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# Tell Your Story!!

## VIPS Family Retreat Weekend, November 8 & 9

The VIPS Family Retreat Weekend, scheduled for November 8 and 9, promises to be a wonderful time for the whole family! The theme this year is, “Tell Your Story.” Every family has a story. And for VIPS families, the stories always have some very special elements around dealing with visual impairment and other disabilities our children may have. Dealing with the need to find appropriate medical and therapeutic services. Coping with the reactions of family, friends and the general public. Making our families whole again, after the hole left in our dreams for the future by our child’s diagnosis. Keeping balance in our families between meeting the needs of our child who is visually impaired, the needs of our other children, and our spouse or significant other. So come gain empowerment and healing from sharing your story with other families facing similar challenges. The story telling theme will include learning from the experts about the power of reading to your child.

Children always have a wonderful time at the Family Retreat. They will be cared for by VIPS staff and well-qualified volunteers, while parents are learning from one another and the experts. There will be lots of fun and learning for them, too. They will hunt for “bookworms” and get a storybook at the end to take home with them.

You don’t want to miss this opportunity to have perhaps the most powerful experience you can have as a parent of a child who is visually impaired. Watch your mail for details!!!



Parents having fun during a make-and-take activity at last year’s Retreat.

## October Is Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness Month

During October, VIPS likes to share stories of our families to help spread awareness of the needs and celebrate the successes of children who are visually impaired. Please share your child’s story with us; they are so inspirational and educational for other families and the community at large.

“Okay,” you say. “I’d like to tell my story. What should I write?” Write whatever you’d like to share about your child. It could be a sweet moment you and your child shared, or a success or challenge he/she has had to face. You might share an incident or situation that positively or negatively impacted your child and family, a day-in-the-life-of your child and family or whatever you feel inspired from your heart to write. You may write a few sentences or a few paragraphs. It’s all up to you. VIPS will be sharing your story on Facebook throughout the month of October for Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness month. Stories may also be published in the next edition of the VisAbility newsletter. If you have a picture or short video (less than 2 minutes in length) of your sweet child please send that along with your story. Please email your story and picture/video to Mary Smyth at [vipslex@vips.org](mailto:vipslex@vips.org).



**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.

# Thank You For Your Hospitality

by Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education

It was many, many years ago when I first found myself sitting on the living room floors of young families providing early intervention services through Kentucky First Steps. I knew almost immediately that I had found my professional home. The homes I frequented were as unique as the families dwelling in them, ranging from the homes of successful professionals to the housing projects of the inner city. The common ground shared by all families I visited was the desire for their child to achieve. I remember feeling humbled when a frazzled mom would apologize for the condition of the home, the cleanliness of the kitchen, or the heat from no air conditioning. Though I must admit, sometimes such things were distracting, they never took away my focus on the child unless safety was compromised. I learned valuable lessons on priorities from these families.

Fast forward ten years and my oldest son was the recipient of home health services following an accident. Overnight, my family was opening our doors to nurses coming to care for my son and to train me on wound care. They came at all times of day and late into the evening. I remember one night in particular when my son's nurse arrived at 9:30 p.m. and breakfast dishes were still in the sink. I apologized profusely; the nurse pointed out that my son was comfortable and that the whole family (minus the four-year-old) was together in the living room watching ESPN – where we should be. Lesson learned. Again.

Fast forward again to today. My parents are now the recipients of home care on a temporary basis to address the health needs of both. It's a transition my siblings and I always knew would come, but one we never requested. Through the process, I think I have wasted a lot of energy on trying to look like the "perfect family" when these caregivers have come to my parents' home. I have had to call case managers when things did not live up to our expectations. I have tried to be gracious. I have learned more valuable lessons this time, too. Like sometimes the most important thing I can do is get out of the way. My mom gets overwhelmed easily; she does not do well with two people talking at once. I've learned that being quiet is a form of care valued by all. My dad sleeps a lot more than I want him to; that's okay, too.

