

## In This Issue:

Halloween Fun.....	3
Marriage and the Special Needs	
Child.....	5
Marvelous Milestones.....	6
VIPS Parents Recommend .....	7
Munchkin Mobility.....	8
Making Holidays Accessible.....	8
Disability or Ability: A Poem .....	9
News From VIPS Offices .....	9
Bret Dahmke Scholarship Fund .....	11
Notes of Interest .....	11
Welcome New Children.....	12
VIPS Staff News .....	12
In Memoriam .....	14
Special Gifts of Time, Talent	
and Treasure .....	15
Recent Grants .....	17
VIPS Wish List .....	18
2018 Beacon Awards .....	19
Note to VIPS Families.....	19

# An Olympic Event: The 2018 VIPS Family Retreat Weekend

by Brittany Clarkson, VIPS Louisville Family Services Coordinator

The VIPS 2018 Family Retreat was so good for my heart and soul, as a mother and just as a person. I am so fulfilled and overjoyed by our inspirational families and their commitment to learn and grow as individuals and as caregivers.

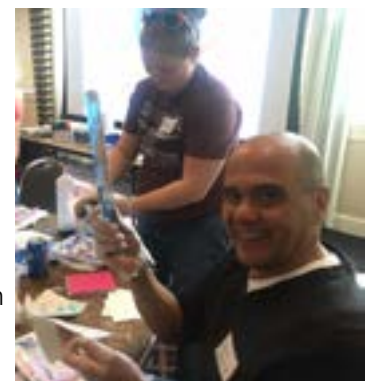
I have attended many of VIPS Family Retreats as a mom, and I was so honored to plan and coordinate the event this year. The 2018 VIPS Family Retreat was Olympic-themed. "Go For Your Gold" was the tag line. I thought about how we as parents want and strive to do what's best for our children so that they can reach their full potential. In some ways it is like we are training and coaching our children for the Olympics. Although each family's journey and goals are different, we all want the "Gold" for our children.

We started Family Retreat with a meet and greet on Friday night. VIPS Olympic staff and volunteers greeted each family and gave them time to explore the rooms which would be their child(ren)'s environments for the next day and also to talk with teachers about their child(ren)'s needs. Families didn't leave without grabbing Olympic themed refreshments and decorating cookies. Traveling families spent the night at the nearby Holiday Inn Express, courtesy of VIPS.

Saturday morning started off bright and early with "Athlete Check In" at the Olympic Arena. Parents brought their kiddos over to the VIPS Louisville facility for a day of planned activities and fun. Dozens of volunteers and staff, led by VIPS TVI/Developmental Interventionist **Paige Maynard**, cared for VIPS children and their siblings throughout the day while their parents participated in the Parent Conference down the road. All children, volunteers and staff in Kids Camp received special entertainment from guest visitors throughout the day. The children enjoyed story time in the outdoor schoolhouse with weekly VIPS volunteer **Deanna Scoggins**, who enthusiastically read braille books to each group. The children, volunteers and staff all got up and moving with **Ms. Elena** during her fun and interactive dance



Parents having fun with art therapy.



class. Our children also enjoyed a puppet show from *Kids on the Block* as they gathered to explore and interact with puppets who wore glasses, and used canes and wheelchairs, as they discussed their differences with the audience.



Top: Barney paid a visit to the children (shown in photo include Josie, Asher, Olivia and Sebastian). Left: Addie got to meet one of the New Kids on the Block. Right: Levi enjoyed time on the playground.

After families checked their athletes into Kids Camp for the day, parents and caregivers headed over to Sullivan University's Residence Halls at Gardiner Point. The group received a warm welcome from Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education. They divided into small groups to answer questions at Olympic Rings placed throughout the room as they got to know one another.

Our morning guest speakers included **Gordon Homes**, a special needs financial planner, and **Elena Diehl**, founder and owner of **GrowBabyGrow**. Mr. Homes spoke personally about his journey as a special needs parent and how parents can prepare for their children's future while protecting their current benefits. Following Mr. Homes' presentation, our families were up and moving with Elena as they learned about how their child's development is connected to movement and how they can adopt simple dances and movements in their homes to bond with their children, aid in their development and help them to sleep better.

After lunch, parents and caregivers pushed their sleeves back for a hands on activity with **Shawna Dellecave** of the Council on Developmental Disabilities. Shawna guided our families through making marbled greeting cards with shaving cream and ink. After crafting beautiful and unique cards, each participant wrote a note to themselves as part of their experience.

Families were then given the opportunity to share about their journeys. Each family smiled as they spoke about their amazing children and heard encouragement and reassurance from their friends around the room.



VIPS teacher, Mr. David, helped Nyiella explore the sensory wall.

We were then joined by **Solomon Parker** from **Centerstone** and **Karen Mourcy** from the **State Department of Indiana** who spoke about waivers and other resources for VIPS families. Parents had the opportunity to ask specific questions about the process and how it could benefit their family.



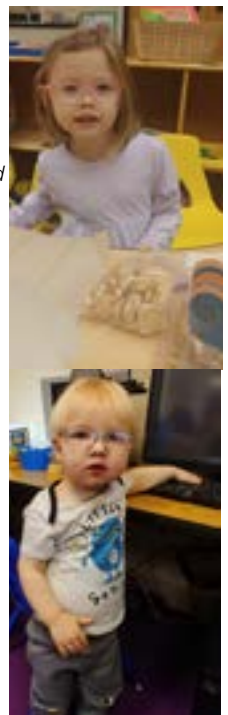
Above: Toddler respite group getting ready for dance: William (held by Ms. Elena), Respite Workers (in red) Ms. Tracey & Ms. Joy (holding Kennedy), VIPS teacher Ms. Amy, with Kenzie, Trystan and Bradley on bottom row.

We ended the evening with a panel, made up of parents and blind and visually impaired adults, who shared their experiences

with community encounters. Each panel participant spoke about the good, the bad and the ugly experiences they have had when out in the community and how they handle them. The discussion was opened up to VIPS parents and caregivers who also shared their stories and encouragement to each person in the room.

My heart was so full that night as I thought about the willingness of our families not only to give up a weekend out of their busy lives to come to Family Retreat, travel

At right: Josie (above) prepared for a snack, while William (below) explored the computer.



with their families and entrust their children to the care of others but to come and participate with such openness and enthusiasm. I truly felt every family left feeling refreshed and confident to carry on in their journey.

A huge thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who made Family Retreat possible. I also want to thank our community partners, The Barth Foundation and Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, for their help in funding to make this event possible for our families. Thanks also to Sullivan University who donated event space as well as breakfast, lunch and dinner for our families at the Parent Conference.

I am already looking forward to VIPS Family Retreat 2019! You don't want to miss it!!!

## Ghoulishly Good Halloween Fun!!

### VIPS Indiana

On Saturday, October 22, VIPS Indiana held our annual Spook-takular PEP! Parents and families had the opportunity to create a make-and-take craft which was a trick-or-treating sensory pumpkin bucket! The pumpkin buckets had olfactory, sound, and touch components attached to them, and parents learned how to braille their child's name to place on the bucket as well. The kiddos trick-or-treated with their custom bucket, and parents trick-or-treated

for resources provided by many supportive organizations! VIPS would like to thank the following for providing resources and

goodies for our VIPS families:  
**Access Behavior Analysis;**  
**Jackson Center**

Parents adapt pumpkin buckets with sensory items.



Above: Parents visit booths at the Resource Fair. Below: Lead VIPS Interventionist, David Sterne, familiarizes a family with the braille writer.



for Conductive Education; Joseph Maley Foundation; Morning Dove Therapeutic Riding, Inc.; Family Voices Indiana; Epilepsy Foundation of Indiana; Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma; and Feeding Friends Children's Feeding Clinic and Therapy Services, Inc. We

also owe our gratitude to Jack's Donuts Southport Road, Starbucks on Eleanor and Emerson, Gregory Thompson, and Eric Bruun for providing food and refreshments. And finally, thanks to our amazing staff, dedicated volunteers, and especially our families for making it one of our favorite PEPs yet!

### VIPS Central Kentucky

Our annual VIPS CKY SPOOKTACULAR Halloween party was held on Friday, October 26, and all of our ghosts and goblins had a great time! With the help of our amazing **Delta Gamma volunteers**, our little monsters enjoyed ghoulishly good snacks, spooky games, and creepy crawly sensory activities. Our Little



Above: There were lots of multisensory games for the children. Below: Trystan basks in the blue glow of the LightAide.



Above: (Left) Owen, with Dad, Andrew, looks like a pretty tame shark. (Center) Firefighter Asher is ready for any emergency. (Right) "Can Do!" Carson was dressed in his working clothes. Below: Gabe's mom, Rebecca, and cousin help with a slimy task.



