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School's In Session at Kids Town Preschool First Day Memories

By Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

I do not remember my first day of preschool. I am old enough that there was no such thing as preschool for three- and four-year-olds. There was no such thing as childcare centers. The closest thing to preschool I ever experienced was hanging out with my cousins on the mornings our mothers gave each other home perms.

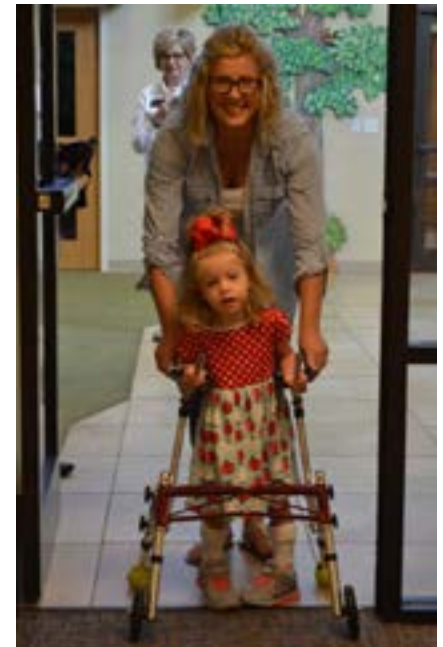


Hadley Jo arrived with a new classmate, her service dog Ariel.

But I do remember my first day of kindergarten. I was six weeks shy of my fifth birthday. Perhaps it was more like preschool than I thought. I remember walking into the classroom and the first thing I noticed were the tables. Shiny tables. A red table. A blue table. A green table. And a yellow table. I

remember standing in awe of how beautiful the tables were. I remember how big that classroom was! Really big to my four-year-old eyes. I remember the relief I felt when I found my name on the blue table. My nametag told me I belonged. That feeling is just as important to a young child as it is to adults.

I remember meeting my kindergarten teacher. Mrs. Wallace was the perfect combination of mother, nurse, and army sergeant. I am pretty sure she was the person in mind when the term "ruling with an velvet fist" was coined. The morning bell rang at 7:55 a.m. and I was in love with Mrs. Wallace by 8:15 a.m. I began planning for my future career before dismissal at noon on that first day of kindergarten.



Kendall was ready for the first day of school!



Tyler was determined to have a great school year; Olive got right to work.



Miss Elizabeth helped Kaylee sign in.

We do things differently now and for that I am grateful. Back in the days of my first experiences in school, everyone looked like me. We had the same color hands, we shopped at the same Kroger or Winn Dixie, we swam in the same pools, and we worshipped in the same church. The gift of diversity had not come our way yet. We were unaware that was wrong. If we still operated under the same practices, we would not have a Kids Town Preschool. Our friends of color would not be side-by-side with the students who look like me. We would have 11 fewer preschoolers with us. Our friends with special needs would be sitting at home, unserved and unprotected by the federal law that was a wake-up call to public education. Fifteen more students would be missing. It would be really, really sad.

I am grateful for the preparation we put into making the first day of school a safe day for our students. Each year we celebrate the beginning of the new school year by inviting our Kids Town families for a pizza dinner, a special time to play on the outdoor playground, and for a chance to visit teachers in their classrooms. As in years past, during this year's Family Orientation on August 22, little friends were excited to see each other again. Parents were just as happy to catch up with each other. Stories were shared about summer events. Some stories were happy – vacations, new births, new skills acquired. Some stories were sad – illnesses, hospital stays, the loss of a loved one. All stories were welcomed and helped us weave the tapestry we call VIPS.

Our Kids Town Preschool parents signed up for volunteer opportunities in the classroom on that special night. They listened to important information shared by our teachers and new assistant preschool director. They asked questions. Lots of questions. Some parents had to rush off to meet another child after a school or church commitment. Other parents stayed around for a long time. Members of the VIPS team turned out the lights and left the building with full hearts. We were finished with the preparation. It was time to welcome back the kiddos. We had missed them!

We have another group of VIPS families experiencing first days of their own. First days of kindergarten! Parents asked, "Are you sure my child is ready? Can they stay at Kids Town just one more year?" First days of preschool in other centers! Parents asked, "Do these teachers know how to teach a blind child? When will the VIPS teacher be here?" As I write this article, the fourth week of kindergarten and second week of preschool are in the books. I feel safe saying that the fear our VIPS parents felt the night before the first day of school are in the past as well.

The day after this year's Family Orientation, I read in the paper that Mrs. Wallace, my kindergarten teacher, had passed away. She was 92! She had a family! I never knew. She was just Mrs. Wallace, the Wonderful. I have a feeling I am going to think about her a lot this school year. Each time, my heart will be filled with gratitude. I hope that at the end of this school year, your hearts are filled with gratitude as well.

Congratulations Class of 2017!!

by Beth Krebs, former Assistant Preschool Director, Instructional Assistant

We had another wonderful graduation held on May 25, 2017 in the beautiful ballroom of Kosair Shrine Center. There were 10 participants. Seven children graduated from Kids Town Preschool: **Alex, Caleb, Isaiah, Lena, Louisa, Pyper and Zachary**. We also had three students graduating from our PreK program: **Anthony, Baxter and Vance**. An audience filled with family and friends of the graduates joined in this wonderful celebration. It was a night filled with laughter and tears.

Some special guests came to honor our graduates, as well. **John Fendig of the Dartmouth Club of Louisville** presented our graduates with the Dr. Suess book, "Oh, the Places You'll Go" in honor of one of Dartmouth's most famous alum. **Kiatt Wood, of The Daughters of the American Revolution**, presented each graduate with a brailled American flag. Then she kindly led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Special thanks to **Music Therapist, Greta Gillmeister**, for the lovely song and video she prepared and performed with the children. Also a heartfelt thanks to **Instructional Assistant, LaRhonda Daniels**, for her beautiful video of our children as they grew and learned along with the yearbook each graduate received!

The graduates will be leaving VIPS to attend a variety of different schools. Some will be going to Kentucky School for the Blind, Bloom Elementary, and Watson Lane Elementary. Others haven't quite decided where they will attend kindergarten. One graduate, Louisa Mae, will return to VIPS for one more year. We wish them all great success in all of the places they will go!



A Call to Parents: Tell Us Your Stories!!

by Mary Smyth, CIPS Central KY Office Manager

Every parent has a story to tell and we'd like to share it during October for Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month.

"Do I have a story?" you may ask. Yes! You most certainly do. *"What's my story?"* you may inquire. Your story is about raising a remarkable and wonderful child who just happens to be blind or visually impaired. *"Why should I tell it?"* To celebrate your child, to inspire other parents and receive their encouragement as they respond to your story, and to bring awareness to the community of what it's like to raise a child who is blind or visually impaired.

"You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think" (A. A. Milne). *"Okay. I'd like to tell my story. What should I write?"* Write whatever you'd like to share about your child. It could be a sweet moment between you and your child. A success or challenge he/she has had to face. An incident or situation that positively or negatively impacted your child and family. A day-in-the-life-of your child and family, or whatever you feel inspired from your heart to write. You may write a few sentences or a few paragraphs. It's all up to you.

VIPS will be sharing your story on Facebook throughout the month of October for Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness month. Stories may also be published in the next edition of the VisAbility newsletter. If you have a picture or short video (less than 2 minutes in length) of your sweet child please send that along with your story. Please email your story and picture/video to Mary Smyth at viplslex@vips.org.

CVI Clinic Forges New Partnership

by Kathy Mullen, Director of Education



Early last spring, VIPS Central Kentucky teacher and early interventionist, Dixie Miller, was approached by a representative from the amazing **Ophthalmology Department of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC)** about combining forces on a special project. The folks at CCHMC were launching a study on services for families with children who have a diagnosis of a cortical visual impairment (CVI) or are demonstrating characteristics of CVI. The target audience was to be children who are between twelve months and seven years old who receive vision services four times a month or less.

