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## Onward and Upward!!

Congratulations, VIPS Kids Town Preschool Class of 2019! The *Kosair Charities Shrine Center* graciously allowed VIPS to again hold graduation ceremonies there for the 16 youngsters who have accomplished so much in their years with VIPS. The graduates marched down the aisle in their purple gowns and mortar boards to take their spots on the stage where each child’s skills and accomplishments were praised by their teachers.

Each graduate was presented a braille American flag, courtesy of the *Fincastle Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution*. The *Dartmouth Club of Kentucky* gave each child a copy of the twin vision (large type and braille) book, *Oh, the Places You’ll Go*, written by Dartmouth graduate, Dr. Suess. After all the praise and gifts, the graduates and their families enjoyed a delicious cake graciously provided by *The Bakery of Sullivan University*.

[Continued on pg. 2](#)



## VIPS Mom’s Story Inspires Donors!

Thanks to all who came out to support VIPS at the 2019 Tennis Ball! With the generosity of all our guests, sponsors and donors, we were able to raise over \$140,000 to help ensure that VIPS can continue to provide the critical educational services that young children who are blind and visually impaired in Kentucky and Indiana so desperately need. During the evening, VIPS mom Kendra Ray spoke about her daughter, Kendall. She said:

*“I was asked to share Kendall’s story tonight, which has been a very dramatic event in my life that was unexpected. As a mother with a child who has several medical conditions, it’s very hard not*



*The Rays with Kendall, one of our 2019 grads!*

[Continued on pg. 2](#)



**Mission Statement**

**VIPS empowers families by providing educational excellence to young children with visual impairments in order to build a strong foundation for reaching their highest potential.**

## Graduates continued from pg. 1

We are most appreciative of all of the groups named above but most especially we are grateful to the parents of the graduates for sharing their delightful youngsters with us! We wish all the best to our Class of 2019 in their new schools!

*Aria – Placement not yet determined  
Ayden – Stonestreet Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Cora – St. Matthews Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Eli – Greenville Elementary, Greenville, IN  
Henley -- Norton Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Ian – Cochrane Elementary, Louisville, KY  
John – Wilkerson Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Kendall – Wilkerson Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Levi – Centerfield Elementary, Crestwood, KY  
Lucy – Norton Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Maxwell – Placement not yet determined  
Oakley – Panther Academy, Elizabethtown, KY  
Olive – Home school, Louisville, KY  
Saphira – Johnson Elementary, Scottsburg, IN  
Trenton – Schaffner Elementary, Louisville, KY  
Tyler - Smyrna Elementary, Louisville, KY*

We will miss your smiling faces. Please stay in touch so we know how you are doing! Better yet, come back for a visit!!

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## VIPS Mom continued from pg. 1

*knowing what our day-to-day will hold. But having Kendall has taught me more than any life experience could. She has taught me the true meaning of unconditional love, to focus on what is important, and to let go of what isn't. She has taught me patience and acceptance.*

*Kendall was our first child. My husband and I waited a few years to get pregnant after we were married. So when the time came, we were so excited to be pregnant! My pregnancy was full of weekly doctor visits, non-stress tests and ultrasounds due to having type 2 diabetes. Every visit we were relieved to receive great news that Kendall was right on target. We did all the stuff new expecting parents do! We went to all the new parents classes, read the books, painted the room, and had several big baby showers. I took weekly bump pictures. I was over the moon to be having a little girl.*

*At 39 weeks I was induced -- 72 hours later Kendall was born. She was rushed to the NICU for testing because the doctor noticed that something wasn't right with her. She was breathing fine on her own but she seemed exhausted. We did get to hold her for a few seconds; then she was taken. I was in*

*complete shock and felt numb to this entire experience. After I was taken to my room, Justin and I went right up to the NICU to visit our new baby girl. We had no clue what was wrong with her at this point.*

*A few hours later, a doctor walked into our room to deliver the most life changing news about our baby. He said our daughter had low blood flow to the brain that probably happened in utero. This caused her to have a seizure condition and moderate cerebral palsy.*

*He said there was no way to determine if Kendall would ever walk or talk. He suggested that we contact First Steps to get the physical, occupational, vision and speech therapies Kendall would need. He felt hopeful that the therapies would help Kendall.*

*There are really no words to explain how we felt in this moment. Nothing in the world can prepare you to be a mother, especially a mother to a child with so many needs. Kendall spent two weeks in the NICU. The hospital let us stay in a room funded by the Ronald McDonald House. I refused to go home without my baby. The next few months were very trying for our family. Adjusting to a new baby is hard in itself.*

*We started First Steps immediately. The therapists were great. We learned ways to help Kendall reach milestones and work on her skills. I learned not to compare Kendall to other children. All my girlfriends had children around the same time as me. All their kids were sitting up, rolling over, holding toys. Not Kendall. I had to learn that Kendall was going to need extra help doing all of these things. She would do things in her own time.*

*We learned about VIPS and their center-based program for two year-olds -- a place Kendall could attend a few days a week to get that sociability she needs. It was always in the back of my mind, will Kendall be able to attend school, and will they be able to meet her needs? I was so scared to send her to a place where she did not know anyone. She was nonverbal; she could not communicate her wants and needs at the time.*

*We made the decision to enroll Kendall in the two-year-old program at VIPS. It was hard. She cried when I dropped her off; I cried, too. After a few weeks though, she became so excited when we talked about school. She smiled so big when we would talk about her teacher and the children in her classroom. We had an excellent experience at VIPS, so we decided to send her there for preschool as well.*