Learners had a great time “trick or treating” around the VIPS office and the offices of the Lexington Hearing and Speech Center.

*Left: Madelyn gets her hand painted to make a handprint. Center: Mackenzie's mom Stephanie decorated her cane to look eerily like a witch's broom!*

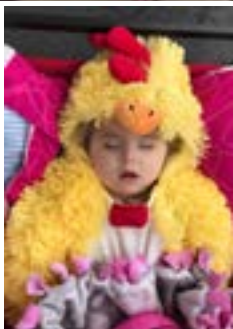


*Above: Mustacioed Dmitri (dressed as Albert Einstein) gets a little help tossing rings on the bottle.*

## VIPS Louisville

On October 27, the cutest trick or treaters from all the land came to VIPS Louisville to celebrate our annual Trunk 'n' Treat. All the little tummies, and big tummies too, were filled with donuts, apples with caramel dip and grapes. Guests even made goody bags of harvest hash from our “make your own trail mix bar.” Families enjoyed making spooky spiders out of halved styrofoam balls, pipe cleaners for legs and googly eyes. They also had fun searching for plastic spiders in a big cauldron filled with hay.

Friends, staff and community partners alike brought their best treats and filled the parking lot with decorated car trunks and tables for our favorite trick or treaters. Children wore fun costumes and practiced their finest manners while asking for candy. Thank you to Louisville Fire Department, Texas Roadhouse and First Steps for joining us for this fun fall event and to all of our volunteers who made it happen. Every child left with a smile and a full bucket of goodies. Mission Accomplished!



*Above left: The parking lot at VIPS was turned into a neighborhood on wheels for Trunk 'N' Treat. Far left: Jayce (aka Big Bird) paused for a nap. Left: Bradley enjoyed being in costume. Above center: The Louisville Fire Dept. handed out helmets. Above right: Connor and Chase visited a decorated car.*

# Is Our Marriage Different Because We Have a Child with Special Needs?

by Meredith Howell, Regional Director of VIPS Indiana and mother of VIPS graduate Lola

I've read [blog posts](#) about how the dynamics of a marriage change when you have a special needs child and it made me wonder, "Is the marriage between Rob and me any different because we have a child with special needs?"

My husband, Rob, and I fell in love fast. He once wrote, "It was quick. It was breathless." And that's the absolute truth. We knew we were committed to one another before we even knew each other's quirks, habits or deep dark secrets. People often told us we would have beautiful babies and in my heart, I believed that to be true. And they were right -- we brought two spectacular human beings into this world.

Our daughter, Lola, who happens to have special needs, is our first child who was born in Costa Rica. I would say our foreign location actually put our relationship through more turmoil than the medical circumstances that surrounded our daughter. Because Lola was our first, she then became our "normal." We threw out the baby development books and vowed to let her develop at her own pace. Doctor visits, hospital stays, medication administering, and therapies were just part of our life and, truthfully, I'm glad we didn't know any differently.

Rob and I became a team in a way we hadn't envisioned when we were preparing for Lola's arrival. But I believe life's curveballs have brought us closer together. We balance one another. I'm wildly neurotic, I worry about almost everything I can't control and I'm a morning person. On the contrary, Rob is a night owl, he is incredibly logical and he's just a laid back guy. Sure, we've had emotionally trying days due to the stress of multiple rare diagnoses as well as the unknowns of Lola's future, but this can be said about our "typically developing" son as well. We worry about both of our children just as any other parent would. Yet knowing we have each other -- well -- it helps the dark days seem that much more bearable and the bright days seem that much more joyous. We truly are in this "for better or for worse."

So when I read headlines that say "[Beating the Odds of Divorce When Your Child Has Special Needs](#)," I often wonder -- what makes the marriage Rob and I share so different from the rest of the world?



I asked my husband and here was his response, "Two people who are on the same page. Even more important, when you aren't on the same page, you discuss the issue so at least it is out in the open and you know how the other feels. Love is respect. You do each other a great disservice by keeping issues or feelings bottled up."

I see my friends who have typically developing children and to be honest, their marriage looks just as stressful. There are bills to be paid, mouths to feed, baths to give, chores to be done, homework to be checked, after school activities to be driven to, and the cycle continues. I can't see much of a difference from my own marriage.

Lola's life is indeed a little bit different in that she goes to an all-day ABA (applied behavior analysis) center, she has an ultra-rare disease (one of less than 60 in the world) and we see countless doctors in multiple states, but that's just what we are used to by now. She may need a little extra help with her self-care, but she's making such progress and we know she'll get there in her own time—just like all of her other inchstones and milestones.

But rarely are our arguments ever ignited because of Lola, Lola's diagnoses, Lola's care, Lola's future or anything even pertaining to Lola. We bicker about the dumb stuff like why I had to get a neurotic mid-life crisis dog or why our house is in constant shambles every second of the day.

So I guess what I'm saying is that I'm not too worried about Rob and me beating the odds. Our marriage will continue to be a work in progress every single day like any other marriage would be. We will have good days and we will have bad days. We will have days when we need to be reminded that our love did bloom in the quick and breathless way it did, but in my opinion, I think that makes our marriage fairly normal.



***"To be fully seen by somebody, then, and be loved anyhow - this is a human offering that can border on miraculous."***

***Elizabeth Gilbert***

***"Committed: A Skeptic Makes Peace with Marriage"***

# Marvelous Milestones

What do milestones look like for children with visual impairments? That depends on the child, as you will see below. If you would like to share one of your child's milestones, send it to Jan Moseley, Newsletter Editor, at [jmoseley@vips.org](mailto:jmoseley@vips.org).

## Cash

*(Submitted by Annie Hughes, TBLV)*

At VIPS we always celebrate every achievement with VIPS kids and their families. Check out our friend Cash, seen in this photo, who recently reached a personal goal of matching the correct colors and sizes in his puzzle! Cash is 2 1/2, and was a micropreemie born at 25 weeks. He has Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), so his VIPS therapist Melissa painted the background of his puzzle black to provide the high contrast necessary to help him see his puzzle pieces. Way to go, Cash!



*(The following milestones were submitted by Paige Maynard, VIPS Louisville TVI/Developmental Interventionist.)*

## Myles

Myles wore his Halloween Costume for two hours while on a Halloween outing with his family! Why is this important? Participation in one's community is an Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) skill! Myles was able to access a seasonal Recreation and Leisure opportunity and practice the

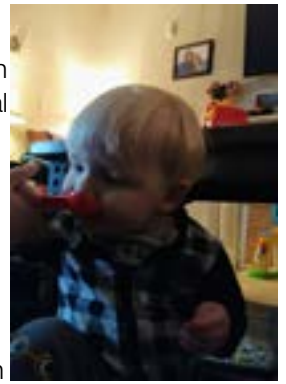


Social Skills piece of Halloween, both areas of the ECC!

Sometimes it can be difficult for a VIPS child to wear a differently textured or fitting piece of clothing than the child is used to, but on a recent home visit, Mom Jen and I worked on strategies to help Myles feel more comfortable and secure in his costume, baby Jack Jack from the Incredibles. Using the strategies we developed at our home visit, she helped him "practice" wearing the costume prior to the big Halloween opportunities!

## William

William is learning how to use a spoon by bringing it to his mouth with rice cereal in it. Today during my visit with him, his Mom, Rebecca's hard work in intervention paid off! During sensory play, William brought this spoon to his mouth several times, some with help, and some all by himself!



Why is this important? Children with visual impairments may have difficulties with utensil use because they may be unable to see family members using utensils, making it difficult to imitate the complex actions needed for this skill. Scooping food with a utensil can also be a frustrating endeavor for a child with a visual impairment, as it can be difficult to know whether there is food on the spoon. Rebecca has been implementing special strategies with William, and they are paying off! He is developing more understanding of spoon use, has a more positive attitude about it, and is beginning to bring a loaded spoon to his mouth. The photo is not great, but the milestone is!

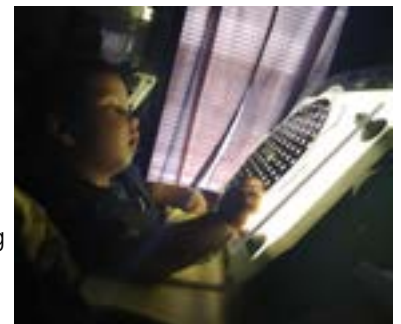
## Judah

As part of his studies, VIPS grad Judah Hales is practicing dissection. His proficiency with a magnifier allows him to access the activity. Judah is a prime example of how our practice of starting kids out early with AT can only benefit them!



## Hunter

Hunter reached out for the very first time today to activate this spinner on his light box! Hunter has cortical visual impairment, and he and his family have spent six months working to get Hunter reaching away from his body toward something he sees. Today, all their hard work paid off!