The primary lesson learned through each of these situations is that families need to be valued for the love they provide for their members in need. Professional visitors to homes need to look at what the family provides on a daily basis and build their care and intervention services accordingly. At the same time, families need to keep their focus on what they do well to care for their loved one. Be proud. Be gracious. Be involved.

Those of us who visit your home will feel the love. We will recognize the vulnerable state of opening doors to strangers and will grow in the process. At the end of our time together, the recipient of the service, loving family members and service providers will all end up much stronger.



Rachel, and son Micah, share a book during a recent home visit.

VIPS is grateful to our families for the welcome we feel coming into your homes. Thank you.

## Summer was SENSE-Sational at VIPS

### Summer Sensations Camp at VIPS Central KY

VIPS children and their siblings had a great time at Summer Sensations Camps held in June, July and August at our Central Kentucky office. Our June camp got the children revved up to explore all things related to transportation with a Planes, Trains and Automobiles theme. Campers raced cars down ramps covered with a variety of different textures, used paint and monster trucks to create tire track masterpieces, and rode scooters through their very own Car Wash (or should we say Kid Wash!). The highlight of the day was taking a trolley ride around the neighborhood courtesy of **LexTran**, and learning all the ways that LexTran can help people with a visual impairment learn to use public transportation safely.



Owen took a trolley ride on LexTran and got a little bus to keep!



Roses are red, violets are blue, summer is fun and camp is too! Camp in July allowed campers to get down and dirty as they explored a Bugs & Blooms themed day. From planting their own seeds, to using flowers and plants as the paint and paintbrushes for their art projects, the campers had a great time learning how to help their gardens grow.

What beautiful flowers! How do I choose, wonders little Mollie.



In August we welcomed **Allegro Dance Project** as our special guest to help us celebrate our Over the Rainbow theme. They led campers through an inclusive dance activity that incorporated all the colors of the rainbow. We had a blast exploring the rainbow through art, science, movement and so much more.

*MacKenzie, with her mom, Stephanie, made a joyful noise playing the drums!*



### Minds In Motion at VIPS Louisville

Our six week program was all about keeping our brilliant “Minds in Motion” for summer at VIPS Kids Town Preschool. Students explored a variety of transportation modes keeping their little fingers and bodies busy. We kicked off our program with our very own car wash in Mobility City! Students were able to have hands on experience washing a real car along with their tiny bikes. We’re not sure who got wetter, Ms. Ashley’s car or the children! We also had a “car wash” set up in Kids Town for students to ride their bikes through while feeling all the sensations of bubbles, foam and brushes. For week two we flew into the skies to explore planes and helicopters! **Mr. Bill Holladay**, a pilot for several years, joined us and brought fun items for all to explore including a real propeller!



*Bradley explored a fire engine.*

The following week we rode our bikes and discussed bike safety. Did you know that there is a bike that two people can ride at the same time? There is and we got to learn all about a tandem bicycle from our two friends, **Mr. & Mrs. Norman Horlander**. Our friend, **Mr. Joey Porter**, brought his motorcycle to conclude the week. Students had the opportunity to sit, explore and listen to the wonderful music that a motorcycle can make! The most important rule that students learned this week was...always wear a helmet!

Fourth of July was filled with parades and popsicles as we celebrated America, VIPS style! Each student got to decorate and ride their vehicle of choice. Fun was had by all! As we discussed safety vehicles, an



*Of course, keeping cool was on the agenda! Aubrey washed toys while outside to stay cool.*

ambulance and fire truck came to visit! Children were able to sit in the ambulance and even try out the stretcher! Special thanks to **Louisville Metro** for this experience! Our last special guest was the **TARC** bus. We walked to the bus stop where we were able to board the bus. We practiced scanning our card, finding the perfect seat on the bus as well as pulling the cord to stop! We didn’t want the summer to end... what fun things will our preschool teachers come up with for next year?



*Carter tested out riding on a stretcher.*

## PEP Empowers through Knowledge!

### VIPS Indiana Summer PEP

On July 16, VIPS Indiana held our summer PEP! Fire trucks from **Station 31** in Indianapolis allowed our VIPS kiddos to explore the trucks and taught our families about what different types of fire trucks do! (Did you know that there’s more than one type of fire truck?!) It was a great experience for our families and all of our volunteers as well. Thanks to Station 31 for this enriching experience.