*VIPS offers inclusion in the classroom. Kendall has had classmates who are sighted peers (children who have no visual impairments or physical or mental disabilities). We like this concept because Kendall learns best around children who are verbal. She is a social butterfly. Her classmates love to help her; they truly love her!*

*Kendall has blossomed and thrived at VIPS. When she is at school I don't have to worry about her. I know she is in good hands. She has ridden the bus to school. She has received PT, OT, vision and speech. She has an IEP through Jefferson County Public Schools. The teachers and therapists have all worked together to meet her needs. She now uses a gait trainer to walk and uses a communication device to talk.*

*We will always feel like we are welcome at VIPS. It has been an amazing school for Kendall. It's not just a school for children with visual impairments. It's a school for ALL children. She has blossomed and thrived at VIPS. Her physical conditions do not define her. Kendall is a very happy, social butterfly.*

*Thanks to her many happy hours at VIPS, she is ready for the next chapter of her life. On to kindergarten!"*



*Kendall watches as her mom talks.*

## A Word on Advocacy

*by Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education*

A few years ago, I attended a pretty good national conference held right here in Kentucky. The very last session of the conference was "Powering up for Advocacy." I loved the title and looked forward to learning more tricks of my trade, as I accompany many VIPS families in school and community meetings to advocate for the educational rights of their children. The speaker summed up her 90-minute presentation with the closing line, "If you are comfortable when you advocate, then you are not doing it correctly."

Does advocating make me feel uncomfortable at times? In a word, YES.

As I transitioned from teacher/developmental interventionist to administrator, my opportunity to represent families of children with special needs in such meetings increased. I can remember walking into such meetings and getting looks from others around the table that said loud and clear in a dreadful tone, "Oh great. Kathy Mullen is here." I felt like I was always professional and almost always polite, but I always dreaded a meeting beginning with this type of reception.

According to the presenter, was I doing a good job advocating? In a word, YES.

But I was not so comfortable with this method of operation. I had the fear that, if people dreaded meeting me, they may

generalize that feeling to the child and family I was representing. I also identify as a very happy person. I'm really very nice. The families I represented knew that. It was up to me to make sure the other members of the child's educational team knew that as well. I made an intentional effort to draw attention to the positivity of gathering a group of adults to share current information and dream of the future potential of one child. I tried starting meetings with a statement of gratitude for the people gathered. I got some strange looks. Most times I now make my statement of gratitude privately to the parent of the child for whom we are meeting. A single statement of gratitude puts the parents at ease immediately and nine times out of ten the meeting follows suit. I now walk into a meeting and I am greeted with looks that say with a happy voice, "Oh great, Kathy Mullen is here."

According to me, was I doing a good job advocating? In a word, YES.

My next objective was to help parents to recognize they advocate within themselves. Some parents were born to advocate. I attended one meeting with a mom donning a t-shirt that said, "Advocate Like a Mother." Bam! No problem there. Recently, I attended a meeting with a mom who had prepared a small packet to share with those at the meeting who had never met her son. On top was a one pager about her son; it included a darling picture, a list of his family members, likes/dislikes, and what the parents hoped he would achieve in life (Independence!). Attached to the one pager was the child's eye report and a definition of his visual diagnosis. It was very clear that the visual diagnosis was not the focus of who the child is.

Other parents need more support. I ask questions during meetings until I am confident that parents understand what is being said. I ask parents if the information being shared sounds like their child. I ask parents to share what they want everyone to know about their child. It is amazing to witness parents discovering their voice.

Can parents be coached to become stronger advocates for their children? In a word, YES.

Who else needs help with advocacy? In some cases, it is our VIPS teachers who need encouragement to speak up for themselves as well as for the rights of their students. This may come as a surprise to the reader, but sometimes teachers need to be reminded of the important role they play in the life of the child served by VIPS as well as their family. Teachers are armed with the research that supports the strategies used in educating young children who are blind or visually impaired. The knowledge that comes from the research helps VIPS to employ best practices in the early intervention services we provide. Teachers are energized by their work and in turn are ready for more.

Are VIPS teachers empowered by advocacy? In a word, YES.



The last group of advocates employed at VIPS is our children themselves. Embedded in our preschool curriculum and home- and community-visits is acknowledgement of the child's right to be respected and honored as a person. One of my favorite VIPS parent stories involves a dad who used to sit on our Board of Directors. One night after a board meeting, I was showing a guest of this VIPS dad around our preschool. I mentioned our intentional effort to teach advocacy skills to our preschoolers. As he's known to do, the VIPS dad interrupted me and said he used to think my advocacy talk was just that – a bunch of talk. That all ended when his daughter graduated from Kids Town Preschool and was enrolled as the smallest kindergarten student in her public school classroom. On one occasion he visited his daughter in the classroom and saw her in action as she told a child larger than her to move out of her way so she could see, that she needed to be in front the other child, and that she needed help getting a book she couldn't reach.

Does advocacy come in all styles and sizes? In a word, YES.

Do advocacy skills grow with an individual? In a word, YES.

Is there room for more advocates around the table? In a word, YES.

## Those Marvelous Milestones

When your child works so hard to reach them, you can never take them for granted. They are to be celebrated!

### Owen

VIPS mom, Tiffany, has been working with Owen on navigating safely in a variety of environments, as well as decreasing sensory aversions. She takes him on a variety of outings to increase these skills, and recently they went to explore the Arboretum at U.K. Owen was very excited to climb into, touch, and explore the different textures of the trees, flowers, and especially enjoyed the fish pond (although Mom had a hard time keeping him out of it!).