## Jalen

Jalen is accepting lotion on his chest after a bath from his Mom, Asia! Why is this a big deal? Accepting touch creates a strong bond between parent and child, builds body awareness, and soothes tight muscles -- all of which are essential for success

for all children (sighted or visually impaired) now and later in life! Asia is using special strategies to help Jalen accept touch -- which her physical therapist and I have coached her on -- using firm pressure, and working up the body from the feet.

Jalen is also exploring foods with his hands! Since getting his gtube, he hasn't been eating by mouth, BUT he CAN still participate in meals with his family, by exploring foods with his hands. This gives him an opportunity to learn about foods, have more social interactions with his family, and use his hands!



### Brooks

Brooks can now watch Mom Sheila scoop his food at meals with this lighted spoon we tried today! Why is being able to watch the spoon so important? It helps Brooks learn to open his mouth for bites (independence!). Also, babies spend almost the first

year of their lives watching a parent use a spoon - this observation allows them to build the neural connections to imitate the behavior when they are developmentally ready to use the spoon on their own. A lighted spoon makes this happen for Brooks! Independence starts way earlier than we think!

### Jake

Jake's milestone is visual fixation with these Slinky lights/Illumisprings! Instructions for constructing this DIY toy can be found at [strategytosee.com/DIYprojects/Illumi-spring](http://strategytosee.com/DIYprojects/Illumi-spring).



*Relish your child's milestones, no matter how small (or delayed) they may seem in comparison to a typically developing child. You know how hard your child and you are working to achieve them. When you compare your child to him- or herself, you will see all they progress that is taking place.*

## VIPS Parent Recommendations

*Sheila and Jimmy Carwile*, parents of Brooks, recommend the following items that they have found that Brooks enjoys and that have helped in his development.



**HLXY Bath Toys™** for Kids and Toddlers - Light up Toys - Flashing Colourful Lights, 8 Pack: Cat, Octopus, Frog, Bear, Rabbit, Seal, Egg and Chick, \$13.99, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**BenBat Dazzle Friends™ Bird Rattle Stroller Toy**, Yellow, \$7.99, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**ASWCOWY Pinwheels for Garden™** Colourful LED Light Windmills Outdoor Toy: Pinwheels Wind Spinner Whirligig, Bright Blended Rainbow Design, LED Light (5 pieces), \$21.99, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



**Baby Einstein Sea Dreams Soother™**, \$31.99, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

**Houwsbaby™ Stuffed Plush Toy**, LED Light Up Dolphin Pillow, Colorful Lights, \$12.49, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

*Brooks playing with his Light-Up Dolphin Pillow.*

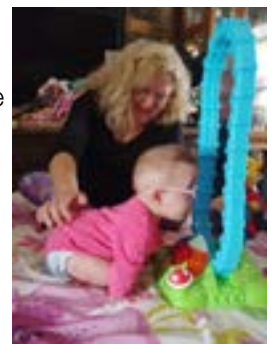
Foster Mom, *Denise Carter*, recommends to all families who are Facebook users to join a community yard sale page or a local mama swap page. Denise just got this fabulous mirror for her foster child to enjoy from her local Facebook yard sale page.

*Jen Bodeker*, mom of VIPS kid, Myles, and big sister, Olivia, recommend



the **CozyPhones™**, available from Amazon.com for \$19.97. The speakers of the cozyphones are embedded into a fleece headband. These head phones work great for kids who need to listen to music for calming, but who have difficulty wearing traditional headphones.

*Olivia modelling the CozyPhones.*



# Munchkin Mobility\*

## Twelve to Twenty-Four Months

by Jane Bartley, TVI/Orientation & Mobility Specialist

*\*Editor's Note: Even though this article was written over 20 years ago, the information contained in it is still applicable today. Reprinted from the VIPS Parents Newsletter, Volume 13, Number 2, March/April, 1997.*

During the 12 months that a child is between one and two years of age, new skills are learned each day. Each child will develop at his or her own pace. As parents, caregivers, and interventionists, we must allow for individual differences, but we can encourage and teach skills that the child is ready for during our daily routine. Most of the necessary daily chores (for example, dressing, being out and about in the car, and picking up toys) can be fun-filled learning experiences for your little one.

Safety is always an issue with children, but once you have addressed safety issues in your child's environment, allow your child the freedom to learn about his or her world in a hands-on fashion. The days when your child will spend long awake periods of time in a stationary play area are past. Your child's world has expanded and he or she is ready to learn about it.



Kailey's mom used a light box to motivate Kailey to stand.

For the child who can investigate independently -- by scooting, crawling, or cruising -- you will want to place familiar, stationary items in her environment that will help orient her and tell her where she is located. By creating ways to move from one place to another using familiar things, like furniture and sounds, your child will begin to develop some simple routes. Children tend to learn the most by doing things by themselves. Stand back and watch how your child problem-solves and travels through the environment.

Acquaint your child with the rooms in your house and make him aware of what is in each room. For example, in the kitchen we have the sink where we get water for a drink and the refrigerator that makes a noise and keeps our food cold. The texture of carpet and the feel of the kitchen floor are noticeable to the bottom of his feet with and without shoes. His touching different surfaces (walls, furniture, floors, doors, windows, etc.)

adds to the knowledge he is collecting about his environment. With your supervision, allow your child to explore the stairs in your home. Let him sit on them, lie down on them, and feel how big they are. Tell him what the stairs are made of and why there is a handrail. And then, in a supervised manner, let him explore the stairs.

Since independence is the long-term goal of orientation and mobility, don't forget to work on other areas where you can allow your child to experience age-appropriate independence and build confidence. Teach your child to hold and drink from a cup. Work on finger feeding and scooping with a spoon. Teach her to search for things she drops. Allow her to be involved in cleaning off her face and hands and washing and drying at bath time.

As your child learns new skills, her world will just keep getting bigger and bigger. Get plastic wall plugs for the wall outlets and allow your child to explore the house, from his room to the kitchen cupboards. The support and encouragement you provide in this second year of life will be a great investment in your child's future.



## Making the Holidays Accessible

Brittany Clarkson, Family Services Coordinator, VIPS Louisville

If you are anything like me you are always looking for ways to modify experiences and traditions, especially around the holidays, to make this time of year more enjoyable for our kiddos. My daughter is completely blind so she doesn't enjoy the lights and decorations like most other kids. A few years ago we started doing Elf on the Shelf. I didn't think she would enjoy it much, but I am often surprised at the things she enjoys so I never write anything off without trying it. For the last few years I have used an app on my phone that changes your voice into what sounds like an elf to record messages. I have moved the elf in various places or have the elf write her braille messages. Last night I programmed my tile (small tracking device you can place on a key ring or item that beeps to help you find it) on my phone as our elf (Peppermint) and tied it to our elf. Addy can now ask Siri to find Peppermint and she will beep allowing Addy to locate her independently and turn it off once she has found it. What a cool idea Santa (MOM)!!!! I thought I would share with you all who may want to duplicate this effort or something similar. Please also feel free to share other ways you make holiday traditions and experiences more enjoyable for your kids.

# Who Has the Disability?

A Poem by Robin Bensinger\*

If you're disabled  
does that mean you're  
disappointing  
distant  
full of dis-ease?  
Should being disabled  
make you disdained  
discarded  
disseed?  
Just because you have the label  
of "disabled"  
are you disgusting?  
disturbing?  
dissonant?  
Or are you a human being  
who has many other abilities?  
The ability to dream  
and fulfill those dreams.  
The ability to love.  
The ability to think.  
The ability to feel pain.  
To cry.  
To inspire.  
To set your heart on fire.  
You are not less than  
in any way.  
And anyone who puts you down  
that is the person who is TRULY  
disabled.  
Disabled as in "not able."  
Not able to see the good in others.  
Not able to see the beauty  
the capabilities  
the potential.  
Those are the TRULY  
disabled ones.  
And I pity the fools.

\*Robin Bensinger lives in Louisville, KY. She is a Peer Support Specialist at Bridgehaven Mental Health Services. She has lived, studied and worked in Spain and Israel and has two Master's Degrees in spite of a Bipolar Diagnosis in 1995. She loves languages, dancing and poetry and has two beautiful cats. She is the daughter of VIPS Founding Director, Sharon Bensinger.



# What's Been Going On Around VIPS

## VIPS Kentucky

### Eye Opening Symposium

VIPS was one of several members of the Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) that hosted this year's Eye Opening Symposium in Lexington, Kentucky. A variety of informative sessions provoked thought and stimulated learning.

**Belinda Shirkey, M.D.**, with Retina Associates of Kentucky, discussed the latest research, technology and surgical techniques that are currently being implemented with patients with low vision. **Padmaja Sudhakar, M.D.**, with the University of Kentucky's College of Medicine, went into depth about cortical vision loss, how it is evaluated and assessed, and its effects on daily living.