*Jeremiah and his parents climbed aboard the fire engine to check out.*



*The whole group with our local heroes!*

As always, we are so grateful to *The Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma* and their families for volunteering to help with our awesome kiddos. Along with the Firetruck Show & Tell, VIPS partnered with *Indiana Deaf-Blind Services* to host a panel discussion about sibling interactions. We cannot say “thank you” enough to the families who sat on the panel and shared their experiences. This was a jam packed PEP full of impactful experiences. Thank you *Papa John’s* for donating pizza and a final HUGE shout out to the *Junior League of Indianapolis* for sponsoring and making this PEP possible!

### Northern Kentucky PEP

We held a Planes, Trains and Automobile themed Parent Empowerment Program in Northern Kentucky on Saturday June 8. VIPS families were able to visit with one another while their



Myles rode through the “car wash.”

children played with a variety of hands-on activities. They made interactive concept books for their children, learned about the assistive technology resources available to them through the *Assistive Technology Resource Center at Redwood* in Fort Mitchell KY, and met *Ruth Klette from the Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation* who was there to present a \$5000 check to VIPS for our early intervention services in Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties.

**RESOURCE CENTER IN INDIANAPOLIS!** Learn more about this amazing opportunity at <https://vips.org/vips-indiana/vision-2020-indiana-family-resource-center/> ! Thank you to *Ruth’s Chris* for providing refreshments for the event, and thank you to our supporters for attending.

## KY Commissioner of Education Visits VIPS

VIPS was thrilled to welcome *Dr. Wayne Lewis, Kentucky Commissioner of Education*, to the Louisville campus in June. The commonwealth’s education leader’s visit afforded our staff the opportunity to showcase our incredible preschool and, hopefully, also raised his awareness of the need for increased early services for our youngest blind and visually impaired citizens. We are grateful for the time he was able to spend with us!

## Help for Santa’s Helpers: Toy Recommendations From VIPS Teachers

It’s that time of year again!! The time when stores start preparing for the Holidays and when parents start thinking, planning and saving for those very special gifts for the little ones on their list. Each year, VIPS teachers have great ideas for toys that nurture development of skills while bringing lots of fun to VIPS children. Here are this year’s hot picks for Holiday toy giving!!

### Christina Allen

*TVI in Training, Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville*

I love *Plan Toys Literacy/Alphabet Tiles with Print and Braille*. They can be found at Target for around \$30 (less than at Amazon at the time of printing). The Smooth wood tiles offer tactile learning and pre-braille exposure with A-Z letter imprints and braille symbols. The tiles are two-sided and feature upper and lower case letters. Pieces measure 2” x 3.” Recommended for ages 2+.



*Plan Toys Numeracy Braille Numbers 1-10™* are available for \$17.99 at Target and Amazon.com.

## Happy Birthday!! VIPS Indiana!

On July 17, VIPS Indiana held a birthday party at Silo Auto Club & Conservancy to celebrate 8 years of serving children all across Indiana. We started in 2011 serving only 8 kids and now we have served over 500! We thought throwing a party to thank all of our generous supporters over the past 8 years was a great way to

celebrate changing hundreds of lives! We also shared a big announcement at the celebration- **WE ARE BUILDING A FAMILY**





These smooth wood tiles provide tactile learning with number tiles in print and braille with corresponding number of leaf imprints on the reverse side. Helps build pre-braille and number skills. Pieces measure 2" x 3." For ages 2+.

A very reasonably priced gift idea comes from Crayola -- **Crayola My First Safety Scissors™** (\$3.98 for 3 pairs at Amazon). The package includes three pairs of blunt tip, plastic blade scissors featuring three different cutting styles -- straight, wavy and zigzag -- perfect for toddler arts and crafts. Ages: 3+.



### Melissa Barrick

Blind and Low Vision Specialist/OTR, VIPS Indiana

One of my favorite toys is the **Melissa & Doug Shapes and Sounds Puzzle with Sound Effects™**, \$12.86 at Amazon.