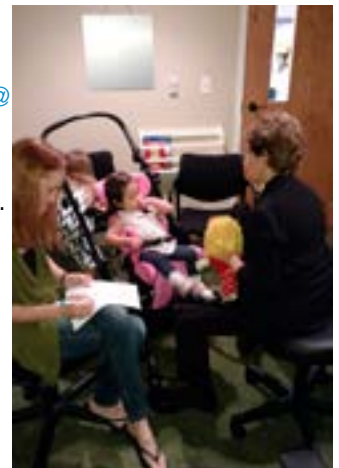
VIPS Louisville welcomed four team members from the CCHMC program, including Dr. Terry Schwartz, in early May. Six families registered for the clinic, traveling up to three hours to attend. The children were treated to a top-notch assessment followed by the most informative review of results provided by the dedicated occupational therapists accompanying Dr. Schwartz. The VIPS team members attending with the families found the review sessions just as enlightening. These same families returned to the VIPS Louisville campus for a follow-up visit with the Cincinnati team in early September.

A second clinic was held in July. Six families participated on this special day as well. Another clinic has been scheduled for late September. New locations for the clinics are being explored so that all regions of Kentucky are reached.

If you are interested in more information about the CVI clinics, please contact Dixie Miller at dmiller@vips.org or (859) 276-0335 or Kathy Mullen, Director of Education, at kmullen@vips.org or (502) 498-2927.

We are grateful for our partnership with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center Department of Ophthalmology, as it helps us to better serve our VIPS families.

CCHMC staff work with Bridget.



Summer = Learning & Fun at VIPS!!

Learning does not take a summer vacation at VIPS. All three campuses offered special activities throughout the summer months to keep curiosity primed, new experiences coming, and skills sharp for VIPS children.

VIPS Indiana

Summer Play and Learn (PAL)

by Meredith Howell, Assistant Director

On Wednesday, August 16, VIPS families in Indiana enjoyed a summer Play-and-Learn (PAL) that provided lots of great information. **Cyndi Johnson** spoke about Letters of Intent, ABLE Accounts and other resources, and **Gordon Homes** shared information and packets regarding special needs trusts. Both Cyndi and Gordon have their own children with special needs, so their information had an authenticity that families appreciated.

Families also enjoyed refreshments thanks to **Trader Joe's and Starbucks**, took home a make-and-take "container play" auditory toy, and enjoyed spending time with other VIPS families. VIPS staff and **Delta Gamma volunteer Laurie Roselle** played with the children so parents had free hands and could focus on the presentations.



Left: Cyndi Johnson speaks to VIPS parents about future planning. Below Left: Tristan climbs on wonderful Delta Gamma volunteer, Laurie Roselle, while Preston listens and observes. Below right: Little Luke enjoys a LightAide.



VIPS Central Kentucky

Summer Sensations

by Kelly Easton, Regional Director

What do skinks, starfish, and saxophones all have in common? VIPS children and their siblings were able to touch and explore all three things at the VIPS Central Kentucky Summer Sensations camps! Each day of camp celebrated a different theme, and guest speakers invited from the community shared hands-on experiences with our campers.

On June 2, the children had a wild time during our Animal Adventure themed camp. Campers embraced their artistic side with Chameleon Paintings, Bird's Nests, and by painting masterpieces by crawling around and stomping on paint covered poster board. They explored sensory tubs themed to different animal habitats, and washed off dirty farm animals in the water play area. **Rosie's Ponies** came to visit and the children were



Sylvie got a sweet kiss from a sheep!



Sayla got to hold a baby alligator!

able to ride a pony, pet the dwarf goats, Sprinkles and Spot, and feel the difference between sheep who have been shorn and sheep that still sported their full fleece. In the afternoon, **Kentucky Reptile Zoo** brought out a menagerie of animals for the children to touch and discover. Campers were able to come face to face with an alligator, several turtles, a skink, a black snake and even a python!

The children learned facts about each animal and how each came to have a home with the Kentucky Reptile Zoo. We think the adults enjoyed the lesson just as much as the campers did!

On July 30, our campers came out ready to enjoy the Water World our staff had awaiting them. From washing cars in the 'car wash' and sitting in the 'duck pond' to playing at the pouring station and creating huge bubbles, the children all had a wet and wild time. **Wellness Music Therapy** came out to sing some songs with us in the morning session, and the children had a blast playing with scarves and shakers while they sang along with **music therapist Pam Withrow**.



With encouragement from Ms. Dixie, Truitt tries the water play pool.

The afternoon session welcomed a guest from **The Living Arts and Sciences Center**, who taught us all about the animals who live in the ocean and how we all rely on clean water to live. Each camper had the opportunity to 'rescue' a sea creature from a frozen environment using just eyedroppers of dripping water and some simple tools. A spirited water balloon battle was the perfect ending to the afternoon!



Carter checks out a saxophone.

On August 11, Campers came out ready to shake, rattle and roll as they celebrated music and the arts at the final session of Summer Sensations in Central Kentucky. The **Lexington Philharmonic** gave our kids an exciting hands on experience with all sorts of instruments, from trumpets to triangles. **Allegro Dance Company** led an interactive dance lesson that got everyone involved in jumping, leaping, rolling and stretching.

With art projects such as stained glass votives, puffy painting, watercolor salt art and musical rainsticks, all campers developed a heart for art!

Many thanks to our volunteers from the *Tates Creek High School Softball Team* and the *University of Kentucky's TVI program!*

VIPS Louisville

Visions of Summer: Kentucky Sights to Behold in Kids Town Preschool

by Staci Maynard, TVI, VIPS Louisville

This year's VIPS summer enrichment program wrapped up on July 20 after six weeks of learning about different natural features, attractions, and recreational options in the state of Kentucky. Our two classes had a total of nineteen students, who came between one and four days a week to learn about Kentucky and Louisville's parks, animal attractions, transportation, arts, and museums. Children got to discover that there are cool local places to visit such as the *Belle of Louisville*, the *Newport Aquarium*, *Mammoth Cave*, and the *Speed Museum*.

Besides the usual VIPS play favorites of Kids Town, the sensory room, and the playground, students also had fun with more organized learning activities in the classrooms. They learned about transportation by helping Slow-Down Snail figure out the best way to get to different places he needed to go, by experimenting with flotation using boats and cargo in the water table, and by practicing directional terms with parachute play. The children explored different animal textures, acted like animals, and pretended to be paleontologists digging for dinosaur fossils in the sand table.

Classes also learned about caves, waterfalls, and camping in Kentucky parks. They made caves out of clay and sugar cubes, made cave drawings with oil pastels on the walls, and fished for letters of the alphabet that they then identified. When discovering Louisville parks, students made tactile books out of natural items they found outside, sorted foods that were good for picnics from those that are not, and searched for items around school using binoculars. During Louisville Arts week, students experimented with changes in sound using water jars, were introduced to making pointillism art, and were exposed to tap dancing and other artistic movement.

Students were given the opportunity to experience a variety of special activities related to Kentucky recreation and leisure. Prior to the July 4 holiday, classes went for a picnic at Joe Creason Park. They also spent time playing on the playground and searching for natural items. VIPS had several guests come to talk to us about artistic hobbies and careers. *Pauletta Feldman* and

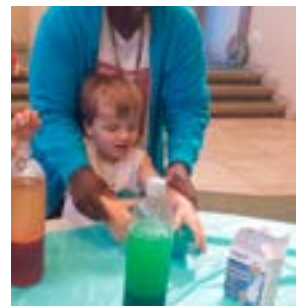
Would everyone who likes art with Ms. Jan, please raise your hand?



Jan Moseley, two of our respected staff members, stopped by to share their artistic work in quilting and visual art. The students were given the opportunity to practice skills in these art forms. *Darren Harbour*, a local actor who is visually impaired, exposed children to foundational dramatic activities. *The Kentucky Science Center* visited VIPS to let children explore sensory science stations. Then, students had fun with water and bubbles on the last day of the summer program.



Left: Eli watches a chemical reaction with foam. Right: Zachary creates gas bubbles in a chemical reaction with water and Alka Seltzer.



Ms. Elizabeth and I want to thank our assistants, special guests, and VIPS parents for their help this summer. Everyone had fun learning about our state!

Fridays Were For Friends

From humble beginnings Friday Friends has emerged as a huge hit when we consider numbers of children who attend. Friday Friends began as a way to share the many blessings and opportunities of the VIPS physical site and skilled staff with VIPS and community children accompanied by their parents. This summer there were almost sixty children who enjoyed the intellectually and socially stimulating speakers, events and activities presented during the six Friday Friends sessions.

Selected children's books formed the center of activities. Study of the letter D was encouraged by *One Duck Stuck* while the *Mixed Up Chameleon* led to an art activity in which mixing and changing colors were the thrust of the action. Participation in a Make-and-Take activity was a consistent part of each day, as were visits to the Sensory Room, playground and Kids Town.