Mom also takes extra time with him at the grocery store and the farmer's market to let him look, feel, and smell the wonderful produce. They attend weekly story time at the library where mom works, to encourage socialization skills. The family (Mom, Dad, and Grammy) also take him on walks, allowing him to pick up "treasures" such as rocks, sticks, and leaves, bringing them home and talking about their finds. As a

result of these experiences, Owen loves these special times, and has become very curious and interested in exploring the world around him.

### Avron

Avron is now able to hold his head upright as he sits in his adaptive chair. Learning to hold one's head up may be difficult for a child with a visual impairment because limited vision makes it less motivating to hold the head up to look around. Sometimes children with visual impairments may also have other special needs, such as high or low muscle tone, which make it difficult to have motor stability. It is important for Avron to learn to hold his head up because it allows him to look at the environment, have the strength to progress to eating solid foods, interact with his family, and many other skills!



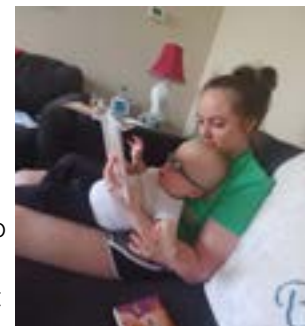
### William

William received his first set of magnifiers recently. He has learned how to turn on the light and is looking at pictures in books with the magnifier! This is not really a milestone, per se, as he has been working toward looking at pictures for a while. However, this is the first time he has had his own set of magnifiers to keep at home and use! William also participated in a big chore that is a step toward independent living! He helped gather eggs from his chickens!



### Micah

Micah recently looked at and patted pictures in a Large Print edition of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* with his mom, Rachel. He has gone from not looking at any of the pictures in the other books in his library while trying to wiggle off his mother Rachel's lap during story time, to now attending to the pictures and patting them -- just with this simple change in a book that was more visually accessible to him!



### Myles

Myles' milestone is using his magnifier! He is now able to use it to "make it big" when requested! He even showed he was able to identify small pictures with it! They were too hard for



him to see un-magnified! He even asked his mom, Jen, to look into the magnifier to see what he sees!

### Arijana

Looking toward the face of a speaker is an important social interaction skill for a child with a visual impairment. On a recent home visit, Jasmina worked with her daughter's interventionist on looking toward her face. They found that putting brightly colored pompoms on their heads helped direct Arijana's visual attention. She immediately started looking at their faces. Her sister, Ermina, wanted to get in on this playful, yet important, activity.



### Hunter

Siblings can be wonderful role models and helpers for VIPS kids. Hunter's sister, Sadie, is helping him learn to grasp, a very important developmental milestone. She helped place rings in Hunter's hands and then gave his hand a light squeeze to activate his grasp.

### Jaycee

Jaycee is learning to feed herself with a spoon! This skill is a significant step toward independence.



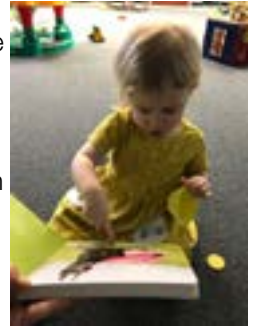
### Wells

From the moment Wells' family heard that he might have Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), his parents and grandparents quickly began researching CVI and implementing strategies shared by his VIPS Developmental Interventionist. Strategies were consistently implemented across all routines at both his home and his grandparent's home, where he is watched during the day. The family's commitment to implement CVI strategies has positively influenced his ability to move from Phase 1 to Phase 2 on the CVI range. Pictured below is Wells playing in his "CVI Den" created by his grandmother. This play space is filled with Wells' preferred objects and toys to provide active learning opportunities while eliminating visual clutter. A big shout out to both Wells and his family for working hard to improve his vision.



### Isla

Isla has always liked looking at books, but only recently began holding them right side up AND pointing at objects in the book to identify them. Isla attends a childcare center during the day, so she has learned what "baby" means. On her latest visit with Ms. Melissa in Indiana, Isla looked through a book of "baby faces" and pointed at all the "babies" she saw. We're so proud of Isla for working hard to identify the things she's seeing in her books!



### Josue



Josue is crawling now and finding his toys. A child with limited vision can lack motivation to move out into the environment beyond his grasp. Learning to become mobile will open up the opportunity to explore for Josue. He is also learning to

use his vision to look for objects in containers and remove them independently.

## VIPS Parents Recommend...

**Sheila Carwile, mother of VIPS child, Brooks,** recommends the SENHAI Fairy String Lights\*, available in 6 strand sets from Amazon.com for \$10.99. These battery operated mini lights come in a variety of hues, and are a perfect way to add luminescence and a preferred color to your child's routines. Sheila bought both the red and white sets, and wrapped the top of Brooks' play yard with the red strand, in order to help increase his visual awareness of the toys hanging on it. Sheila also plans to outline a space the tray on Brooks' stander (a position device that helps an individual maintain a standing position) with the lights, in order to help direct his visual attention down to the toys on the tray.



*\*Adult supervision is recommended when these lights are in use, as they include small parts, which may be choking hazards for some children.*

### Kim Restivo, mother of Danielle, writes:

Being a parent or guardian of a visually impaired child is challenging enough on its own, so finding activities to engage your child in at home and on your own can be a daunting task



for some of us. When I was asked to help other parents with our experiences, I did what I thought most other parents in my situation do, I over thought it. I made my task more difficult than it needed to be. Parent to parent, you do not need to do that to yourself. Keep it simple. Use your therapist and VIPS as a resource to get you started. There are so many wonderful items already in your home for you to help your child's visual development. As seen in the picture Dani is exploring a roll of tape. She is engaged and interested in the activity. If you need to modify the activity you could use brightly colored tape on a plastic lid or on a light box. Here are some other items and activity ideas to keeping it simple and fun at home with your child.