It helps build numerous skills, among them: tactile discrimination, shape recognition, language, cause and effect, orientation to sound, pincer grasp, spatial orientation, and understanding of directional concepts. Ages: 3 and up.

### Lesley Lusher,

Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Central KY

The **Lamaze Captain Calamari™**, \$9.59 from Amazon, is a visually stimulating toy that has many different textured fabrics to encourage tactile exploration, auditory awareness and visual attention. Safe for birth on up.



Another of my favorites is the **Baby Einstein Glow & Discover Light Bar Activity Station™**, \$17.99 from Amazon. This toy has six different colors to encourage baby to use her vision in the lower field. This is a great toy for working on tummy time due to being able to slant it for easier reaching and looking. It requires only a light touch to activate, making it easy for little hands to benefit. A language switch allows your choice of English, Spanish or French. Suitable for babies 3 months and older.



I also love the **Ambi Lock a Block™**, \$16.99 from Amazon. This first shape sorter has just three shapes, high contrast colors, and raised rims. There is also a lock and key retrieval door for even more work on fine motor skills. Ages: 12 months and up.



### Melisa Matthews

Blind/Low Vision Specialist, VIPS Indiana

The **5x5 Blank Hardcover Chunky Book™** (ASH10704) by Ashley Productions, \$5.37 at Amazon, is perfect for the crafty parent. It is a blank, white, hardcover book that allows you to create a one of a kind book that caters to each child's specific visual impairment. I filled one with shiny scrapbooking paper cut into common shapes for a visually stimulating, learning book.



The Quack Stick and Canary Stick are great toys! You get one of each in the **Basic Beat Bird Sound Set™** that runs \$8.95 at Amazon! Both make fun noises as children shake or push on them. These are great for early understanding of cause and effect.



### Paige Maynard

TVI/Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Louisville

If your family is like my own or like the Whos in Whoville, from "How The Grinch Stole Christmas" by Dr. Seuss, you'll agree that one of the best parts of the holidays is the food! In order to help your "Who" participate in and enjoy your holiday "roast beast" feast, I have some mealtime gift recommendations!

If you want your child to begin reaching for her food or to use a spoon to scoop, you can snag a silicone divided plate that suctions to the table, like the **EzPz Mini Mat™** available from Amazon and EzPzfun.com for \$19.99. A high contrast plate that stays in place is great for a VIPS kid because it helps your child more easily locate foods using vision and sense of touch. The raised lip helps your child begin to grasp or load a spoon against the side of the bowl.



Maybe your little "Who" is learning to drink his Christmas Eggnog from an open cup. In this case, the Grinch and I suggest a tiny cup, like the **Just Funky Red Solo Cup Acrylic Shot Glasses™** - 20-Pack, available at Target for \$7.99. This little cup is a perfect size for little hands. Since it is small, it helps facilitate your child tipping it up for open cup drinking, and holds just the right amount of liquid for a child who is learning what life with no lid is like! The cup's heavier weight helps your child get the sensory input needed to know where it is in space. The red color may also provide your child a visual cue to locate it.



A textured spoon, like the **RaZ-Berry Spoon™**, from RaZ Baby, available from Amazon for \$5.99, is also a great option for a little "CindyLou Who." Not only will foods stick to it better when your child is learning to scoop, the bumps on the spoon can



help her develop better tactile awareness in the mouth, promoting better management of foods and a wider acceptance of food textures. This spoon comes in both red and yellow, which may help many VIPS children see them better!

If your child will be eating this winter's meal via g-tube, he or she will still benefit from a mealtime gift! Consider signing your child up with [tubiefriends.com](http://tubiefriends.com) to receive a stuffed animal who has a g-tube placement. The service is free, but Tubie Friends requests that families pay for shipping if they are able, about \$11. A *Tubie Friend* is a great gift for a VIPS child because it helps your child learn about their g-tube, and thus mealtimes through play! What is more fun for your child than finding his/her Tubie Friend's g-tube and pretending to give a meal just like he/she eats! This all builds understanding, language, fine motor, self help and social skills!