Fantastic volunteers and parents supported the staff on each busy Friday. Special thanks to *music therapist Greta Gilmeister* who coordinated parachute play, singing and movement, while Instructional Assistant and resident artist *Shelby Birchler* made



3-dimensional sculptures with the children. *Jessica Turpin*, sister of a VIPS graduate, played the harp one Friday; *Deanna Scoggins*, with her guide dog Virginia, read *The Buffalo* in braille on another. The children enjoyed water play on the final Friday and watched a slide show of each Friday's activities.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made Friday Friends such a wonderful way to start the weekend!

VIPS Louisville Has a New Twos Crew



Grayson



Gabriel



Brindle



Rose



Nicholas



Nolan



Ainsley just got glasses and wants to make you smile!



When Nicholas isn't working with his VIPS teacher, Ms. Mary, he likes to help out around the homeplace!



Right: Aubrey and her mom are working on tactile deviousness by exploring different textures.



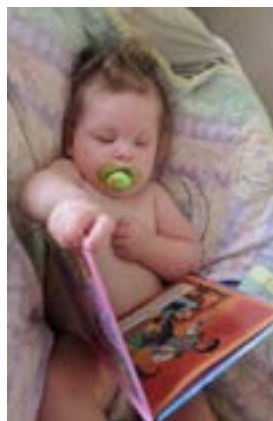
Madelyn is determined to go where she wants to go on her own.



Dads are first teachers, too! Steve encourages Oliver to move to the toy.

Visions from the Homefront

Most VIPS children are seen in their homes by our traveling developmental interventionists and teachers of the visually impaired. Seeing these pictures, you can understand how they fall in love with the children they serve and their families. And as you will notice, home intervention is for siblings, too!



Left: Serenity doesn't worry about fashion when she has a book to look at! Right: Eden and mom explore a slinky.

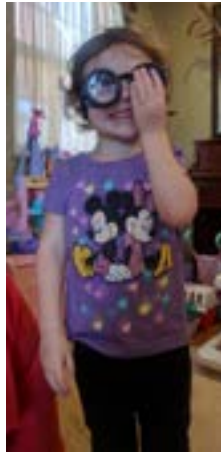




Left: William is determined to get a piece of paper out of the Perkins brailler. Above: Jackson makes some braille labels for his little brother William.



Myles' Mommy Jen and big sis Olivia try out vision simulators to understand how Myles sees.



A Summer of Learning for VIPS Staff, Too

by Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

When the last school bus pulls out of the parking lot at Kids Town Preschool at VIPS on the final day of each school year, the teachers and administrators take a collective deep breath, relax for the afternoon and jump back into the busy-ness of summer. While many traditional school teachers enjoy a well-earned summer of rest and relaxation, the teachers and interventionists calling VIPS home switch gears and continue with their mission to educate young children who are blind or visually impaired.

Our home- and community-based interventionists continue with the same schedule they have employed throughout the school year, visiting children in their homes and childcare centers, coaching parents and caregivers in the latest strategies for working with our special population of children. Our center-based teachers can still be found in their classrooms, leading their Little Learners groups and launching the much-loved VIPS summer program. Each summer, VIPS Louisville welcomes back past and current families, with some new faces thrown in for good measure, for a summer of fun, exploration, and respite for parents.

But all of our teachers, regardless of the capacity in which they serve, have one thing in common every summer. Training.

I mean, TRAINING. The summer of 2017 was no exception. In early June, ten VIPS team members, representing all three of our agency's offices, traveled to Illinois State University in Bloomington/Normal, Illinois to participate in the university's summer mini-camp for early interventionists in Illinois. The topic of the mini-camp was Providing Orientation and Mobility to Very Young Children. We enjoyed a presentation by a national speaker, coming away re-affirmed that the services we provide our youngest children truly is setting the foundation for learning.

Late in the same month, seven team members attended Kentucky's Early Childhood Institute 2017, along with 1,600 other preschool teachers and childcare providers from across the commonwealth. VIPS teachers graciously provided two training sessions during the conference: one on Home Visits That Work for Everyone and the other on Embedding the Expanded Core Curriculum into an Inclusive Preschool Classroom. A variety of sessions were attended on numerous topics focusing on improving our preschool programming.

In July, Kentucky School for the Blind welcomed members of the faculty from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to their annual Gateways to Independence conference. Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and VIPS early interventionists gathered for three days to learn tried and true strategies for working with students who have complex needs.

In August, staff from all three offices spent a day at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), touring the production facility, the museum, and learning all about new products. (See article below.)

As the new school year rolls around, our minds are full – but never too full for the lessons yet to be learned from our students and amazing VIPS families throughout the new school year!

A Day at APH

The staff from all three VIPS offices recently spent a wonderful day at our frequent collaborator, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). APH is the "world's largest nonprofit organization creating educational, workplace and independent living products and services for people who are visually impaired." It is also a top international resource for information, equipment and materials relevant to blindness and visual impairments as well as a repository of the history of blindness. We were delighted to be guests of the staff who had obviously worked very hard to prepare an informational day for us.

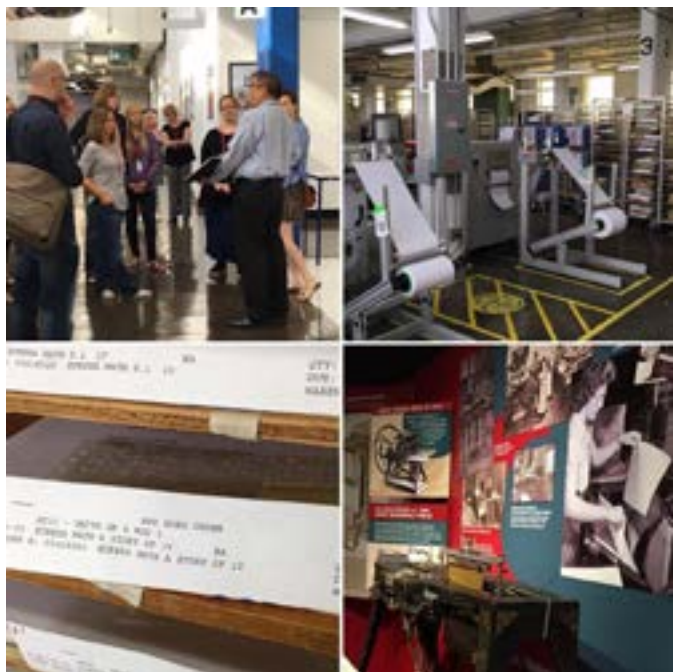
VIPS staff were introduced to new technology in development by APH: 1) a phone/tablet app that enables individuals to locate landmarks and travel efficiently indoors; and 2) the Graphiti, a 2400 moveable-pin refreshable display, which was actually used

to allow individuals with reduced vision to tactually experience the recent solar eclipse.

A discussion about childhood literacy culminated with a look at older publications now being updated including the braille literacy series developed and produced by APH.

A panel of three APH staff members shared their childhood and educational experiences, including transitions to the work force and to real life. VIPS teachers found their insights and experiences both motivating and affirming as classroom guidelines.

We are tremendously thankful to the APH staff for their care in developing and time in sharing recent products and materials with our staff. It is truly incredible to see close-up the research and energy that goes into the development of products used in our classrooms. Thanks so very much!



Crusade License Plate

Don't forget when you renew your license plate to make it a Crusade for Children license plate! We continue to be blessed with grants from the Crusade. To recap the 2017-2018 grant, VIPS Louisville received \$75,000; Indianapolis received \$30,000 and Central Kentucky received \$30,000 for a total of \$135,000 for all three VIPS offices!

Please continue to promote and support this amazing community effort which funds so many worthwhile programs, including VIPS.

Help for Santa's Helpers:



Toy Recommendations and Gift Ideas from VIPS Staff

Paige Maynard, TVI, Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Louisville

The Gift of Christmas Routines

All young children thrive in the context of routines. Routines are essential for enabling the child to fully participate in activities. However, during the holiday season, the craziness of celebrations can really disrupt those essential routines that help your child to function at her best. Consider giving her the gift of establishing Christmas routines and traditions this year. Not only will your child be able to successfully take part in celebrations, your stress level can go down as you feel confident about her joining in.

