal. To walk, donate or sponsor, please visit: www.walkingfordreams.org or contact Meredith Howell at mhowell@vips.org or (317) 902-0931.

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