- Muffin tins, empty egg cartons can be used for sorting smaller items and fine motor skills.
- Empty plastic coffee containers, shoe boxes, tissue boxes, wipe containers, are good for stacking and counting.
- Plastic kitchen utensils, measuring cups/spoons can be used for scooping.
- An empty parmesan cheese container makes a good shaker.
- Paper towel rolls, toilet paper rolls, can be used for looking through or strung on a piece of yarn or shoelace.
- Cornstarch and water makes a fun sensory and science activity.

The entire idea of this article is for you to engage with your child and not worry about spending extra time and money on expensive toys. Use what you already have around your home. Have fun and remember to keep it simple.

## VIPS Family Events

### Spring PEP at VIPS Indiana

On April 13, VIPS Indiana held a Spring Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) with a special presentation from *Lisa Kutschera from About Special Kids (ASK)*. ASK is Indiana's Parent-to-Parent organization that works throughout the state to give support, answer questions and provide information and resources to families of children with special needs. We greatly appreciate Lisa speaking with our families and providing them with valuable resources to help them ensure the best life for their VIPS kiddos.



Gavyn looking at Tigger.



Jacob reading a book with Grandma.

Thanks to our volunteers, for helping with VIPS children and their siblings, and for making Easter egg shakers for our Welcome Bags. We also thank *Starbucks (Emerson and Eleanor)* and *Kroger* for providing refreshments.

### Easter Fun!

VIPS families celebrated Easter with a pancake breakfast and sensory egg hunt on Saturday, April 13 at the VIPS Louisville office. There were bins of colorful eggs hidden in Easter grass, beeping eggs producing sound cues for the children to use to locate them, and eggs attached to brightly colored balloons floating in the air to provide visual cues. Families also made textured eggs for their children.



Levi watches as his friend finds some eggs.

### We Love Our VIPS Parents!!!



Left: Conner and dad, Damond. Right: Ian and dad, Andrew.



On April 26, VIPS fathers stayed for Donuts with Dad when they came to drop their children off for Kids Town Preschool. We are so appreciative of the donations of donuts from *Dunkin Donuts*, coffee from *Heine Brothers* and orange juice and milk from *Arby's*.

VIPS mothers got equal time with Muffins with Mom on May 10. Thanks to *Arby's* for the orange juice and milk.



Left: Athena and mom Autumn. Right: Gabriel with mom Tiffani and baby sister.

## Golfers, Children and Sunshine, Oh My!

The VIPS Central Kentucky office had a PERFECT day for the 16th Annual Golf Outing on May 7th at Keene Trace Golf Club.



VIPS Central KY Advisory Board Chair Scott Duncan gave Ember some putting tips.

Our Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Dixie Marz, and Teacher Assistant, Rebecca Chinn, welcomed several families whose children participate in the Little Learners enrichment program. The children loved playing on the putting green and getting some tips from our Advisory Board members and players, and enjoyed making some artistic creations on the patio before lunch was served.

Almost \$9000 was raised to support our early intervention services in the 67 Central and Eastern Kentucky counties served by the Lexington office!

## VIPS Staff News

### In Louisville...

We are happy to welcome **Christina Frasher** as our new Controller. Christina is a Louisville native who spent the past 11 years moving around Ohio. She received her degree in Accounting from the University of Louisville in 2006. Christina was a stay-at-home mom to her two boys, Collin (9) and Alex (5) for many years. During this time she worked part time as a bookkeeper for an entrepreneur and as a church treasurer.



Christina has a passion for organizing and budgeting and is a self-identified “Excel nerd,” using any excuse to use the application. She also loves doing yoga and became a certified yoga instructor in 2017. In her spare time, she loves spending time with her boys at the Science Center and playing at the park.

We had to say “so long” to **Brittany Clarkson**, the VIPS mom who was our Guest Relations/Family Services/Volunteer Coordinator for the past 2½ years. (See related article, “The Children Need You!” on pg. 8)

Kristin Horlander, Assistant Kids Town Preschool Director, has stepped up to serve as the new Family Services Coordinator. Kristen is a VIPS Mom, whose daughter Maddie graduated last year.

**Kirsten Schmidt** is the new Guest Relations/Volunteer Coordinator. Kirsten is a life-long Louisville resident and a graduate of Murray State University. Kirsten comes to VIPS after retiring from the Kentucky Office for the Blind where she held a number of positions serving low vision/blind adults: providing O&M services; evaluating, identifying and remediating skills leading to employment; coordinating, evaluating and providing low vision services; managing an online and physical store of adaptive devices and low vision aids; coordinating client services; and overseeing residential services to clients. She received the prestigious Charles W. McDowell award for her willingness and flexibility in serving OFB clients. Kirsten is also a long-time volunteer for VIPS.



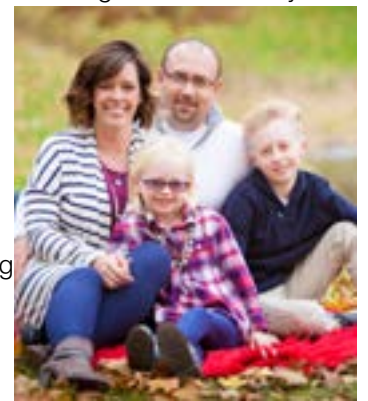
VIPS Kids Town Preschool Teacher **Ashley Emmons** was recently nominated and elected to fill a vacant seat as one of four City Commissioners of Simpsonville.