Merry Christmas, and may your heart swell to Grinchiest Proportions this holiday season!

### Staci Maynard

TVI/Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

After recommending toys for multiple years, it can sometimes be difficult to come up with something that feels new and exciting to share. However, this year the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) has released a toy that is perfect for our age group, especially for our braille learners. *BrailleBuzz* may be a splurge gift at \$99 (<https://shop.aph.org>), but it should prove to be both fun and educational. The high contrast of the black and yellow design is both appealing and easier to see for those with low vision. This audio based toy can help children make connections between letters and the sounds they make, understand the keys of a braille keyboard, and learn braille letters.



I also recommend the *Oombee Cube Sorter*™ (\$16.95 on Amazon). The shapes are held to the cube with strings, so you don't have to worry about your child getting frustrated with losing pieces. The shapes are made of food-grade silicone, so they are safe if your child decides to chew on them. The ridges on the shapes and their squishy consistency are fun to feel, and the toy helps develop visual-spatial skills, shape recognition, and fine motor skills.



For little ones, I like the *Floorchestra*™ by B. toys. It can be ordered as a set of black and white tiles or with brightly colored ones, both of which are high contrast. This textured floor mat

can be a safe surface on which children can explore cause and effect, concept development about animals, music tempos, fine motor skills and problem solving. Music, included with the activity mat, can be used for gross motor "dance" time or for "lullaby" music when it is time to calm down. The radio tile also features a volume control for when parents need a little break from all of the noise. Target sells Floorchestra for \$29.99.



A SIDE NOTE: Don't forget that your gift packaging can also be a great toy before it goes in the recycling bin. Wrapping paper is fun to crumple and tear, which is good for fine motor development. Popping bubble wrap is another entertaining way to strengthen those little fingers. Larger boxes can be great for imaginative play, art projects, or as a contained play space, where your child who is learning to sit up, can play with security and stability. If you put some weight in the box, a child who is learning to walk, could also use it to push for independent walking. Never underestimate the usefulness and amusement to be found in the mundane, everyday objects in your home environment.

### Juanita Miles

Twos Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

Pop beads (snap-lock beads) are super developmental toys and are available from Amazon, Walmart, eBay and school supply stores in a variety of shapes, sizes, quantities and prices. Pop beads are great for strengthening muscles in small hands. The beads can be used for counting and for sorting by color or shape. They are sold in bright colors as well as primary colors. In addition, there is a tactile version in which the beads have different textures on them. Some beads also come in the shape of cars, boats, trains, rockets, etc., making them even more useful for sorting! Ages: 6 months-4 years.



### Amy Nichols

Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision, VIPS Indiana

I'm recommending the *Noggin Stik*™, available for \$20.99 at Amazon.com. The Noggin Stik is especially recommended for babies with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). It is a rattle that lights up with the slightest movement. It turns three colors (red, blue, and green). The handle is small and easy for young ones to grasp. It does NOT play music which is great for children who need to use just one sensory channel at a time. I use it to help gain a child's attention and work on that important skill of a visually guided reach. Ages: infant to 12 months.





**David Sterne***Lead Blind and Low Vision Specialist, VIPS Indiana*

**The Giantsuper Tummy Time Playboard + Art Cards™** are great for kids with CVI! These cards are sturdy, offer a high contrast, and can be used to encourage gaze shifting. The reverse side of the playboard is reflective and can be used for mirror play. They are available from Amazon for under \$20.

**Brittany Williamson***TVI, Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville*

**Teachable Touchables Texture Squares™**, (\$18.49 from Amazon, Walmart and Target) include ten sets of various matching squares. Textures vary from silky to furry. Children can play a matching game as well as gain tactual exploration skills. Colors, descriptive words and comparisons are also areas that can be incorporated using these squares. Ages: birth on up.