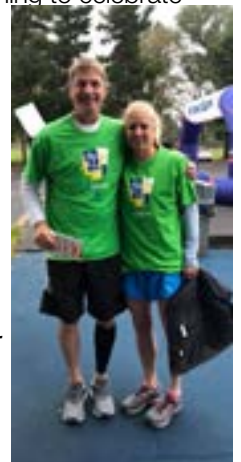
Exciting new technology and everyday consumer electronics that are useful to those that are visually impaired were presented by **Sam Seavey** with Bluegrass Council of the Blind. He demonstrated a new light up cane prototype, and gave examples of how to integrate various smart phone apps with Google Home, Amazon Alexa and Echo.

VIPS' own **Brittany Clarkson** was one of three panel members who shared their stories of early intervention, independent living, and journeys through life.

Each presenter was videoed live on Facebook. To view the presentations, please visit the BSCK's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/bscky.net](http://www.facebook.com/bscky.net) and click on Videos.

### 5k for the 5 Senses

VIPS CKY held their 2nd Annual 5k for the 5 Senses on Saturday, October 20, at UK's Club at Spindletop Hall. Runners, walkers and volunteers braved the chilly morning to celebrate VIPS and explore their five senses in our SENSEsational Spot. Many thanks to the **Lexington Lions Club** for conducting vision screenings, **Healthy Way Lex** for providing samples of their delicious nutrition shakes, and **Meijer and Hibbetts Sports** for providing race awards. The day would not have been possible without all of our **University of Kentucky Delta Gamma volunteers** and our Race Sponsors: **Stratton Eyes, Fluid Power Systems Inc., John Groft RE/Max Creative Realty, PrintLEX, Medical Vision Institute and Don Jacobs Honda**.



The Bakers came from VA to run the 5k for the 5 Senses, looking to complete their goal of running a 5k in all 50 states.

## Night for Sight Gala

The Delta Gamma's 1st Annual Night for Sight Gala benefitting the Delta Gamma Foundation was an exciting event. VIPS CKY Regional Director, **Kelly Easton**, was honored to be able to speak about our longstanding partnership with the Delta Beta chapter of the University of Kentucky's Delta Gamma Fraternity. She shared how much VIPS relies on these ladies for support for our family events and how they always show up enthusiastically and ready to work with our kids and families. **Lion Lee Morrison**, president of the Lexington Lions Club also was a speaker about their relationship with the DG's. Almost 600 people were in attendance.



## PEP - Parent Empowerment Program

Be sure to save the dates for our upcoming Parent Empowerment Program sessions. We have special guests planned for both January and February. Wear your favorite jammies on January 5, as we will be reading **Llama Llama Red Pajamas**. Come back February 2 for a fun day with our friends at the Parklands who are bringing tactile elements for us to explore.

## VIPS Indiana

### Summer PEP and a VIPS Family Farewell to Miss Annie

As many of you know, **Annie Hughes** retired in August, and the summer PEP was her last one as an official VIPS employee. (We know Annie will always keep her toes dipped in VIPS so you'll likely see her again as a volunteer!) So to ALL of the former and current VIPS families, we thank you for joining us for this very special PEP!

We had our usual circle time with introductions and a sing-along led by Miss Annie and her infamous ukulele. Families had an opportunity to connect, watch children play and take home a sensory summer surprise specifically made for their child with



*The room was packed with so many families coming to wish Annie well.*

visual impairments. The training portion of the event focused on the transition into preschool. A big thank you to our new community partner, **Jason's Deli**, for providing us with snacks and refreshments!



*Miss Annie shared some love with one of the children attending.*

## VIPS Night with the Indiana Fever

We'd like to send a big thank you to all who were able to attend VIPS Night with the **Indiana Fever** on Saturday, August 18 in Indianapolis! VIPS Staff, families, and supporters had access to the practice court before the final Indiana Fever game of the season. Our kiddos were able to play basketball and meet this year's Indiana Pacemates! Our VIPS information table was right on the main concourse, so we had the opportunity to spread awareness to all in attendance about our organization, and its impact on Indiana's youngest children with blindness and low vision.

## Cookout for the Crusade

On Thursday, October 11, VIPS Indiana held our 3rd annual Cookout for the Crusade! **WHAS Crusade for Children** has been a generous supporter of VIPS and the children we serve (gifted us with \$35,000 this year!), so this cookout was just our way to say "THANK YOU!" VIPS Indiana would also like to give a big thank you to everyone who came to the cookout lunch, from board members, to neighbors, to VIPS families, and everyone in between. We provided over 60 lunches! Without our grill master, **Steve DeVore**, we would have had a herd of hungry supporters on our hands! Thanks, Steve!



*The postman stopped by for lunch.*

## Trivia Night Hosted by the Delta Gammas

On Friday, November 9, the **Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gammas** hosted Trivia Night to support VIPS Indiana's new Family Resource Center! An incredible \$65,000 was raised, with all proceeds going directly to the building fund so that children with vision loss in Indiana and their families have a Family Resource Center designed and built specifically for their specialized needs. The VIPS Family Resource Center will provide a unique opportunity for individuals or groups to participate in as donors and as supporters of the community.

## INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT BLINDNESS/LOW VISION?



The Bret Dahmke Scholarship Fund was started in March 2015 when the family of Bret Dahmke (above), who was visually impaired himself, wanted to turn the tragic situation of his death at a young age into a beacon of hope by supporting other families who have a child with blindness/low vision.



Pictured above is a 2018 Conference hosted by The Kentucky Chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AEB). This is one of the many conferences you could choose to attend to learn more about blindness/low vision.

### YOU COULD QUALIFY FOR SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS!

#### THE BRET DAHMKÉ SCHOLARSHIP

A \$500 scholarship available to one Kentucky family of a child with a visual impairment. Funds are allotted for the family to attend a local or national conference that is related to blindness/low vision. The goal is to better equip the family with resources, insight, and tools needed to support their child. The scholarship funds may be used for transportation, lodging, or conference fees.

#### HOW TO APPLY

visit the following website:  
[www.vips.org/bret-dahmke-scholarship](http://www.vips.org/bret-dahmke-scholarship)  
Follow the instructions listed for the application process.

In order to be considered you must have a child with a visual impairment (birth-high school age), and you must be a resident of Kentucky.

Deadline to submit applications is  
**FEBRUARY 16, 2019**

## Notes of Interest

Students who are beginning to use a braille writer may need a little extra motivation or additional practice. The Perkins School for the Blind has a website we have mentioned many times in these pages. Paths to Literacy ([pathstoliteracy.org](http://pathstoliteracy.org)) is a wonderful website, and recently a Braille Writing Song appeared. The song is to the tune of Three Blind Mice. First it teaches basic skills associating the keys on the braillewriter with learning the dot numbers that make up the braille cell. Then it moves to the alphabet letters represented by varying combinations of the dots. To hear the song, go to [http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/sites/pathstoliteracy.perkinsdev1.org/files/audio/Braille\\_Writing\\_Song.mp3](http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/sites/pathstoliteracy.perkinsdev1.org/files/audio/Braille_Writing_Song.mp3).

VIPS TV/DI Paige Maynard recommends a delightful toy that teaches/reinforces the braille alphabet featuring 26 puzzle pieces – **brailleblox** – which fit perfectly into the usual LeapFrog Fridge Phonics Letter Toy that is sold separately. The brailleblox, when inserted into the LeapFrog, play the matching ABC song for the letter. The brailleblox are similar to the typical alphabet blocks

sold with the LeapFrog toy, but with added braille texture on each piece. The brailleblox are available to buy on <https://www.braillebot.com/shop/> (\$79.99), and the LeapFrog toy is sold separately (\$19.99) on amazon.com.

An interesting article about the university group that oversaw the development of the brailleblox is available on the incredible wonderbaby.com website. Go to <http://www.wonderbaby.org/resources/braillebot>.

Howard Kaplan, Visualization Specialist at the University of South Florida Advanced Visualization Center, has been designing tactile maps to help blind and visually impaired students better navigate the campus. Using a 3D printer, he creates all the shapes, adjusts the sizes and develops symbols to represent specific interior features. The University hopes to begin public use in the spring of 2019 when the 3D maps will be located outside classrooms. Kaplan hopes to ultimately create software that allows anyone with an internet connection to drag and drop a 2D map to turn it into a 3D printable model. He would like to see tactile maps used in public buildings like hospitals and airports. Checkout [www.83degreesmedia.com](http://www.83degreesmedia.com).