Office Manager/H.R. Director **Carol Dahmke** recently received the Women in Leadership Award at the Kentucky Lions Clubs’ State Conference! She currently serves as President of the Louisville Downtown Lions’ Club.

### In Indiana...

**Melisa Matthews** is our new developmental interventionist working out of Ft. Wayne, IN. Melisa grew up in Portage, Michigan and is a graduate of Western Michigan University. She worked for Fort Wayne Community Schools for seven years as a classroom teacher, reading interventionist and instructional coach.

Melisa and her husband, Chris, have been married for almost 12 years and have two children. Their youngest was diagnosed with Ocular Albinism at three months of age. This discovery led to the same diagnosis for their older son. At that time the decision was made for Melisa to stay at home to assist with the challenges that were presented to their daughter. Once both children were in school full time Melisa decided to take a teaching position at the preschool her children attended.



A friend began talking to her about becoming a developmental therapist with First Steps at the end of the school year. This new position led her to explore how blind and low vision children are being served in Northeast Indiana. It was at that point she decided to move forward with training to become a blind/low vision specialist.



## The Children Need You

A *VISability* article in October-December 2017 reported on the existing shortage of certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) and encouraged readers to consider returning to school to become certified in this much needed specialty. Ironically, that same newsletter welcomed Brittany Clarkson, as the new VIPS receptionist. Brittany has now left that position in a bold, but amazingly clever, move to become a teacher of the visually impaired! How did this happen?

Brittany recently attended an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting for her daughter, Addy, where she expected to see, among other school district professionals, the Teacher of the Visually Impaired serving Addy. However, she was told that the teacher, who had not yet completed coursework to become fully certified, had just resigned! Brittany, sensing an opportunity, offered to fill that interim position and agreed to return to school to obtain her certification. And her school district took her up on it!

Brittany's situation is unusual only in that the parent of a child being served by a TVI is the one filling that position! Because of the international shortage of TVIs, many school districts find themselves in such predicaments and hire interim teachers of the visually impaired who are enrolled in the University of Kentucky's (or other university's programs) online TVI classes.

Keep in mind, school districts who serve children who are blind and visually impaired are legally required to provide the number of minutes/hours per week of TVI services as specified on each child's IEP and when they cannot, are vulnerable to lawsuits and other negative outcomes. So they, too, are motivated to find a TVI, even one who may not be fully certified as yet!

If you already have teaching credentials, you would need to take classes in teaching children who are visually impaired and/or blind! If you have a college degree without teaching credentials, you could still become a TVI if you are willing to return to school to obtain both teaching certification and the visually impaired endorsement. The children need you!

## VIPS Grad Honored

VIPS and Kentucky School for the Blind graduate Shane Lowe was one of seven students who recently wrote part of a book, *We Can Hear You Just Fine*, with assistance from the Louisville Story Program. Shane has now been selected to be one of 150 young leaders from around the world to participate in the 2019 International Congress of Youth Voices in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he will be able to learn with and from accomplished writers, activists and elected officials. Congratulations, Shane!

## Gifts of Time, Talent & Treasure

### VIPS Kentucky

For their assistance in Kids Town Preschool and Two Day Twos at VIPS Louisville, thanks to: *Sharon Bohannon, Deanna Scoggins, Ella Springer and Fran Woodward.*

The Easter Bunny greatly appreciates the help he received from the *Middletown Christian Church volunteers* at the annual Easter party, including: *Molly Barney, Brittany Cross, Rachel Freeny, Lisa Guelda, Brandi Hitzelberger, Eric Hitzelberger, Audrey Lentz, Logan Lloyd, Megan Lloyd, Amanda Martin, Kay Mills, Marie Peterson, Sharon Peterson, Emily Schaefer, and Jordan Schaefer.*

For the wonderful helping hands with the 31st Annual VIPS/ Yum! Brands Golf Tournament on May 20, thanks to: *Kenzie Bovinet, Sabina Briggs, Willie Dempsey, Theresa Gholson, Lisa Griffin, Nakia Hearn, Bonnie Helm, Shari House, Pete Laguens, Cindy McLain, Amy Minton, Rachel Osborn, Brandon Osborn, Casey Pereira, Jenny Sash, Kelly Steward, and Leo Sullivan.*

### VIPS Indiana

Thank you to the *Young Nonprofit Professionals Network - Indianapolis chapter* for helping us make World Braille Day cards to send out to all of our Indiana legislators.

Thank you to the *Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma* for their many donations from our Amazon Wish List, from books and toys to office and cleaning supplies.

We are so grateful for VIPS Indiana's supporters, *Neti Hawk, and family*, for coming up with an ingenious idea to give back to VIPS through the sale of their homemade goat's milk hand cream, Butter From Another Udder! (Neti's son, Jonah, gets full credit for that clever name.) They presented VIPS with \$400! Thank you, Hawks!



*Regional Director Meredith Howell with Hawks children.*

Thank you to the *Girl Scouts of Central Indiana* for making shaker tubes and the *Delta Gamma IU Chapter* for making texture blocks for our Welcome Bags for new VIPS Indiana families!



## Kids in Classes

In Little Learners at VIPS Central KY, Dmitri is learning to use a magnifier when looking at a book. A few weeks ago, students learned about insects. We had lots of fun swatting “bugs” during art. It was good practice for eye-hand coordination!



Left: Ember is swatting at the “bugs” on the paper. Above: Dmitri is exploring his magnifier with Ms. Dixie.



At Kids Town Preschool, the red room also studied insects. Ms. Brenda brought in a beehive frame, some beeswax, a beekeeper suit, and some honey for the children to explore with their senses while we learned about how bees make honey. Ms. Brenda’s husband is a beekeeper.