First, I encourage each VIPS family to start the tradition of doing what is best for your household each winter. December is a busy month for everyone, and sometimes the pace of life is a little too swift to allow you to feel that the most wonderful time of the year is indeed wonderful. Sometimes it's better to have a few simple routines and traditions that are meaningful than it is to try to take part in every celebration you are invited to.

So what's in a routine? Why is a routine important? A good routine for your child has predictability – your child should know what is going to happen from start to finish and that steps occur in the same order each time. If your holiday routine is to send out one card together to one family member each day of the month, your child might learn to know that first she sits in the high chair, then hears you get out the box of cards, then it is her turn to grasp an inked stamp or other tool to help sign the card. Finally, the card is placed in the envelope, and your child joins you in taking it to the mailbox.

Consistency is also important – your child should know what is expected of her during the routine. Is it her job to pull the tissue paper out of the gift bag? Or maybe to be the designated holder of the songbook during the religious service? Good routines also engage your child in anticipation – when your child observes your cues, she knows how to prepare herself for what comes next. For example, your child can learn to get ready to help join in on part of a familiar carol you sing each evening when she hears you begin the tune. Finally, a good routine allows for practice – the opportunity to complete activities again and again over a period of time so that your child can recall what happened the last time and try to do more of them this time. For instance, multiple attempts at rereading *"The Night Before Christmas"* can help a child who uses a switch to know when to press it to take part.

Specific traditions and routines that you can start with your child this year include:

- Instead of opening all gifts on one day, let your child participate in opening one gift each day of the month. Not only will opening one gift for a succession of days enable your child to learn this “skill,” it can also help minimize the sensory overload that can come with wrapping paper and toys strewn throughout the living room.
- Create a story about what happens in your home on Christmas day. Then review it each day. This can be as simple as telling your child what happens on Christmas morning. Or, it could be as complex as creating a book or story box that describes what to expect at each part of your celebration. I recommend consulting with your child’s VIPS teacher to help make the most of your holiday story.
- Celebrate the season by reading the same favorite holiday story each day. Allow your child to help turn pages in the book, join in on reading, or pat the pages of the book.

Resources:

Smith, Millie. (n.d.) *Routines*. Retrieved from <http://www.tsbvi.edu/component/content/article/1733-routines>.

Smith, Millie. (n.d.) *Why are Routines Worth the Trouble?*. Retrieved from <http://www.tsbvi.edu/component/content/article/1723-why-are-routines-worth-the-trouble>.

Staci Maynard, TVI & Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

Making the Holidays Meaningful and Fun for Your Child Who Is Blind or Visually Impaired

Before I talk about gift ideas for this coming season, I wanted to take a minute to offer a few tips on how to help your child engage with your family’s traditions and activities.

- Use family gatherings as an opportunity for working on social skills and becoming acquainted with unfamiliar environments. If you are at a family member’s house, take the time to walk around the perimeter of the room you are in, talking about landmarks, and greeting people that you walk past.
- Try to explain what you are doing while it is going on, and give your child the chance for hands-on participation whenever possible. For example, let him or her pour in ingredients for baking cookies or help you mash and stir the potatoes.
- When reading favorite holiday stories or singing songs, try to have the text in braille or to provide objects related to the words that your child can explore and use to build concepts.
- Consider making multisensory ornaments or a tactile advent calendar. The advent calendar can be made with tags that have the number in print and/or braille with a different object attached to each



Tactile Advent Calendar

day’s tag. In addition to being a fun tradition, the advent calendar can be used to work on concepts of time, tactile discrimination, and number identification.

- When possible, take toys and other presents out of the packaging prior to wrapping them. This may make them more challenging to wrap, but it will give your child a quicker reward once he or she has torn off the wrapping paper.
- Pick your favorite holiday activities and focus on them as a family rather than trying to fit too much into one month and ending up exhausted.

Now, I have a few toys that I think are pretty cool for our population of children with blindness or visual impairments. I can’t guarantee that your child will love them; that can sometimes only be found through a process of trial and error. However, I can say that these choices have either been really popular with some children that I’ve known or they have some features that make them a good fit for our kids.

Remember you can help VIPS by shopping Amazon Smile when ordering from Amazon.

B. Mat-A-Matics Musical Mat™ (around \$30 at most toy or department stores) -- This soft floor mat comes with a number of musical and sound features. The notes glow as you step in time to the music, and the control panel can be used to change the game or sounds. The music can be activated by tapping, crawling, walking, or dancing over the mat.



Rib-It Balls™ (\$26-\$75 on <https://shop.aph.org>) -- The Rib-It-Ball comes in 3 sizes and color combinations. The balls are bright, contrasting colors that make them easier to see. They also have ribs that stick out from the body of the ball to make them easier to grab onto and to provide a fun, crinkly sound when touched.



Tabletop Texture Board™ (\$179 on www.specialneedstoys.com) -- If you have ever been able to visit the sensory room at VIPS, this board reminds me of our ball wall. There are many tactual elements to explore including a roller to spin, plastic chains to hold, a mirror to look in, and rope loops to pull.



Last but not least, I am a big fan of **making memories through the experiences** you have together as a family. Consider getting your child tickets or an annual pass to a favorite event or place near you such as the Louisville Zoo, the orchestra, a children’s play, Bernheim Forest, or the Kentucky Science Center. This way the bonding, fun, and learning can last way beyond the holiday season.

Annie Hughes, Director/TVI, VIPS Indiana

Busy Balls

I always seem to have a theme to my Christmas toy suggestions, and this year is no different. This year, my theme is balls. So, let's get the ball rolling!

The **Oball Classic**™ 4" ball is a perfect toy for little hands that need practice grasping. Little fingers fit right through the holes, and when both hands are engaged, suddenly you have a child using both hands and holding a toy at midline! For extra fun, a parent can push a sheet of shiny, crinkly mylar through one of the holes into the center of the Oball so that when a little one reaches in, they are rewarded with that wonderful crinkle sound. An Oball can be suspended from a play frame or attached to a play vest too. They are available in many retail stores and online for \$8 - \$10.



The **Sound Adapted Tangle Ball Kit**™ from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is great for educational play and doubles as a teething toy. It is made of safe, soft plastic material, and the rubbery frame of the ball makes it easy to grasp. Because of the sound aspect in the middle of each ball, (they come in a set of three), this ball can help to develop hand-eye coordination, sound localization skills, fine motor skills and interaction with others. This toy is available from the American Printing House for the Blind, Catalog Number: 1-08111-00, for \$38.00. Your Teacher of the Visually Impaired may be able to order a set for your child using Quota Funds.



Who wouldn't want a **Beeping Foam Ball**? This regulation size soccer ball beeps whether it's moving or not. It is made of durable soft foam to avoid injury and runs for several hours on one AA battery. It is item number 1278 from <http://www.braillebookstore.com/Sporting-Goods> for \$24.95. There is a less expensive Rattle Foam Ball for \$9.95, and there are many other choices for auditory balls including many pet balls with bells. APH has two nice beeping balls available in their catalog and three sizes of Jacob's Rib-It-Balls which have high contrast, have an auditory aspect, and are easy to grasp.



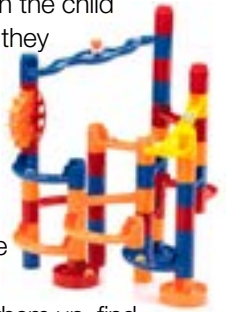
Everyone loves the sound a marble maze makes, but for smaller children, the marbles are a choking hazard. I have found two wonderful ball toys that provide the same auditory feedback, but are safe. The first is called the **Tolo Roller Ball Run**™. This "cause-and-effect" toy has three balls and three holes at the top. When a child puts a ball in, it rolls down ramps and comes out at the bottom, making noise on the way down. Children with low vision can watch the highly



contrasted balls, and children without vision can reach right in to feel where the balls are traveling. This toy is available at many toy and department stores for around \$27.

My other favorite is the **Busy Ball Drop**™. It comes in a box with four pieces and three sound balls. The four pieces stack to make four levels, (which can be part of the learning), and the child starts the ball or balls at the top and listens, (or watches), as they roll and drop down to the bottom level. (Concept: "top/bottom")

When choking on a marble is no longer a danger and maybe around the age of four years, The **Original Toy Company Marble Maze Building Set**™, (45 piece set), is a fun next step. A parent will need to help with "set-up," but then the child will really enjoy the sound the marbles make as they career down ramps to the bottom. Help your child to explore the path the marbles will take and show him/her how to hold a hand down at the bottom to catch the marbles as they come out. If you don't have carpeting and are doomed to losing marbles under the refrigerator, put a shoe box lid under the bottom of the maze to trap the marbles as they come out so your child can pick them up, find the top, and start them on their downward tumble independently. This toy is offered in numerous places for under \$25.



Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Central KY



I really like the **Battat Sound Puzzle Box**™. I love the instant feedback the child gets when they put the correct shape in the cylinder. A perfect toy for working on fine motor skills, cause and effect, shape concepts and "in" and "out", "up" and "down." It is available at many stores and online for around \$20.

A second toy that I like is the **Excellerations Touch and Match Board**™, available online for around \$20. This toy encourages use of touch and/or vision to match the textures.



Elizabeth Underwood, Developmental Interventionist & Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

Gifts for Our Senses

Buying gifts for children can be a difficult task, but here are a few suggestions you might consider when deciding on a special gift for your child.

Braille Magnetic Letters are available in stores and online for around \$10, and can be a great gift which helps children learn and practice their letters, as well as improving their braille skills.



Do-A-Dot Markers™, which can be found at your local store or online for around \$16, allows your child to create her own art work. These large, multi-colored markers allow for an easy grasp and an endless amount of fun.



Pop Toobs™ can be found in stores and online for as little as \$1.50. They allow for an endless array of skills to be utilized. Children can shape them into letters or anything their imaginations decide, thanks to their slinky structure. They also can be used as musical instruments and their bumpy texture provides ample opportunity for children to feel the movement of the toy.



Ashley Emmons , Orientation and Mobility, TVI & VIPS Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

I love playing games with children! This year, I decided to share some of my favorites that you can find on the shelves in my classroom at Kids Town Preschool at VIPS as well as online and at most toy and department stores.

Pop the Pig™

Under \$20

Age Range: 4 and up

Skills: turn taking, social skills, color identification, number identification, fine motor skills, and concept development.

Adaptations: Dice and manipulatives can be adapted by adding textures or braille.



Kerplunk™

Around \$20

Age Range: 5 and up

Skills: turn taking, social skills, fine motor skills, and auditory skills.

NO ADAPTATIONS NEEDED



Hot Potato Electronic Musical Passing Game™

Around \$20

Age Range: 4 and up

Skills: turn taking, social skills, auditory skills, and concept development.

NO ADAPTATIONS NEEDED



Juanita Miles, VIPS Kids Town Preschool Teacher - Twos Class, VIPS Louisville

Laugh & Learn Piggy Bank™ by Fisher Price

This bank is shaped like a pig with large plastic coins. It is great for counting, sorting by color and learning about animals. Children develop hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills when they place the coins in the coin slot. In addition, the bank has speech that counts the coins as they are placed in the slot. Children will have lots of fun with this toy while learning. It can be found at most toy and department stores for around \$15.



Calling All Book Lovers!

VIPS Kids Town Preschool has our very own Little Library! The concept for a Little Library is quite simple. Take a book. Leave a book.

Please help us stock the shelves of our new Little Library on the playground of Kids Town Preschool at VIPS. As your child loses interest in a book, please save it for us! We will be recycling gently used books all school year, allowing our students at Kids Town Preschool to take home a book of their own on a regular basis.

Please start collecting those books now! We will be accepting gently-used books throughout the school year. Look for the Little Library Book Basket in the VIPS lobby. And the next time you are visiting VIPS Louisville, be sure to take home a book for your favorite child!

The success of our Little Library relies on YOU! Please ask family members and neighbors to save books, too.



VIPS Staff News

VIPS Central KY

VIPS Central Kentucky office is excited to welcome a new Developmental Interventionist to the team! A former student teacher assigned to Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) Dixie Miller in 2015, **Katie Dick** joined VIPS full time in June and jumped right in. In true VIPS fashion, on her first day of work we sent her off to the Early Intervention Vision mini-camp at the University of Illinois for some professional development and networking with her peers.



Katie graduated with her Master's in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education in August, and will represent VIPS when she presents her thesis on Multi-component Coaching Intervention to Train Educators in Using Naturalistic Communication Strategies at the International Division of Early Childhood (DEC) conference in Portland, Oregon in October. Katie has a special interest in assistive technology, and is excited to see how it can be better incorporated into our Little Learners classroom as she assumes the role of Lead Teacher.

Katie loves music and attending concerts with her boyfriend Sam, and playing outdoors with their Australian Shepherd, Banjo.

VIPS Louisville

VIPS would like to welcome our three newest classroom assistants, Brandi Crush, Karen Weber, and Suzanne Bigbee.

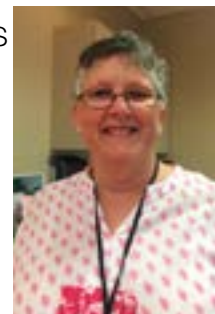
Brandi Crush is a former preschool director and is a wonderful enthusiast for her son, Dalton. Brandi will be teaming up with Ms. Elizabeth and Ms. Marchelle in the Green Room. She will also be Hadley Jo's service dog handler and has been working to learn commands and getting to know both Hadley Jo and her dog, Ariel. We are very excited that Brandi has joined us; we know she will do amazing things.



Our next new member, **Karen Weber**, is a Sunday school teacher and has a natural longing to help others. Karen will join Ms. Staci and Ms. LaRhonda in the Red Room for a fun and exciting school

year. Karen, a mother of two, shows great patience with the children and we couldn't be happier to have her aboard.

Suzanne Bigbee is no stranger to the VIPS family, as she has been an advocate for her grandson, Vance, a graduate of VIPS, since he started with us in 2011. Suzanne is very intuitive about the needs of young children with visual impairments and her strategies for inclusion are no less than incredible. We are all thrilled to welcome Suzanne to Kids Town Preschool's Orange Room with Ms. Ashley, Ms. Beth, and Ms. Shelby.



We sadly bid not "goodbye" but "see you later" to **Martha Hack**, who has been a part of VIPS for 18 years, first as a parent and then as a staff member. Martha has been part of the VIPS Louisville staff for 11 years, as Events Coordinator and Family Services Coordinator. Martha's attention to detail in planning events was evident in the organization and structure of major fundraisers such as the Tennis Ball and Tournament, YUM! Brands Golf Tournament, and ReVision. Her passion for all things VIPS was ignited when her son, J.D., began receiving VIPS services. After J.D.'s passing, she immersed herself in activities targeting parents' needs, ensuring that other parents received as much information and affirmation as she could make available to them. An integral part of the Admin Team, her heartfelt work and placid presence will be sincerely missed. We wish Martha all the best as she accepts a position with the central office of Jefferson County Public Schools.

VIPS Indiana

It is not easy to say good-bye to **Lisa West**, who has been a much-loved early interventionist for many families in Indiana for the past two years. She traveled extensively, and we have been very blessed to have her as part of our team as she has enabled us to serve so many more babies in Indiana. Due to family needs requiring her to be "off-the-road" and very close to home, she resigned in July. Her smile and joyful laugh will be missed by all her families and by all VIPS staff. We wish Lisa the very best, thank her for her devotion to her VIPS families, and look forward to crossing paths with her again in the future.

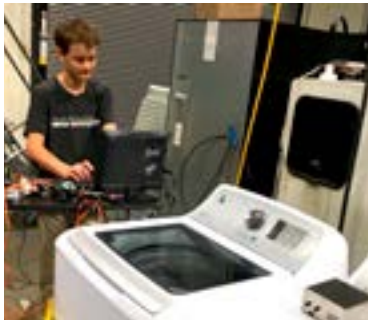
VIPS Indiana is happy to welcome **Melissa Barrick** to the VIPS team! Most recently Melissa worked as an occupational therapist at Indianapolis Public Schools. She has also provided occupational therapy for children, ages birth to three, with Pediatric Specialty Associates in Indianapolis.



She has participated in trainings regarding vision, has a keen interest in young children with vision loss, and will be participating in an upcoming VIISA training that will begin in November in Indianapolis. Melissa also has expertise in oral motor, feeding, and sensory issues, so we feel very lucky that she will be providing exceptional service to VIPS children in Indiana. When she is not working, Melissa is an “outdoor girl” who likes hiking and kayaking. Melissa will be seeing many of the children who had been on Ms. Lisa’s caseload. We know families are going to love working with her and learning from her expertise.