#### **Braille Writing Song (To the Tune of Three Blind Mice)**

Verse 1:

I use this finger to make a dot 1, see how it presses to make a dot 1  
(Wiggle left index finger and then make a line of dot 1's)

Chorus:

(Make the line of dots as you sing the chorus)

Each key does its part to form a dot

I press down hard to form a dot

To write my braille, to write my braille

Other Verses:

I use this finger to make a dot 2, see how it presses to make a dot 2  
(Wiggle left middle finger and then make a line of dot 2's)

I use this finger to make a dot 3, see how it presses to make a dot 3  
(Wiggle left ring finger and then make a line of dot 3's)

I use this finger to make a dot 4, see how it presses to make a dot 4  
(Wiggle right index finger and then make a line of dot 4's)

I use this finger to make a dot 5, see how it presses to make a dot 5  
(Wiggle right middle finger and then make a line of dot 5's)

I use this finger to make a dot 6, see how it presses to make a dot 6  
(Wiggle right ring finger and then make a line of dot 6's)

Final Verse:

I use these fingers to make a full cell, see how they press to make  
a full cell

(Hold up all 6 fingers and wiggle and then make a line of full cells)

For writing letters:

Each verse will use the fingers for that each letter of the alphabet.



## New Arrivals

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

Addyson -- 1 year, Mooresville, IN  
 Aiden -- 5 months, Louisville, KY  
 Aiden -- 9 months, Clearfield, KY  
 Alexander -- 1 year, Frankfort, KY  
 Alexander -- 1 year, Fort Wayne, IN  
 Alice -- 2 years, Mooresville, IN  
 Allyson -- 3 years, Petersburg, KY  
 Andrea -- 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Andrew -- 1 year, Bluffton, IN  
 Ashton -- 11 months, Indianapolis, IN  
 Autumn -- 4 years, Louisville, KY  
 Ava Mae -- 11 months, Greenfield, IN  
 Barrett -- 1 year, LaGrange, IN  
 Bentley -- 8 months, Beech Grove, IN  
 Bronson -- 7 months, Owensboro, KY  
 Cadence -- 1 year, Windfall, IN  
 Christopher -- 1 year, Louisville, KY  
 Cody -- 6 months, Hopkinsville, KY  
 Cole -- 1 year, Seymour, IN  
 Danielle -- 2 years, La Grange, KY  
 David -- 1 year, Louisville, KY

Easton -- 1 year, Mitchell, IN  
 Elizabeth -- 3 years, Danville, IN  
 Elijah -- 1 year, Andrews, IN  
 Emery -- 1 year, South Bend, IN  
 Foster -- 9 months, Paducah, KY  
 Franklin -- 1 year, Owingsville, KY  
 Garrison -- 1 year, Terre Haute, IN  
 Haley -- 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Isabella -- 2 years, Columbus, IN  
 Isabella -- 2 years, Louisville KY  
 Israel -- 1 year, Danville, IN  
 Ivori -- 1 year, Michigan City, IN  
 Jace -- 2 years, Indianapolis, IN  
 Jake -- 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Jayden -- 11 months, Louisville, KY  
 Jerry -- 1 year, Covington, KY  
 Jessie -- 1 year, Henryville, IN  
 Jocelyn -- 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Kaiden -- 1 year, Martinsville, IN  
 Korben -- 8 months, Greenwood, IN

Landon -- 1 year, Brazil, IN  
 Lois -- 10 months, Pembroke, KY  
 Louis -- 8 months, Greenwood, IN  
 Maddox -- 10 months, Fort Wayne, IN  
 Mark -- 1 year, Fort Wayne, IN  
 Meghan -- 5 months, Madison  
 Miradi -- 1 year, Louisville, KY  
 Nova -- 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
 Owen -- 1 year, Warsaw, KY  
 Raven -- 2 years, Burlington, KY  
 Robert -- 9 months, Shelbyville, KY  
 Samuel -- 5 months, Salem, IN  
 Santiago -- 7 months, Elkhart, IN  
 Sabrina -- 1 year, Leesburg, IN  
 Savana -- 2 years, Lexington, KY  
 Sophia -- 2 years, Columbus, IN  
 Sullivan -- 6 months, Lexington, KY  
 Talilah -- 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
 Tyrie -- 2 years, Valparaiso, IN  
 Willow -- 1 year, Glasgow, KY  
 Z Lin -- 8 months, Henderson, KY

## VIPS Staff News

### ***VIPS Indiana***

On Monday, August 20, the staff from all VIPS offices gathered together with friends & family to celebrate the retirement of one of Indiana's greatest teachers, **Annie Hughes**. Annie has been a Teacher of Blind/Low Vision for 40 + years and actually retired once before so she could co-lead the expansion of VIPS services throughout Indiana. VIPS is proud to be able to celebrate an educator who has worked so hard for so many years making sure that Indiana's youngest children with blindness/low vision receive the vision-specific intervention they so desperately need and deserve. At the celebration, Annie was even presented with an official



*Annie accepts her proclamation from LeNee Carroll, former president of the VIPS Indiana Board.*

proclamation from the State of Indiana highlighting the thousands of children she's served over the length of her career.

As one person said it, "Annie is a beacon of light." And she absolutely is. She exudes good energy from the moment you meet her. She is memorable, kind, good-hearted, funny, and she is just a wealth of knowledge when it comes to children and children with vision loss and special needs. While Annie and her ukulele will be sorely missed by the staff at VIPS, we are thrilled that she will be able to just sit back, relax and enjoy her family. Annie, thank you for all that you have done. You will forever be a legend in Indiana's blindness community and VIPS was lucky to have you as long as we did.

**Meredith Howell**, a former VIPS mom, is now the Regional Director of VIPS Indiana. (Meredith is shown with daughter Lola on pg. 5.) She started out as a VIPS parent in 2012 when her daughter, Lola, began receiving services. In 2014, Meredith joined VIPS as a part-time Family Services Coordinator then was promoted to Assistant Director. Meredith is excited about continuing the forward momentum that co-founders, Annie Hughes and Rebecca Davis, have put forth over the years. She

couldn't be more thankful to have a career where she gets to advocates for children and families much like her own.

**David Sterne** will assume the role of Education Lead for VIPS Indiana.

For **Ashley Romine**, an internship has become a full-time job. A native of Central Indiana, Ashley was born and raised in Franklin, a small town south of Indianapolis. She is a recent graduate of Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis' (IUPUI) School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). During her three years at IUPUI, she earned a Bachelor's degree majoring in Media and Public Affairs. Throughout her college years, she worked with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Indianapolis Zoo, gaining experience for her future career in the nonprofit sector. Ashley started at VIPS as the Fundraising Coordinator intern in January 2018; in August, she began working full-time as VIPS Indiana's Development Coordinator to continue her passion serving the children of VIPS and their families.



## VIPS Louisville

**Christina Allen** is the newest teacher on the VIPS Louisville staff and will be teaching in Kids Town Preschool. Christina was born and raised in Prestonsburg, Kentucky but moved to Louisville in the fall of 2012 to begin her college career. She graduated from the University of Indiana with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science in 2015.

In the fall of 2016, Christina received her Master's Degree from the University of Louisville in Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE). During her time at the U of L, she received the Outstanding Student Teacher Award for her class and was chosen to be a member of the PNC Grow Up Great Fellowship.

Christina taught early childhood classes in Jefferson County Public Schools for a year and half. By spring of 2018, she was ready to go back to school to get another degree to teach blind and visually impaired children. Her mother has been her greatest influence on this specialty. Christina says, "My mother is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) at Breckinridge-Franklin Elementary, and I have been watching her work with blind and visually impaired children my whole life. Growing up I saw the

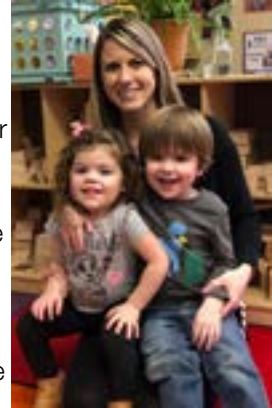


*Christina shares a giggle with Ian.*

magic of a child visually track light with their eyes and read braille as fast as I can read print.

I have always known that I wanted to help others, to give back, and maybe provide some magic of my own". Therefore, she is now a student at the University of Kentucky studying to become a TVI. She has already shown some magic here at VIPS Louisville!

**Julie Hampton** started as a VIPS parent in 2015 and her two children, Henley and Brindle, are still attending here. She began by volunteering and before long, her passion for working with these wonderful children was undeniable. She is now pursuing her Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, with the long-term goal of completing certification requirements to become a teacher of the visually impaired. Julie is a Classroom Assistant in the Purple room with Ms. Christina.