Kya tried on the beekeepers protective hood.

## Notes of Interest



A documentary on cortical visual impairment (CVI) provides a wealth of information from the unique perspective of individuals with CVI, including those who were not diagnosed as youngsters. To watch this 30-minute video, go to [cviscotland.org](http://cviscotland.org) and look for “Not in Plain Sight”.

The Read Read™, makes braille and phonics learning independent and accessible. The American Printing House for the Blind and the Perkins School for the Blind, both world famous educational leaders, have endorsed the Read Read™, which is a finalist in Louisville’s annual Venture Capital competition. It is the only device that allows a child to independently learn braille and phonics through proven, best practice, manipulative-based instruction. It provides immediate audio feedback, by touching the braille and large print manipulatives. To learn more, visit [www.theadread.com](http://www.theadread.com).

The Braille Institute offers free braille books and storybook kits to any visually impaired child living in the U.S. or Canada. The Dots for Tots (birth through six years of age) collection includes a manipulative to interact with the child, available on a first order-first served basis. The Digital Dots collection includes downloadable books in braille for older students. Teachers of the Visually Impaired may also subscribe to the Institute’s Special Collection through the Partners in Literacy program. Visit [brailleinstitute.org/special-collection](http://brailleinstitute.org/special-collection) for additional information.

## VIPS Wish List

### VIPS CK

- Paper towels
- Baby wipes
- Plain white cotton bibs
- Copier paper
- Colored card stock (black, white)
- Scotch Brand Thermal Laminating Pouches
- Child size gardening tools
- Child size aprons
- Small terra cotta pots
- Potting soil mix

### VIPS Indiana

- $\frac{3}{4}$  “ knit elastic (to suspend items from a play frame)
- White copy paper
- Pegboard
- Lysol cleaning wipes
- SmartNoggin NoggiStik Light-Up Rattle
- Full-size slinkies (red/yellow) for Welcome Bags
- Metal measuring cups
- Metal whisks
- Metallic items to hang from playframes

### VIPS Louisville

- Children’s Socks
- Boys and Girls Pants 2T-5T
- Markers
- Finger Paint
- Paper towel rolls
- Baby wipes
- Hand Soap Refills
- Dish Soap
- Construction paper
- Elmer’s Jumbo Glue Sticks
- Wet wipes and Clorox wipes
- Batteries -- Double A and Triple A
- Magic erasers
- Laundry detergent and dryer sheets (must be ALL brand, Free and Clear)

# VIPS Kids Eligible for Free Echo Device Through Radio Eye

The Amazon Echo device offers wonderful accessibility for users who are visually impaired. Now, students of VIPS who live in designated areas of Kentucky and Indiana will be eligible to receive an Echo FREE of charge through Radio Eye (<https://www.radioeye.org/become-a-listener>). Radio Eye provides radio reading services for Kentucky and Southern Indiana. In fact, a Radio Eye recording studio is located at the VIPS Louisville campus.

Radio Eye serves the following counties in Kentucky: Anderson, Bath, Bell, Bourbon, Boyle, Bullitt, Carter, Casey, Clark, Clay, Elliott, Fayette, Fleming, Franklin, Garrard, Henry, Jefferson, Jessamine, Knox, Laurel, Lewis, Lincoln, Madison, Meade, Menifee, Mercer, Montgomery, Morgan, Nelson, Oldham, Rockcastle, Rowan, Scott, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble, Whitely and Woodward. In addition, Radio Eye serves the Southern Indiana counties of Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Scott, and Washington.

Other radio reading services are located in the VIPS service areas of Northern KY and Indiana. The Cincinnati Association for B/VI has a radio reading service that covers some Northern KY counties ([www.cincyblind.org/information-services](http://www.cincyblind.org/information-services)). In Indiana, radio reading services are available in the communities of Evansville (WNIN Radio Reading service – [www.wnin.org/radio-reading-service](http://www.wnin.org/radio-reading-service)), Fort Wayne (Audio Reading Service -- [www.acpl.lib.in.us/](http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/)

[www.wfyi.org/iris](http://www.wfyi.org/iris)), and Indianapolis (Indiana Reading & Information Service -- [www.wfyi.org/iris](http://www.wfyi.org/iris)). VIPS families residing in Indiana (not including the above Southern IN counties) should please contact the location nearest you to find out if your county is covered and to arrange for services.

## Bret Dahmke Scholarship

The \$500 Bret Dahmke Scholarship is given every two years to assist the parent of a child who is visually impaired to attend an educational conference. It is given in memory of Bret Dahmke, son of VIPS Louisville Office Manager, Carol Dahmke.

The winner of the 2019 Bret Dahmke Scholarship was Karen Geraci of Northern KY, who is enrolled in the TVI program at U of KY. She is the mother of a 4 1/2 year old daughter who is visually impaired. Karen said, *"With the scholarship from the Bret Dahmke Scholarship Fund and his family, I was able to attend the 2019 KY Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the B/VI (KAER) Conference. The scholarship covered my housing, food and transportation costs. Through attending the KAER conference, I obtained a wealth of information not only for me as a TVI, but also as a mother of a visually impaired child. I loved learning about the latest technology for the visually impaired, how to create a safe environment for visually impaired students and the necessary life skills that are all very important for a visually impaired child. I feel very blessed to have been given the opportunity to attend the conference and gain so much knowledge. Thank you for the scholarship and the opportunity to serve visually impaired children locally with my newly learned skills."*