Local Teen Makes Appliances Accessible

A fourteen year-old Louisville student has created a device that enables those with visual impairments to get audio feedback from their washing machines and clothes dryers, providing valuable information that increases their independence. Jack DuPlessis, a freshman at DuPont Manual High School, wrote software for the GE appliance’s service diagnostic board that provides audio feedback about the knob’s position. The board is typically used to determine why a machine is malfunctioning. Jack was motivated by the knowledge that modern appliances are not well adapted to those with visual impairments.



Jack’s dad, Sam, is design leader at FirstBuild, a GE Appliances subsidiary and innovation hub, where Jack developed the software for his Talking Laundry device. The device plugs into the back of the appliance and into a power source. Students at the Kentucky School for the Blind provided feedback about the device’s effectiveness including having the device announce how much time remains on a washing/drying cycle.

Larry Portaro, FirstBuild Director, said this project was a wonderful example of the work for which the innovation hub was created: people use the FirstBuild expertise and collaborative approach to solve an appliance-related challenge. Those who contribute to projects at FirstBuild, such as Jack, generally receive some financial compensation if their product goes into mass production.

The Talking Laundry modules can be ordered online for \$99. They will be made to order at FirstBuild, with delivery taking about five weeks.



New Arrivals

VIPS is pleased to welcome these new children and their families into the VIPS program.

A'Myia – 14 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Anthony – 15 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Ashlynn – 8 months, Louisville, KY
 Austin – 9 months, Cave City, KY
 Ava – 28 months, Terre Haute, IN
 Avante – 29 months, Brandenburg, KY
 Ayden – 47 months, Brooks, KY
 Benson – 9 months, Louisville, KY
 Brayden – 14 months, Neon, KY
 Carla – 9 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Charles – 15 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Cole – 16 months, Greenwood, IN
 Darrell – 31 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Demi – 11 months, Henderson, KY
 Destiny – 12 months, Glasgow, KY
 Eilam – 30 months, Hazard, KY
 Eileena – 5 months, Louisville, KY
 Elijah – 11 months, Independence, KY
 Emma – 27 months, Newburgh, IN
 Ethan – 17 months, Noblesville, IN
 Garrett – 31 months, Vanceburg, KY
 Gerardo – 34 months, Danville, IN
 Grayson – 6 months, Hillsboro, KY
 Grayson – 7 months, South Bend, IN
 Grayson – 12 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Hunter – 8 months, Fairdale, KY
 Hunter – 19 months, Bremen, IN
 Isabell – 13 months, Big Spring, KY
 Jackson – 10 months, Nicholasville, KY
 Jenna – 31 months, Vanceburg, KY
 Kahryn – 17 months, Mooresville, IN
 Kris – 11 months, Greenwood, IN
 Lavin – 31 months, Georgetown, KY
 Mackenzie – 17 months, Versailles, KY
 Nyla – 19 months, Indianapolis, IN
 Oliver – 20 months, Goshen, IN
 Renesmee – 13 months, Columbus, IN
 Samantha – 23 months, Henderson, KY
 Savannah – 19 months, Campbellsville, KY
 Saul – 19 months, Milan, IN
 Stanley – 7 months, Salem, IN
 Stella – 16 months, Noblesville, IN
 Stella – 30 months, Lexington, KY
 Syrena – 11 months, Sturgis, KY
 Theodore – 33 months, Bloomington, IN
 Trystan – 36 months, Cicero, IN
 Waylon – 10 months, Greenfield, IN
 Waylon – 27 months, Waverly, KY

Notes of Interest



The Thomson Reuters Foundation* recently reported that Watertown, Massachusetts based Perkins School for the Blind plans to train one million teachers around the world by 2030 to educate the 6 million visually impaired children who also have other disabilities. Working with governments, Perkins expects to train specialist teachers who can meet the complex needs of these children and young adults, 90 percent of whom do not get an education, because their school system has no awareness of how to teach or reach them or because they don't have the right to an education. Such children are often left at home or placed in orphanages in poorer countries. The goal of the program is to increase these individuals' chances of living independently and finding jobs, also allowing their parents the opportunity to work more hours.

The school recently piloted its teacher-training program in Argentina and India. The program can be adapted to different languages and cultures and the multi-sensory core curriculum for children who are blind, or deaf and blind works globally. The training program will be conducted online to help limit the cost, which Perkins expects to be covered by government budgets and supplemented by grants.

Dave Power, chief executive of Perkins, noted that in 2015 all countries signed on to the Sustainable Development Goals, which include a goal of inclusive, quality education for all people, aiming to ensure training for people with disabilities, boosting their social participation and creating equal paying jobs for them.

"We're ready to work with any ministry of education that really wants to make progress in a measurable way to reach this population," said Power.

**Visit news.trust.org to read the entire article reported June 2017 by Sophie Hares and edited by Megan Rowling. The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters that covers humanitarian news, climate change, resilience, women's rights, trafficking and property rights.*

Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist at VIPS Central Kentucky, sent the following resource for those families who are patching their child's eye. "Alternative" patches are available through Patchpals.com. The Patch Pals were developed by the mother of a child who was uncomfortable with the reactions of strangers to her daughter's patch. She also decided to educate others about amblyopia and other eye disorders so that other children would not have to explain why they wear a patch. The patches, besides being attractive, are non-adhesive and some do

not slip over glasses, a plus for children who do not wear glasses. In addition to selling the patches and teaching about why some children must wear them, Patch Pals also provides free downloadable coloring sheets, interactive games, educational worksheets, reward calendars and many other items that provide fun, positive experiences to assist with patch compliance.

Lesley also found a second resource for patching, www.childrenseyecaremich.com, in particular the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Patching section. Several specific eye conditions are also well described and the Os of Eye Care section gives excellent information about the differences between ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists, ocularists and opticians.

VIPS is now a partner with the Critically Loved agency whose director Tyia Lynn is a mom of a chronically ill child. She has created a wonderful binder to help parents stay organized for all their child's medical needs. It also contains information parents need to get started and templates of forms they need. She also provides online resource and personal support through her website <http://www.criticallyloved.org>. Binders are available at VIPS through Kathy Mullen (kmullen@vips.org or 502-498-2927).

IN MEMORIAM

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memories of:

~ Annelyse Willsey ~

daughter of Blake and Jennifer Willsey of Greenwood, IN, who passed away May 25, 2017, at the age of two years.

~ Eva Juneja ~

daughter of Fahr and Jamie Juneja of Louisville, KY, who passed away on July 27th, 2017, at the age of 18 months.

~ Oakley Schweitzer ~

son of Meredith and Allison Schweitzer of Louisville, KY, who passed away on July 31st, 2017, at the age of 20 months.

and

~ Conscience Robinson ~

son of Tionhna Jefferies and Rob Robinson of Louisville, KY who passed away on September 2, 2017, at the age of 8 years.

Our hearts go out to all of those who loved Annelyse, Eva, Oakley, and Conscience.

Norma Hall's Grace

by Noriah Alexander, VIPS mom

Grace Madison Alexander, mom Noriah and dad Jay are part of the VIPS family in Indiana. This is a tribute to Grace's great-grandmother and my grandmother.

Norma Hall loved being a mother, grandmother and friend. She loved watching children grow and learn. She spent 20 years of her life babysitting and running a daycare out of her home. My grandmother loved my daughter more than anything, late in her life. Grace held a special place in her heart.

Norma was sad when we were told Grace had congenital nystagmus. She prayed that it would go away on its own even though we knew it wouldn't. She then began to pray that we would find the help we needed to help Grace in life. I was introduced to VIPS. We prayed and prayed until Carla Vied called me late one evening and told me that we had been accepted into VIPS. My grandmother's and my prayers had been answered!

Miss Carla met my grandmother several times and my grandmother knew that Grace would receive the help she needed. When my grandmother passed and we were asked where her memorial contributions should go, no one knew the answer. I spoke up and said my grandmother would have been honored to donate to VIPS. Everyone in the room knew that it was right for the donations to go to VIPS.

Since the year we have been with VIPS I have seen my daughter grow in ways I never thought were possible when we started this journey and were introduced to congenital nystagmus. I am grateful for VIPS and Miss Carla and the wonderful things that the program has done for my daughter. I know my grandmother is smiling down on Grace every day and will help guide her in her life.



Grace and great grandmother, Norma Hall.