We are excited to welcome **Brenda Pharris** to the VIPS Louisville team as a Classroom Assistant! Brenda has spent the last ten years being a stay-at-home mom to her three daughters, Gracie (10), Ella (7), and Brynlee (5). During this time Brenda also served as a full-time caregiver to two little boys. Before Brenda became a stay-at-home mom, she worked at a pediatrician's office. She's always enjoyed being around and working with children. Brenda loves crafting and spending time with her family, which includes her three girls, her husband, Jeremy, and their Labrador retriever, Wilbur. They spend a lot of time outdoors. Brenda has had fun getting to know our students here at VIPS and she is looking forward to seeing the growth they will make this year. Brenda works with Ms. Staci in the Red Room.



We welcome **Elaine "Laney" Reed** to VIPS as a Classroom Assistant in the Orange Room with Ms. Ashley. Laney was a preschool teacher for seven years, and is excited to be back in the classroom. She grew up in Hopkinsville and has lived in Louisville for the past 22 years. She is a graduate of Indiana University Southeast. Laney has been married to her husband Bryan for 17 years. They have two teenage children, both attending duPont Manual



High School; Elijah (age 15) is at the Youth Performing Arts School, and Evie (age 14) is in the Journalism & Communications magnet. Laney and her family are members of the Westport Road Church of Christ, where she teaches Sunday school. Being visually impaired herself, Laney is especially proud to be working at VIPS. Her ultimate goal is to attain certification to teach visually impaired children.

**Dani Savick**, a new Classroom Assistant in the Purple Room with Ms. Christina, grew up in Minnesota and enjoys snowboarding and snowmobiling, activities she may not be able to continue in Kentucky! Dani and her husband, Will, are just settling into Louisville after moving here so that their two-year-old daughter, Jaycee, could attend VIPS. Dani was a volunteer in special education classes while in high school, perhaps motivated by her mother, a special education teacher. She attended college in Minnesota and will resume her studies in Louisville. Welcome, Dani! We're delighted to have you here.



VIPS Director of Education **Kathy Mullen** was honored at a celebration of Mercy Day by the Sisters of Mercy of Assumption High School. Kathy received an award for her work in lifting the community and keeping the power of Mercy alive through her life's work. Students and alumnae shared the many ways they rise in our community, showcasing the various clubs that are centered around the critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. Kathy was honored as one who has kept the power of mercy alive through her life and work. The other recipient of the Mercy Day honor, is a young woman serving as a missionary in Guatemala.



Kathy says, "Years ago this young woman was in First Steps – and I was her early interventionist! How cool is that?!" While this honoree could not make the celebration, her mother came in from Cincinnati to accept her award. She shared that she still remembers sitting on the living room floor with Kathy, as she fought tears asking if her daughter would ever go to college, live alone, etc. She said Kathy kept saying, "Today, we're building the foundation." That is what early intervention is all about -- building the foundation for the future!

## VIPS Central KY

VIPS CKY is thrilled to have **Rebecca Chinn** join us as an Assistant Teacher for the Little Learners program. Rebecca is mom to VIPS child William, who also has two older brothers, Patrick and Jackson. Rebecca is married to Harry, and they live

in Germantown, Kentucky (NOT the Germantown in Louisville!). She enjoys playing and having fun exploring with her boys, and the entire family frequently participates in VIPS CK family events. Rebecca is excited to be able to join the VIPS team and help all of our Little Learners learn more about their world.



**Tammy Maynard** has joined the VIPS CKY staff as a Developmental Interventionist. Tammy graduated from Eastern Kentucky University in 2005 with a Bachelor of Health Science in Communication Disorders. She returned later to complete her Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) Certification.



Tammy worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist Assistant in the public school system for 6 years. She also worked as an independent provider with the First Steps Program as a Developmental Interventionist for the last 9 years. Tammy is married and has two sons that make her a proud mom. Tyler is a special education teacher and Joshua is a combat medic for the Armed Forces. Tammy is very excited about her transition to VIPS and looks forward to working with her new VIPS family.

## In Memoriam

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memories of

**Jacob Sharpe**

son of Dave and Kristen Sharpe of LaPorte, IN,  
who passed away on June 4 at the age of 10 months  
~ and ~

**Aaden Cornelison**

grandson of Barbara Willard (his caregiver) and son of  
Devante Catching and Ashley Cornelison of Louisville  
who passed away on July 29, 2018 at the age of 5 years  
~ and ~

**Domnique York**

grandson of Wayne and Michelle Bell of Indianapolis, IN  
who passed away on August 30 at the age of three years  
~ and ~

**Ethan Keith Hubbs**

son of Keith and Stephanie Hubbs of Louisville  
who passed away on October 13 at the age of 15 years

*Our hearts go out to all who loved them.*

# Special Gifts of Time, Treasure and Talents

## VIPS Kentucky

Our thanks to to **Karly McKinney and Jade Lasley of Holy Cross High School** who are interning by working in the Kids Town Preschool Twos classrooms as an extra set of hands as well as helping with administrative tasks such as filing, making copies and preparing materials.

For their amazing help with the Stampede, our thanks go out to **Jessica Curry, Amanda Dees, Stephanie Dobson, Melanie Dragoo, Angela Eckert, Robin Garmin, Debbie Hardesty, Bonita Helm, Shelby Henry, Holly Herring, Kim Lintelman, Lauren Locke, Vielka Lopez, Katie McDaniel, Aggie Nelson, Mason Ocampo, Kate Oeschli, Mike Richardson, Eileen Smith, Kelly Steward, Leann Thomas, Laura Tino, Patti Wallace, Annabelle Wallin, Jason Wallin, Martha Watts, Lisa Wegner, Sarah Welch, Alyssa Wines.**

Thanks to these **Humana employees** who loaded all the Stampede supplies on the bus and then washed windows: **Cheryl Atzinger, Chris Atzinger, Rebecca Bon, Linda Orrand, Adriana Powell, and Julie Streble.**

**Veronica Mackin**, of Louisville, celebrated her 7th birthday by asking her family and Sacred Heart Model School friends to contribute to her wishing well instead of giving her birthday presents so she could donate to children at VIPS. We are so very grateful for Veronica's generosity that raised \$2,085 for the support of VIPS services to children who are blind/visually impaired. Thank you, Veronica!



Veronica is on the far right, helping VIPS Executive Director Diane Nelson hold the check. Children thanking Veronica are Brindle, Grayson, Henley and Lane.

We continue to express gratitude for weekly volunteer **Deanna Scoggins** who does so much to model (and instruct!) good Braille-reading habits as well as a little piano playing tossed in!

**Fran Woodward**, the stalwart volunteer in the Twos classroom, is once again the object of our thanks for her superb skills in working with our youngest classroom of children!

**Tamara Scott** has become a weekly volunteer in the Twos Class. We are so grateful for her loving assistance.

We appreciate the efforts of **Claire Head from the University of Louisville**, who has been spending her Fridays assisting in the classrooms.

We are thankful for the volunteer time of **Hayley Shrewsbury**, also from **U of L**, who helped us get ready for Trunk 'n' Treat.

**Ella Springer, from Assumption High School**, has been helpful with our playgroups as well as preparations for Parent Empowerment Programs (PEP). Thanks so much, Ella!

We also say thanks to **Andrea Macke** for her volunteer work.

We truly appreciate the time and talents of brothers **Michael and Jon Daniels**, who, along with their friend, **Carter Cary**, all of **Louisville Male High School**, continue to volunteer with us. Michael and Jon are the sons of former Instructional Assistant Larhonda Daniels. Their flexibility and willingness to assist in the preschool or with administrative tasks have endeared them to the staff.



Michael and Jon, who received the Beacon Award for Volunteerism, are shown with Board President Mike Johnson.

For spending two days working in the library, shifting books and organizing, thanks to **Kim Seifers**.

We are grateful to **Linda Holtzmeier** for her help preparing braille thank you notes.

**Members of the UPS Flight Training Administration** descended on VIPS to perform a multitude of needed tasks, including cleaning our event tables and chairs, helping set up for the Beacon awards, helping prepare crafts for Trunk 'n' Treat, and shifting and organizing books in the library. Thanks to **Keith Atchison, Charese Hemphill, Evelyn Joly, T. Keith, A. Kramer, Laura Merrell, Betty Porter, Shannon Raymer, G. Redden, Staci Roff, Correna Reichle, Debbie Sanders, Alyssa Smallwood,**

*Amanda Thomas, Tina Vetter, Jenna Wells, Jacqueline Whitechurch and P. Williams.* We cannot tell you how much we appreciate your hard work (but we must try)!