## New Arrivals

**VIPS is pleased to welcome the following children and their families into the VIPS family:**

Abigail – 8 months, Bedford, IN  
 Adilynn – 1 year, Erlanger, KY  
 Aiden – 1 year, Brownsburg, IN  
 Arijana – 5 months, Louisville, KY  
 Ayomide – 1 year, Greenwood, IN  
 Azalea – 3 years, Greenwood, IN  
 Bentlee – 1 year, Columbus, IN  
 Caleb – 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Camari – 1 year, Louisville, KY  
 Cameron – 1 year, West Lafayette, IN  
 Caralina – 8 months, Stanford, KY  
 Carlie – 4 months, Lagrange, KY  
 Chloe – 7 months, Liberty, KY  
 Christine – 2 years, Salem, IN  
 Clay – 1 year, Lexington, KY  
 Colton – 11 months, Osceola, IN  
 Connor – 2 years, Hustonville, KY  
 Cooper – 9 months, Elizabethtown, KY  
 Corbin – 2 years, Lovely, KY

Daniel – 6 months, Greenwood, IN  
 David – 1 year, Santa Claus, IN  
 Dulce – 1 year, Elkhart, IN  
 Ella – 2 years, Fort Wayne, IN  
 Elliott – 3 years, Princeton, KY  
 Emma – 1 year, Huntertown, IN  
 Emma – 3 years, Greensburg, IN  
 Foster – 1 year, Paducah, KY  
 Gabryel – 3 years, Beech Grove, IN  
 Gregory – 1 year, Princeton, KY  
 Harper – 2 years, Louisville, KY  
 Hayden – 1 year, Tennyson, IN  
 Isabella – 1 year, Thorntown, IN  
 Jude – 1 year, Louisville, KY  
 Kennedy – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
 Kylan – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
 Kynleigh – 6 months, Knob Link, KY  
 Landry – 1 year, Hamilton, IN  
 Leah – 1 year, Grayson, KY  
 Lily – 9 months, Indianapolis, IN

Lois – 1 year, Pembroke, KY  
 Lucas -- 2 years, Warsaw, IN  
 Lukas – 1 year, Cadiz, KY  
 Lucy – 6 months, Danville, KY  
 Lydia – 3 years, Holland, IN  
 Madison – 14 months, Lexington, KY  
 Mason – 2 years, Indianapolis, IN  
 Maylin – 1 year, Marion, IN  
 Miracle – 7 months, Madisonville, KY  
 Nathaniel – 1 year, Beechcreek, KY  
 Noah – 9 months, Evansville, IN  
 Oliver – 7 months, Clarksville, IN  
 Oliver – 2 years, Georgetown, IN  
 Raqual – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
 Rohi Be – 11 months, Fort Wayne, IN  
 Salvadore – 11 months, Connersville, IN  
 Skylar – 1 year, Paris, KY  
 Willow – 1 year, Ashland, KY  
 Wyatt – 3 years, West Lafayette, IN

# Development News

## VIPS Kentucky

### Central KY Grants

For the support of Early Childhood Intervention and Little Learners programs, thanks to:

- \$56,000 from the *Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government*;
- \$7,500 from the *Children's Charity of the Bluegrass*;
- \$7,500 from *The Copia Foundation*;
- \$5,000 from the *Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation*;
- \$5,000 from the *E. O. Robinson Mountain Fund*;
- \$5,000 from the *Orphan Society of Lexington*; and
- \$1,000 from the *Alex G. Campbell Jr. Foundation*.

### Central KY Golf Outing

The 16th Annual Central KY Golf Outing on May 7 was a great success. We are so grateful to our Hole Sponsors from *Affinity Media & Public Relations, Home City Ice, Nick Ratliff Realty Team, PrintLEX, Stokley's Marine, Stoll Keenon Ogden, Unified Trust, Versailles Brewing Company* and to all of our *Advisory Board Members* for their contributions to the tournament.

### VIPS Louisville Grants

Thanks to:

- \$1,500 from the *William E. Barth Foundation* for the 2019 Family Retreat; and
- \$5,200 from the *King's Daughters & Sons Foundation of Kentucky* for laptops, desktops, and Microsoft Upgrades to Windows 10.

### VIPS/YUM! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament

The 31st Annual VIPS/YUM! Brands Golf Tournament on May 20 brought in a whopping \$63,000! We are deeply appreciative of all those who made this possible: *YUM! Brands, BB&T/McGriff Insurance* who co-sponsored the tournament, and *V.I.P. sponsors, Allianz, Proskauer and UPS Brokerage*.

## VIPS Indiana

Thanks to:

- \$5,000 from *3Rivers Credit Union* for the Early Childhood Intervention Program;
- \$3,000 from the *Sertoma Club of Broad Ripple* for the Orientation and Mobility Program;
- \$2,000 from the *Community Foundation of Elkhart County* for the Early Childhood Intervention Program ; and

- \$500 from the *Matthew L. Tully Memorial Fund* for the Early Childhood Intervention Program.

### reVISION

On Friday, March 8, the opening of reVISION, VIPS Indiana's multi-sensory art exhibition, was jam-packed with people ready to touch the art and support VIPS! We thank the artists for their willingness to thoughtfully create art for patrons who may not have the ability to see. Their artwork made the show so very special AND they donated the proceeds from the sale of their art!

We would like to thank our sponsors for making this exhibition possible: *Christel Dehaan Family Foundation, Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma, Indianapolis Washington Township Lions Club, and Delta Gamma -Theta Chapter*. The small bites served on the opening night were delicious and we owe our gratitude to *Ruth's Cafe, Ruth's Chris Indianapolis North, Gigi's Cupcakes, Tlaolli, Duos Indy, Starbucks, and Steve & Rita DeVore*.