**Fat Brain Toys Dimpl Duo™**, can be found online at Fat Brain Toys or Amazon for \$24.95. This simple toy is quite fun! The six buttons “pop” with one side featuring colors and the other teaching shapes. This toy includes braille words as well as tactile shapes. It can help little learners learn shapes, colors and be exposed to both print and braille. The Dimpl Duo is also a great way for a pre-braille student to begin using finger isolation to “pop” each cell. Ages: 1 – 4 years.



## VIPS Parents Recommend ...



*Jubie with pegboard book in background.*

Leslie Lusher, DI for VIPS CK, shares some great ideas from Jubie’s parents, Marsha and Mark. They have created a peg board book for him to increase his interest in literacy. Because of his diagnosis of CVI, providing 3-D objects for him to explore helps him understand concepts. They incorporate orientation & mobility by exploring drawers, appliances, and cabinets in the kitchen. Recently, Jubie enjoyed learning how to make brownies with his family! The peg board books have been a success!

**Maggie Metz**, mother of Maylin who is served by VIPS Indiana, recommends the Kakiblin Baby Neck Travel Pillow for children who have little to no head control. This lightweight pillow provides stability for the child’s head, is comfortable for the child and it can help make it easier to hold the child without worrying about that critical neck support. This pillow is available online for \$10.99 through Amazon simply by typing in the name of the pillow.



During a recent home visit, Tammy Maynard, VIPS Central Kentucky DI, observed an interesting idea that **VIPS parent, Sara Scott**, used to encouraged Sullivan to look/focus in various directions. Sara ordered a string of battery operated lights from Amazon and attached bells to each light. She used fishing line to attach the bells tightly to each light. This encourages Sully to look in different directions and to roll and swat at objects during playtime on the floor. The lights are portable so she can move them around to different areas in the home.

## Those Marvelous Milestones

Recently **Elijah** had a great time playing in the water bin with his mom, his Occupational Therapist Abby, and his VIPS teacher, Ms. Melisa. Elijah did a great job standing for at least 10-12 minutes at a time, which is longer than he has ever stood before! He had some standing support from Abby, but was so motivated to reach and play in the water, that he initiated standing and wanted to continue to stand!



At recent home visit, Myles learned that the monocular is a tool for helping him see objects and people who are far away! He also learned how to position the monocular over one eye. These skills seem simple to adults, but they are a big deal for a two-year-old like Myles! They are a big deal because it takes practice for a little one to learn to isolate one eye to look, as many children will initially place the monocular in between their eyes.

It's also a big deal that Myles understands that he can use this tool to find objects too far away for him to see. The monocular places cognitive demands on him to remember, for instance, that the car that he's looking for exists before he spots it. He also needs to remember what it looks like, so that he can use the monocular to find it.



*Micah* is standing without holding onto the couch! VIPS kids can sometimes be overly or unduly cautious with movement due to their decreased visual and spatial awareness. His mom, Rachel, and his VIPS teacher, Paige, worked on helping him to be confident and motivated to stand without holding onto the couch and he had a lot of success!

At a recent home visit with *David* and his mom, she was worried that, while he was able to hold toys, he struggled with holding a spoon. David's VIPS teacher discussed some simple strategies and decided to add a finger light to the spoon to help him see it better. She told him "This is your spoon.



"I'm going to put the spoon in your hand." She helped him grasp it by holding his hand on the spoon while saying "squish squish squish" while helping him squeeze it tighter. She also gave him wait time to reach for the spoon. David very quickly looked at the unloaded spoon, reached for it, grasped it, and successfully brought it to his mouth! His mom wants to try these strategies during mealtime and may add even more of the strategies she and his teacher discussed!

*William* learned the concept of "under" at a recent home visit. His Mom, Rebecca, requested help with teaching him more positional concepts. Positional concepts are important for children with visual impairments, because they help the child develop spatial awareness despite not being able to see or see



clearly. A good understanding of positional concepts can help a person with a visual impairment learn how to navigate the world and follow directions about where an object is located or how to get from point A to B. Rebecca and William's VIPS teacher came up with a simple game to teach "under," and William caught right on!