Director's Note: Thank you Hall Family for this generous blessing!

Gifts of Time and Talent

VIPS Louisville

Volunteers assist VIPS staff at most of our events, especially family events and fundraisers. From preparations before the event to helping at the actual event to taking down and/or removing materials after the event, volunteers perform varied and multiple tasks that a small staff can never hope to accomplish.

For their help with the Easter party we are most appreciative of *Lauren Garrett of Assumption High School, Ryan Hack of St. Xavier High and Madeline Plank.*

The *American Heritage Girls* group were thanked in our last edition for donating valentines to the preschoolers and for presenting the Three Little Pigs puppet show. This edition we get a little more specific to thank *Elizabeth Broniak, Lillian Broniak, Michael Broniak, Lisa Scarlett Derhake, Wendy Havens, Annaliese McMillan, Chuck McMillan, Abby Whaley, Hilary Whaley, Lila Whaley and Caroline Wilson* for their kindness.

Middletown Christian Church has been an amazing supporter of VIPS, typically beautifying our grounds and cleaning up our landscape. We thank the following hard workers *Lynn Danko, Brandi Hitzelberger, Erik Hitzelberger, Jim Mallory, Brenda Massey, John Schulz, Robert Tisch, Jeff Wellcamp, Bill Wilson, Ralph Wilson and Karen Wilson.*

Speaking of amazing supporters, these valiant souls helped us stage one of our oldest fundraisers, the Golf Tournament. These volunteers were incredible: *Sharon Bensinger, Brandi Hitzelberger and Ellen Prizant from the VIPS Board of Directors; Larry Birchler from UPS; Anne Elliott, Diane Hansen, and Christine Stewart of ARG; Tracy Hutchins and Monty Mehra, of YUM!; LaRhonda Daniels, VIPS Instructional Assistant and her sons, Jon Daniels of Barret Traditional and Michael Daniels from Male Traditional High School.*

We thank childcare helpers *Jon Daniels of Barret Traditional and Michael Daniels from Male Traditional High School.*

The Tennis Ball is a large production and our staff is exceptionally supportive and helpful setting up, dismantling and working the event. Thanks to *VIPS staffers Greta Gillmeister, Kristin Horlander, Matt Horlander (spouse), Beth Krebs, Mary Lesousky, Ashley May, Jan Moseley, and Beth Owens. Missy Browning and Kathy Toebbe also volunteered their assistance as did long-time VIPS supporters Sharon Bensinger, Brandi Hitzelberger and Ellen Prizant.*

We extend our thanks to *Erin Curtsinger, Rami Duke, Caroline Gravate and Anna Tabler, all from Assumption High; Lauren Garrett of Sacred Heart Academy; and Haley Rose and Jessi Turpin* for volunteering at summer camp.

Helping out the VIPS staff at Friday Friends this summer were *Jon Daniels of Barret Traditional Middle School; Michael Daniels of Male Traditional High School; Lauren Garrett, Maria Riley and Siena Riley of Sacred Heart Academy; Tikell Taylor of Chenoweth Elementary School; Vaibhar Vinukonda of duPont Manual High School; Rishi Vinukonda of Meyzeek Middle School; and: Caroline Bechkam, Emily Conway, Erin Curtsinger, Rami Duke, Lauren Garrett, Caroline Gravate, Hailey Kampschaefer, Anna Tabler, Gretchen Thomas and Ashley Widmer from Assumption High School.* Our appreciation to all for sharing their summer vacation with VIPS.

Thanks to the *fourth graders from Collegiate School* who helped with classroom clean-up before the start of school this year.

Thanks again to *Fran Woodward* for her wonderful assistance and knowledgeable support in the Two's classroom.

We thank *Donna Dangler and daughters Lucy, Lizy and Lilly,* for their time and energy providing office assistance.

Our grounds and Sensory Garden was recently spiffed up with weeding and tidying thanks to these energetic *volunteers from Visionworks: Paula Baker, Sandy Brown, Josh Bryant, Brent Dabney, Jenny Haynes, Dawn Marrs, Hadrawie Mohamed, Greg Murray, Andrea Thomas, Joe Thompson and Maureen Vigneau.* We are so grateful -- our campus looks great!



VIPS Indiana

Thank you *Beta Iota Chapter of Delta Gamma at Purdue University* for your incredible efforts for the Black Towel Initiative which brought in countless supplies for the early interventionists to use with the children they serve.

The wonderful ladies of the *Junior League of Indianapolis* made texture blocks which will go into Welcome Bags for new kiddos during their 96 hours of service and we cannot thank them enough.

Many thanks to *Kim Borges of Regions Bank* for donating snacks that were used at the most recent Play and Learn Group.

We owe our gratitude to *Terri Schonhoff and the teachers from St. Charles School in Bloomington* for purchasing materials to make texture bottles and blocks for the children we serve.

VIPS Central KY

University of Kentucky students worked at the VIPS Central KY office for *UK FUSION*, painting our logo on the wall and some of the lockers in VIPS colors. Thank you ladies!!



Development News

VIPS Indiana

by Meredith Howell, VIPS Indiana Assistant Director

Walking for Dreams

Grayson's Village, Parade for Preston, Team Lil' J and the PASS Project Prancers were just a few of the team names that participated on behalf of VIPS Indiana in the Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk which was held on Sunday, May 22nd in downtown Indianapolis! We had almost 100 walkers and raised more than \$27,000 which officially makes this year's event our largest fundraiser ever! The money we raised will be used for early intervention for babies and toddlers with blindness/low vision in Indiana.



Grayson's Village

We had incredible raffle prizes and would like to thank all of those companies and individuals who donated goods/services for our walkers to win! After the walkers completed the scenic walk along the canal, they enjoyed *pizza that was generously donated by Papa John's Pizza*. We owe our gratitude to our wonderful sponsors: **Bosma Enterprises, Mr. Eric Bruun, Carpenters Union Local 301, Delta Gamma – Theta Chapter at Indiana University, Diversified Mail Services, Gordon Homes of MassMutual: Special Care, Indiana Deaf-Blind Services, Lumina Foundation, Ossip Optometry + Ophthalmology and Republic National Distributing Company**. The day couldn't have gone any better and we are so grateful for our VIPS staff, board members, amazing VIPS families, friends, and everyone who came out to support VIPS!



Parade for Preston



PASS Project Prancers

Papa John's
Pizza to feed
a crowd!



Recent Grants and Donations

Thanks so much to the following who granted us funds to serve young blind and visually impaired children in Indiana:

AWS Foundation: \$17,000 was awarded for early intervention in Northeast Indiana.

Junior League of Indianapolis: \$5,000 will go toward the Orientation & Mobility Program.

Sertoma Club of Broad Ripple: \$3,000 which will be used for our Play and Learn (PAL) Program.

Fall Trivia Night to Benefit VIPS Indiana!

The wonderful ladies from the **Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma** are hosting Trivia Night on Friday, November 10th at the Woodland Country Club and VIPS will be the beneficiary of the event! If you are interested in purchasing a table or if you are a single and would like to play, please purchase your table or seat soon as we are expecting this to be a sell-out event! A table of 8 is \$150 and a single is \$20. All proceeds from the event will go to VIPS and the babies and toddlers with blindness/low vision we serve. Contact Meredith Howell for more details at mhowell@vips.org or (888) 824-2197.

VIPS Louisville

by Heather Benson, Development Director

Corporate Cup Golf Tournament

VIPS crossed off its 29th year of hosting the Corporate Cup Golf Tournament on May 22nd at the beautiful Persimmon Ridge Golf Club. More than two dozen foursome teams spent a day on the links under beautiful skies to raise more than \$62,000 for VIPS! Special thanks to our long-time supporter **YUM! Brands** for helping to make this event such a big success. We are greatly looking forward to celebrating Year 30 in 2018!



Above: Maddie, one of the VIPS Kids Town Preschool children who came out for the tournament, looked like a pro! Left: The team of Tom Briggs (first person on left), retired from KFC, who was our founding corporate sponsor.

VIPS Tennis Ball and Tournament

The VIPS Tennis Ball & Tournament took place over the course of the first weekend in June at the Louisville Boat Club. Nearly 200 guests gathered on that Saturday evening for an elegant night of auctions, live music and VIPS stories. The following day, nearly 40 doubles teams competed on the courts for trophies and bragging rights. Our

The success of the Tennis Ball rests with former VIPS Mom Brandi Hitzelberger, who was a wonderful Tennis Ball Chairperson!