The wonderful *staff from VisionWorks* helped winterize the sensory garden and cleaned up the landscaping. Our gratitude goes to the following: *April Baker, Don Bibb, Sandy Brown, Josh Bryant, Haley Burden, Brent Dabner, Shannon Davis, Katlin Dreisbach, Johnny Flatt, Jan Goff, Trey Hathaway, Kyle Koch, Chelsea Larkins, Dawn Marr, Jennifer Miller, Hadrawie Mohamed, Greg Murray, Chandra Roper, Andrea Thomas, and Joe Thompson.*



*The great group from VisionWorks.*

For the loving care during the Family Retreat, thanks to our wonderful child care team, including: *Bridgette Duke, Shelby Easton, Dani Harper, Buddy Horn, Rebecca Ledford, Lauren Locke, Tracy Marchegion, Kim McMahon, Rachel Morales, Autumn Moran, Shelby Rich, Haley Shrewsbury, Becca Smyth, Joyce Wall, and Cate Wollert.*

The Tobii eye gaze system is a communication device that lets the user communicate by using only her eyes to select what is on the computer screen. This device can also be controlled by touch. VIPS CK was fortunate enough to receive a donation of the Tobii from the *Haas family*, who received VIPS services for their daughter Sylvie. Currently the Little Learners class has been using the device to work on picture recognition and pointing to pictures on request (from pictures of the children to pictures of their favorite songs). We also have one student in Little Learners



*Mackenzie uses the Tobii system during Little Learners class with guidance from teacher Dixie Marz.*

who is practicing using the Tobii for communication purposes. The system will also be a wonderful tool when working on various ideas for communication with future children during home visits.

VIPS CKY was honored to be selected as the recipient for *Cole's 735 Main Dining & Spirits Community Table Night*. Regional Director Kelly Easton was on hand to share our mission with diners, and owner *Cole Arimes* generously donated a percentage of all sales, resulting in a \$965.63 gift to fund early intervention services in Central KY.



*Mackenzie holds a "Thank You" sign for Coles.*

We are so thankful to the 5k for the 5 Senses *volunteers from Delta Gamma: Morgan Blair, Allie Brumfield, Avery Burton, Nicole Carlson, Emily Clamage, Alyssa Gallagher, Allison Gehling, Allison Horn, Grace Kadubek, Payton Kennedy, Grace Krah, Megan Manuel, Katie Meek, Savannah Miller, Lily Moore, Jordan Parks, Jacqui Ray, Madi Re, Paige Richards, Emily Silvati, Haleigh Simmonds, Katie Wallach, Ally Weis, Emily Willett, and Ellie Williams.*

SPOOKTACULAR Halloween Party *volunteers from Delta Gamma* are due our high praise and gratitude. They included *Jenna Argast, Karlie Brown, Madison Butler, Kelly Custer, Makensie Ellermann, Julie Farral, Meg Fennell, Avery Harden, Shannon Ho, Sammy Howard, Emilee Jackson, Grace Keane, Shannon Kelly, Taylor McBride, Megan Manuel, Addie Meiners, Julia Meyer, Savannah Miller, Katherine Morsman, Sydney Rebella, Mary Shetler, Nicole Slain, Madi Sydnor, Macy Tabachka, Claire Taormina, Cara Tresnowski, and Liz Weppner.*



*We can always count on the Delta Gammas!*

*Brittany Clark, administrative assistant with Mott + McDonald* is helping VIPS make a difference one bottle cap at a time. With help from her colleagues, family and friends, Brittany has

provided VIPS with 149 lbs of plastic bottlecaps in the past year. Regional Director, Kelly Easton, gives those bottlecaps to the Downtown Lexington Lions Club, who in turn has the bottlecaps made into benches that will be placed out at Masterson Station Park for the annual Bluegrass Fair hosted by the Lexington Lions Club. We greatly appreciate her support (and her bottle caps!).

*Brittany Clark with her carload of bottle caps!*



## VIPS Indiana

Thank you to **Catrina Harris**, mama of VIPS kiddo, **Isaac**, for donating classification folders, cones for Orientation and Mobility (O&M), smelly stickers, computer paper, and post-it notes!

A heartfelt thanks to **Jennifer Silverstein**, mother of recent VIPS graduate, **Ryan**, who donated shiny, metallic pompoms which will be used in Welcome Bags!

We are so grateful for the kind folks of **ACUI in Bloomington** for purchasing the materials and making shaker tubes!

The VIPS Indiana office is incredibly grateful to **Wendy Vivirito**, who organized a “Back to School” drive for VIPS! For two days, deliveries from Wendy and her supporters had our VIPS staff members literally jumping with excitement! The admin team LOVED the printer ink, and the teachers were excited by the metal bowls, PVC pipes and beads. However, not only did Wendy hold a back-to-school drive for



*Wendy and husband with just a few of their donated supplies and a happy Meredith Howell, Indiana Regional Director.*

VIPS, but in lieu of gifts for her and her husband's 25th Anniversary Party, they donated toys, materials, and monetary gifts! Thank you so much, Wendy, and everyone who helped fulfill our wish list. Donations of this type help to ensure that VIPS continues providing quality education to children who are blind or visually impaired.

Thank you to our friend and donor, **Eric Bruun**, for taking Meredith Howell on a Costco shopping spree! Items were purchased to support the Cookout for the Crusade, Parent Empowerment Program, and general office supplies. This was extremely generous and we are so grateful!

Many thanks to **Ann Perrin of Klosterman Baking Company** for donating hamburger and hot dog buns for the Cookout for the Crusade!

## Recent Grants and Donations

### VIPS Kentucky

**Give for Good Louisville** was a unique opportunity to contribute to VIPS, especially through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Last year we raised over \$23,000 and our “stretch” goal this year was \$30,000. We made \$29,833 and considered ourselves most successful.

Thanks to everyone who made for the most successful Stampede ever on Sept 29, raising almost \$70,000 for VIPS! VIPS extends a HUGE thank you to our title sponsor, **Dr. Mark and Cindy Lynn & Associates with Vision Works**, along with **Ford, Papa John's, Louisville Downtown Lions Club, Print Tex, Texas Roadhouse, Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, American Printing House and Mortenson Family Dental**. After the 5K and the family walk, kids enjoyed playing in the Family Fun area complete with face painting, bouncy castles, bubbles, donuts, pizza and hot coffee. Congratulations to all our runners, category winners and **Indiana VIPS kid, Unstoppable Daphne**, for raising the most money with her team—over \$2,000—along with **Team Addy** for having the highest number of family and friends participate in her team for the Stampede.

VIPS received a generous \$50,000 grant from the **Gheens Foundation** to be used for the general support of VIPS operations.

**The Independent Pilots Association** granted \$20,000 to the new Purple classroom constructed this summer that opened with the fall 2018 school year.

**The Honorable Order of the Kentucky Colonels** awarded a grant of \$4,267 for educational tools/toys for our VIPS kids.

**The Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation** awarded a \$60,000 grant at the VIPS September board meeting. This generous donation will be earmarked for: \$54,500 in scholarships for direct services to VIPS children; \$4,000 for the annual Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates 5K Run/Walk Stampede for VIPS; and \$1,500 for the Family Retreat.

Since 2005, the **Lexington Lions Club** has supported VIPS programs in Central Kentucky with over \$144,000 in grant funding. These funds allow us to provide critical early intervention services throughout 67 Central and Eastern KY counties, offer our Little Learners enrichment program for 2- to 3-year-old children, and provide family support programs to all children who have been served by VIPS over the years. We cherish the wonderful relationship we have with this Lions chapter, and are so thankful for their help in serving the children in our community who are blind or visually impaired.

Recently the Lions invited us to their Charity Gifting Night where they presented VIPS with a check for \$10,000, along with over two dozen other agencies. We THANK YOU LIONS CLUB!



Lee Morrison, President of Lexington Lions Club, presents the check to VIPS CKY Regional Director Kelly Easton.

Recently, VIPS was awarded a \$3,000 grant from **Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky** for Central Kentucky's Early Childhood Intervention Program. Thanks to Toyota's generous support, VIPS Central KY teachers are able to continue to provide specialized instruction, modeling, and hands on opportunities to maximize learning and facilitate development for children with low to no vision!

## VIPS Indiana

Thanks to the **AWS Foundation** for \$21,250 that will fund early intervention home visits in the northeastern region of Indiana.

## A Special Visitor

Recently, VIPS had a visit from Megan McDougal of the **Lift a Life Foundation**, which has provided ongoing support of the VIPS Direct Services Program with a three-year, \$45,000 grant, completed during FY 2018. Direct service is a cornerstone of the services VIPS provides since founded in 1985 and, today, accounts for nearly 92 percent



Bradley showed off his cane skills to Megan, under the eye of O&M Instructor, Mr. Maury.

of the services provided to children and families. Each year, VIPS teachers travel thousands of miles across Kentucky and Indiana to provide one-on-one direct intervention with babies, toddlers and preschoolers who are blind and visually impaired. VIPS relies on foundations like Lift a Life to supplement the cost of providing these Direct Services.