*Kennedy touches the brailled art.*

## Get Ready to Stampede for VIPS!

One of the biggest fundraisers for VIPS every year is our Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS 5K Run/Walk, scheduled for Sept. 28, 2019 at Bowman Field. This event is a great opportunity to bring VIPS families together with the community to raise funds and awareness for VIPS. The race even features a special prize category for runners who are blind or visually impaired!

It is really fun to get your family and friends together in a team to honor your child for the Stampede. You can create your very own fundraising page to encourage your supporters to join you at the Stampede; you don't have to be a current VIPS family to participate! As we often say at VIPS "Once a VIPS family, always a VIPS family." The VIPS family who raises the most money and the family who brings the most participants will each win a great prize!

Please contact VIPS Development Coordinator Dani Harper to get started on creating your very own family fundraising team for this year's Stampede. Dani will set you up with your own individualized fundraising page that will have its own unique link that you can share on social media to get the word out. You can reach Dani at 502-498-2926 or at [dharper@vips.org](mailto:dharper@vips.org).





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, June 10 – Thursday, July 18

Minds in Motion Summer Program, VIPS Louisville Campus --your child must be registered to attend.

### Friday July 12, 10 a.m. – noon

Summer Sensations Camp, VIPS CKY office, 350 Henry Clay Blvd, Lexington KY 40502. Special themes -- Bugs and Blooms! Contact [keaston@vips.org](mailto:keaston@vips.org).

### Wednesday, July 16, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

VIPS Indiana will host a Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) at the Indiana Interchurch Center. We are partnering with the Indiana Deaf-Blind Services Project to offer a sibling panel to share what it's like to be a sibling of a child with vision loss. There will also be two fire trucks here for the children to explore! Contact Rita DeVore at [rdevore@vips.org](mailto:rdevore@vips.org) for more information.

### Monday, July 29 – Friday, Aug. 2

All VIPS Offices will be closed for summer break.

### Friday, Aug. 9, 10 a.m. - noon

Summer Sensations Camp, VIPS CKY office, 350 Henry Clay Blvd, Lexington KY 40502. Special theme -- Over the Rainbow with special guests from Allegro Dance Project. Contact [keaston@vips.org](mailto:keaston@vips.org).

### Thursday, Aug. 22, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

An End of Summer/Back to School Celebration will be held at the VIPS Louisville Campus. Contact [khorlander@vips.org](mailto:khorlander@vips.org) for more information.

### Wednesday, Aug. 28

First day of school for Kids Town Preschool at VIPS Louisville. Contact [khorlander@vips.org](mailto:khorlander@vips.org) for more info.

### Saturday, Sept. 14, 10 a.m. – noon

Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) will be held at the VIPS Louisville Campus. Contact [khorlander@vips.org](mailto:khorlander@vips.org) for more info.

### Saturday, Sept. 28

Dr. Mark Lyn Stampede for VIPS  
This family focused 5K Run and 1-mile Family Walk will be held at Bowman Field Airport. Families are encouraged to create teams, design team t-shirts, and raise funds in a fun competition. Runners who are visually impaired can compete for cash prizes (18 and over) or for glory if younger. Contact [dharp@vips.org](mailto:dharp@vips.org) for more info.

### Saturday, Sept. 28, 10 a.m. - noon

Parent Empowerment Program (PEP), UPIke College of Optometry. Learn more about the services offered by the UPIke College of Optometry and meet the staff of VIPS Central Kentucky. Contact [keaston@vips.org](mailto:keaston@vips.org).

### October 2019—Location and Date TBD

3rd Annual VIPS 5K for the 5 Senses. Join us for the 3rd Annual 5k for the 5 Senses, the only run/walk that incorporates sight, smell, sound, taste and touch into the course experience! Fun for the whole family.

## Newsletter Survey

**Please help us by completing a brief survey about VISability, the VIPS Parent Newsletter at:**

<https://forms.gle/fChLJ88BhLNoG2TX9>.

We are trying to determine whether or not we should continue to produce it in print and to mail it using the postal service. This is expensive to do. But if having a print copy of this newsletter is useful and important to you, we will continue to print and mail to you, as long as we are able. The newsletter is available in digital format on the VIPS website ([www.vips.org](http://www.vips.org)) and will be posted on the VIPS Parents Only Facebook page. We really appreciate your input!

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

### VIPS-Louisville

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Kathy Mullen, Director of Education  
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Carol Dahmke, Office Manager & HR Director  
Christina Allen, TVI in Training/Preschool Teacher  
Suzanne Bigsby, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Shelby Birchler, Instructional Assistant/After School Care  
Ashley Emmons, TVI/COMS/Preschool Teacher  
Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects  
Christina Frasher, Controller  
Julie Hampton, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Marchelle Hampton, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Debbie Hardesty, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Dani Harper, Events Coordinator & Marketing/PR  
Kristen Horlander, Preschool Asst. Director/Family Services  
Mary Lesousky, TVI/Developmental Interventionist  
Ashley May, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Paige Maynard, TVI/Developmental Interventionist  
Staci Maynard, Provisional TVI/Preschool Teacher  
Juanita Miles, Twos Preschool Teacher  
Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist  
Shai Mullins, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Beth Owens, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Brenda Pharris, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Elaine Reed, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Dani Savick, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Kirsten Schmidt, Welcome & Family Support  
Carla Vied, Developmental Interventionist  
Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist  
Maury Weedman, O&M Specialist/Facilities Manager  
Brittany Williamson, TVI/Preschool Teacher

### VIPS-Central Kentucky

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