Bidding was brisk during the auction.



Players competed in two-person teams.



Good weather, good playing and good sportsmanship were plentiful.

generous guests and players raised more than \$120,000 throughout the weekend to fund early intervention services across Kentucky and Indiana. Special thanks to our **Presenting Sponsor, Brown-Forman Corporation**, for contributing to a great weekend!

Recent Grants and Donations

Metro United Way: \$76,879 donation to fund direct services.

WHAS Crusade for Children: \$75,000 for teachers' salaries.

The Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation: \$55,500 for direct services, Family Retreat and a therapeutic listening device.

Lift A Life Foundation: \$45,000 (3-year total) for direct services.

Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County: \$10,000 for direct services.

Gheens Foundation: \$10,000 for the Kids Town Preschool.

Louisville Metro Government: \$8,000 for the music therapy program.

Jacob C. Koch Charitable Trust: \$3,743 to replace the bubble tube in the Sensory Room and to fund fundraising consultation.

Wood & Marie Hannah Foundation: \$3,000 to replace the ball pit in the Sensory Room.

Car Seat Replacement

A big thank you to the following individuals who helped us replace expiring car seats for the VIPS van: **Mary Adamowicz, Marchelle and Fred Hampton, Sheila Ising, Jolene Jones, and Jessica Singleton.** It's not too late to make a donation to replace the three car seats that expire this coming year! Please contact Heather Benson, hbenson@vips.org or 498-2933 if you are interested!

VIPS Central Kentucky

by Kelly Easton, Regional Director

Central Kentucky Golf Outing

On Tuesday, May 9th, golfers, kids, VIPS staff and Advisory Board members came out to support the 14th Annual VIPS Central Kentucky Golf Outing held at Keene Trace Golf Club. Under beautiful sunny skies, 15 teams registered and played golf, bid on wonderful silent auction items and visited with children from the VIPS Little Learners program. Over \$9,765 was raised for VIPS Central Kentucky early intervention services. We would like to thank our wonderful sponsors, without whom this event would not have been possible:

Beverage Cart Sponsor: Infiniti of Lexington

Tee gift sponsor: Window World

Sign Sponsor: PrintLex

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Silent Auction donors included: A&W Restaurants, Ale-8-One, AutoZone, bd's Mongolian Grill, Bluegrass Hospitality Group, Bonefish Grill, Buffalo Wild Wings,

Michael Carpenter, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen, The Cheesecake Factory, Chick-fil-A, Chuy's, Cincinnati Reds, City Barbeque, Coffee Times Coffee House, Griffin Gate Marriott Resort & Spa, Hilton Lexington Downtown, George Hocker, Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, Horseshoe Southern Indiana, Joe Bologna's Restaurant & Pizzeria, Keene Trace Golf Club, Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky State Parks, King's Island, Aaron Ledbetter, McAlister's Deli, McDonald's, Meijer, Mellow Mushroom Pizza, Moe's Southwest Grill, Norton Center for the Arts, O'Charley's, Old National Bank, Olive Garden, Outback Steakhouse, P. F. Chang's, Perfect North Slopes, Redmond's Garden Landscaping & Gift Center, Rooster's, Sawyer's Downtown, Schlotzsky's, Sleep Outfitters, StarBucks, Talon Winery & Vineyards, Tony's of Lexington, Kathleen Turner, Wildcat Wearhouse, and the YMCA of Central Kentucky.

Recent Grants and Donations

We owe a tremendous thank you to the **Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's Child & Youth Extended Social Resource (ESR) program** for their donation of \$63,940. The funding is for two years and provides for direct services in Fayette County, the Little Learners Enrichment program, and the Early Preschool program.

Thank you, Nick!

VIPS Central Kentucky would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to **former Advisory Board Member, Nick Ratliff and the Nick Ratliff Realty Team** for the generous donation of Lexington Legends tickets to our Central Kentucky VIPS families. Our families had a great night out watching the Legends play the Asheville Tourists and enjoying the fireworks after the game.



Major Growth in VIPS Services

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, VIPS served a total of 526 children through all three offices. That number represents a 16% increase over the number of children VIPS served during the 2015/16 fiscal year. New referrals were up over 45% system wide, from 178 in 2015/16 to 259 in 2016/17.

Best of all, Direct Services to children and their families in Kentucky and Indiana are up a whopping 31.5%! Over the past two years, VIPS has worked tirelessly to find highly qualified providers in local areas with whom we can contract to provide regular and ongoing direct services to VIPS families, no matter where they live. This was not something that could be done fully or efficiently through our previous outreach efforts.

Wish List

VIPS Kentucky

- Batteries of any size
- Spare keys -- any size of house keys, car keys, etc.
- Non-latex disposable gloves
- Rolls of paper towels
- Baby wipes

VIPS Indiana

- Disinfectant wipes
- Manila folders
- White out
- Grocery store gift cards

Simple Ways You Can Help VIPS

Kroger Community Rewards Program

You can give back to VIPS just by shopping for groceries! All you have to do is go to Kroger.com and select Community/ Kroger Community Rewards to get started. Connect your Kroger Plus Card to the VIPS account # 10771 (Louisville), # 30423 (Central KY), and # 74094 (Indiana). A percentage of your grocery bill will be donated to VIPS.

Amazon Smile

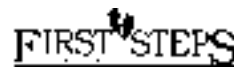
Another easy way to support VIPS is connecting your Amazon account to VIPS. The online shopping giant gives back to charity through Amazon Smile. Just log into your account at smile.amazon.com and search for Visually Impaired Preschool Services. Once you connect to us, shop away!



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

Direct links for event registration are included for online readers. For those reading the newsletter in print, simply go to www.vips.org to register for events.

VIPS Louisville

Saturday, October 21

VIPS Louisville Trunk-N-Treat, 10 – 11:30 a.m. RSVP to <https://vips.z2systems.com/eventReg.jsp?event=75&> with number attending. Crafts, snacks and safe trick-or-treating. VIPS children and their siblings and friends are welcome when accompanied by an adult.

Friday & Saturday, Nov. 3 - 4

The 27th Annual VIPS Family Retreat, We Are All Super Heroes, begins with Super Hero Sundae Night (Friday), featuring games and activities for the parents and children. Saturday begins the actual conference with activities for the children at the VIPS office and sessions for the parents at the Holiday Inn Express Louisville Airport Expo Center, 1921 Bishop Lane, 40218. Register at: <https://vips.z2systems.com/event.jsp?event=78&>. For more info contact Kathy Mullen kmullen@vips.org.

Wednesday, Dec. 6

Jolly Holiday Concert and Party, Kosair Shrine Temple, 4120 Bardstown Rd., 40218, 6:30 p.m. RSVP to www.vips.org or email bclarkson@vips.org with number attending.

VIPS Indiana

Thursday, Oct. 19, Nov. 9, Dec. 21

Toddler Art Group at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Contact Meredith Howell for info or to register: mhowell@vips.org.

Saturday, Oct. 21

Spook-tacular Play and Learn, 10 a.m. There will be lots of Fall fun and games. Costumes encouraged!! Please register at: <https://vips.z2systems.com/np/clients/vips/event.jsp?event=76&>. Contact Meredith Howell for more info: mhowell@vips.org.

Friday, Nov. 9

Trivia Night, sponsored by the Indianapolis Alumna of Delta Gamma, will be held at the Woodland Country Club. All proceeds to benefit VIPS! See pg. 17 for details.

Friday, Dec. 8

Santa Fred will be at the VIPS Indy office from 10 a.m. - noon, for a calm Sensory Santa experience. There will be the opportunity to take photos with Santa, too! Stay tuned for more details.

VIPS Central Kentucky

Friday, October 20

SPOOKTACULAR Halloween Party, 6 - 8 p.m. Join us for a ghoulishly good time featuring Treats, Costume Contest, Games, Sensory Activities, Goody Bags, and Crafts. **Free to all current and former VIPS families! Register online at** <https://vips.z2systems.com/np/clients/vips/event.jsp?event=80&>

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

VIPS-Louisville

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Heather Benson, Development Director

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Paige Maynard, TW/Developmental Interventionist

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Juanita Miles, Twos Preschool Teacher

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Kim Shippey, Controller

Elizabeth Underwood, Preschool Teacher

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