## VIPS Wish List

### VIPS Central KY

- Clorox wipes
- Baby wipes
- Paper towels
- Toner for Brother MFC-9130CW color printer

### VIPS Indiana

- Three-hole punches
- Vinyl by the yard for scratch mats
- Red and yellow kids' grocery carts for Orientation and Mobility
- Large, solid black comforters (new) for intervention

### VIPS Louisville

- Amazon Echo (5) one for each classroom
- New or gently used boys pants, size 2T - 5T
- Paper towels
- Card stock in all colors
- Vinyl or Non-Latex disposable gloves
- Baby wipes
- Batteries (all sizes)
- Velcro
- Dixie cups (Small)
- Washable finger paint (especially white)
- Easel paper (12x18)

# Beacon Awards

On October 25, VIPS board members, staff, and supporters gathered at our Louisville location for the annual Beacon Awards Presentation. The Beacon Awards were created 12 years ago as a way to recognize individuals, companies and civic groups that have helped to further the mission of VIPS – whether it's been through the donation of their time, talent or treasure. Each recipient has been an integral part of helping VIPS evolve from a small \$20,000 community agency serving 8 children to a multi-state, internationally recognized \$2.8 million agency serving over 600 children!

This year's recipients included:

**Corporate Benefactor Award** - **C&R Graphics**

**Corporate Volunteer Award** - **Transit Authority of River City (TARC)**

**Individual Benefactor Award** - **Darryl Isaacs Attorney at Law Psc**

**Individual Volunteer Award** - **Jon & Michael Daniels\***

**Parent Ambassador Awards** - **Jim Bosworth & The Pettit Family**

**Collaborative Partners Awards** - **Subway's Roy & Shannon Pierce and Hatfield Media**

**Social Service Award** - **Lexington Lions Club and Fraternal Order of Eagles**

**VIPS Ambassador Award** - **Terri Connolly**



*All recipients are shown with Mike Johnson, President of the VIPS Board of Directors. Left: Roy & Shannon Pierce, of Subway, have been the BEST neighbors!! Below left: Maggie Dolan, of C&R Graphics, prints this newsletter! Below right: Terri Connolly, former VIPS teacher and former President of the VIPS Board, is always available to help VIPS in any way!!*



## Junior Golfer Raises Funds for VIPS



Junior Golfer and St. X student, Drew Doyle, accepted a challenge this summer. Along with a friend, he pledged to raise money for the Mason Goodnight Foundation by playing in the first annual Mason Cup. But Drew did not stop there. He decided to raise funds for VIPS as well.

Mason Goodnight died suddenly on April 6, 2017. Mason had an amazing passion for sports; he played baseball, basketball, football and, of course, golf. To honor Mason, his family started the Mason Goodnight Foundation to benefit youth sports in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

The Mason Cup is a unique junior golf event allowing competitive junior golfers the opportunity to showcase their golf talents while providing development in important life skills such as charitable giving, leadership and teamwork. Drew invited friends in the American Junior Golf Association from all over the country to join him, with each participant challenged with raising funds for The Mason Goodnight Foundation and other charities.

## A Note to VIPS Families

Many VIPS parents are struggling financially under the challenges of care and services for their children. VIPS does everything possible to provide services at no, or very little, cost to our families to help ease this strain.

But those services are very expensive to provide, and VIPS works very hard to raise funds to support all of the wonderful services you have come to expect. We hire teachers with the highest credentials, and provide services in the best possible environments for your child and family, which can mean the expense of traveling many miles.

During this season of giving, *if you are able*, please consider a gift to VIPS, to help support these wonderful services that your child, and other families' children, receive to make sure they can all reach their highest potential. No gift is too small to make a difference in the life of a child and family like yours.



1906 Goldsmith Lane  
Louisville, KY 40218

Visually Impaired  
Preschool Services

Change Service Requested



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



## Upcoming Events

**Monday, December 24 through  
Tuesday, January 1**

All VIPS Offices will be closed for the Holidays.

### Looking Ahead to 2019!!

*Be on the lookout on our Facebook page,  
your inbox or mailbox for more info about  
upcoming events at your regional VIPS Office.*

#### Parent Empowerment Program (PEP)

VIPS Louisville Campus, 10 a.m. - noon.

For more info, contact Brittany Clarkson  
at [bclarkson@vips.org](mailto:bclarkson@vips.org) or 502-636-3207.

**Saturday, January 5** -- Wear your PJ's

**Saturday, February 2** -- Touchables  
with our friends from the Parklands

**Saturday, March 2**

**Saturday, May 11**

VIPS Indiana Campus, 10 a.m. - noon. For  
more info, contact Rita DeVore at  
[rdevore@vips.org](mailto:rdevore@vips.org) or 888-824-2197.

**Saturday, January 26**

**Saturday, April 13**

**Thursday, January 17, 6:30 p.m.**

VIPS Family Night at Kentucky School for the  
Blind. For info, contact Brittany Clarkson  
at [bclarkson@vips.org](mailto:bclarkson@vips.org) or 502-636-3207.

**Wednesday, January 23**

VIPS families will visit the VI Program at  
Breckenridge-Franklin Elementary School  
in Louisville. Contact Kathy Mullen for info  
at [kmullen@vips.org](mailto:kmullen@vips.org) or 502-498-2927.

**Saturday, February 23**

Parent Paint Event in Louisville. For info,  
contact Brittany Clarkson at [bclarkson@vips.org](mailto:bclarkson@vips.org) or 502-636-3207.

**Friday, March 9, 6 p.m.**

Join us for the opening of reVISION at the  
IICC Art Gallery in Indianapolis. Contact  
Meredith Howell at [mhowell@vips.org](mailto:mhowell@vips.org) or  
888-824-2197.

**Sunday, March 17**

VIPS Family Event at Louisville Science Cen-  
ter. For info, contact Brittany Clarkson at  
[bclarkson@vips.org](mailto:bclarkson@vips.org).

**Saturday, April 13th**

Easter Party in Louisville. For info, contact  
Brittany Clarkson at [bclarkson@vips.org](mailto:bclarkson@vips.org).

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

#### VIPS-Louisville

1906 Goldsmith Lane, Louisville, KY 40218  
(502) 636-3207 FAX (502) 636-0024  
Toll free 1-888-636-8477

E-mail: [info@vips.org](mailto:info@vips.org) Website: [www.vips.org](http://www.vips.org)

Diane Nelson, Executive Director

Kathy Mullen, Director of Education

Angela Billings, Development Director

Janie Martin, Director of Finance

Carol Dahmke, Office Manager & HR Director

Christina Allen, TVI in Training/Preschool Teacher

Suzanne Bigsby, Classroom Assistant

Shelby Birchler, Classroom Assistant/After School Care  
Bob Boyd, IT

Brittany Clarkson, Welcome & Family Support

Ashley Emmons, TVI/COMS/Preschool Teacher

Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects

Julie Hampton, Classroom Assistant

Marchelle Hampton, Classroom Assistant/After School Care

Debbie Hardesty, Classroom Assistant

Dani Harper, Events Coordinator & Marketing/PR

Kristen Horlander, Preschool Assistant Director

Mary Lesousky, TVI/Developmental Interventionist

Ashley May, Classroom Assistant

Paige Maynard, TVI/Developmental Interventionist

Staci Maynard, Provisional TVI/Preschool Teacher

Juanita Miles, Twos Preschool Teacher

Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist

Beth Owens, Classroom Assistant

Brenda Pharris, Classroom Assistant

Elaine Reed, Classroom Assistant

Dani Savick, Classroom Assistant

Carla Vied, Developmental Interventionist

Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist

Maury Weedman, O&M Specialist/Facilities Manager

Brittany Williamson, TVI/Preschool Teacher

#### VIPS-Central Kentucky

350 Henry Clay Blvd., Lexington, KY 40502  
(859) 276-0335 FAX (859) 276-4379

Toll free 1-888-254-8477

E-mail: [vipslex@vips.org](mailto:vipslex@vips.org)

Kelly Easton, Regional Director

Mary Smyth, Assistant Director

Rebecca Chinn, Little Learners Assistant

Tammy Maynard, Developmental Interventionist

Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist

Dixie Miller Marz, TVI/DI & Little Learners Teacher

#### VIPS-Indiana

1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 228, Indianapolis, IN 46208

Toll Free 1-888-824-2197 FAX 1-502-636-0024

E-Mail: [vipsindiana@vips.org](mailto:vipsindiana@vips.org)

Meredith Howell, Regional Director

Melissa Barick, Visual Impairment Early Interventionist

Rita DeVore, Administrative Assistant

Amy Nichols, TBW/ Early Interventionist

Ashley Romine, Development Coordinator

David Sterne, Lead Blind/Visual Impairment Specialist



*Wishing you the  
happiest of  
Holiday Seasons  
and many  
blessings  
in the  
New Year!!*

*The VIPS  
Staff*

**Any VIPS family may attend any VIPS family activity, regardless of  
where the event is held or from which VIPS office you receive services.**