## New Arrivals

**VIPS is pleased to welcome these children and their families into the VIPS program:**

Aashvik – 10 months, Louisville, KY

Adeline – 2 years, London, KY

Adrianna – 1 year, Terre Haute, IN

Alexandria – 1 year, Lexington, KY

Amiya – 4 years, Louisville, KY

Anthony – 9 months, Greenwood, IN

Apollo – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN

Aurora – 2 years, Crestwood, KY

Bella – 1 year, Louisville, KY

Brynleigh – 10 months, Mt. Sterling, KY

Callaway – 10 months, Fort Wayne, IN

Caroline – 1 year, Carmel, IN

Edison – 2 years, Anderson, IN

Evelyn – 5 months, Louisville, KY

Evelynn – 1 year, North Manchester, IN

Felix – 2 years, Rushville, IN

Franklin – 10 months, Terre Haute, IN

Hayden – 2 years, Knightstown, IN

Hayden – 1 year, Campbellsville, KY

Hazen – 1 year, Goshen, IN

Holden – 1 year, Walton, IN

Jade – 3 years, Indianapolis, IN

John – 1 year, Fairdale, KY

June – 1 year, Plainfield, IN

Kacen – 2 years, Greenwood, IN

Kaia – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN

Kaide – 1 year, Lafayette, IN

Kaiser – 2 years, Richmond, KY

Kendell – 2 years, Lafayette, IN

Kennedy – 1 year, Fishers, IN

Laramie – 2 years, Carthage, IN

Leah – 1 year, Sonora, KY

Leo – 8 months, Fishers, IN

Maximus – 2 years, Louisville, KY

Noah – 2 years, Montpellier, IN

Owen – 10 months, Morristown, IN

Paisley – 2 years, Floyd Knobs, IN

Patricia "Josie" – 1 year, Fort Wayne, IN

Reece – 9 months, Muncie, IN

Philip – 2 years, Fishers, IN

Rivaan – 8 months, Fishers, IN

River – 8 months, Marion, IN

Rose – 2 years, New Castle, IN

Ruby – 2 years, Muncie, IN

Ryler – 2 years, Redkey, IN

Samuel – 4 months, Lexington, KY

Samuel – 7 months, Lexington, KY

Samuel – 3 years, Indianapolis, IN

Sophie – 1 year, Fishers, IN

Taytum – 1 year, Louisville, KY

Toby – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN

Walter – 4 years, Fisherville, KY



*Ayden* has been diagnosed with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) a visual processing disorder. His visual responses are improved when he is looking at familiar red, Mylar, lighted, or moving objects. He has shown recent progress in visual attention to these preferred objects. He visually gazes at red beads hanging from his light box and also his Mylar blanket. These preferred objects are used to not only develop vision skills but also to motivate him to tolerate new positions and strengthen overall development of skills.



Sometimes, young children experience texture aversion when being introduced to new things. This can be especially true for young children with visual impairments. *Luna* has struggled with accepting new textures during her daily life. But on a recent home visit, her VIPS teacher, David, tried introducing her to slime. She was very hesitant at first, but slowly began to enjoy playing with the slime and even started using another sense to smell it!



*Ellis* laid on a wedge during a home visit to help support her as she laid on her tummy and explored her shiny, new purple beads. She could really find them when they were laid on the light box.



At his recent home visit, *Jake* was playing with a new switch toy, and looked down at it while pressing it! This is huge!! He has also come such a long way with grasping. Jake's mother, Nikki, shared this picture of Jake at his childcare center looking at the sensory wall, which made him so happy.



Nikki was excited to find something that could engage Jake so well there and she made sure the childcare staff knew. That is parent empowerment in action!

*"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us."*

*Helen Keller*

## Gifts of Time & Treasure

### VIPS Indiana

Thanks to *The Indianapolis Delta Gammas Alumnae* who collected hundreds of plastic bottles used for making shaker bottles. *"Kids Serving Carmel Camp"* hosted by the *Kiwanis Club of Carmel, IN* made shaker bottles for VIPS Indiana Welcome Bags.



### VIPS Kentucky

Thank you to members of *Middletown Christian Church*, including *Molly Barney, Brittany Cross, Rachel Freaney, Lisa Gueda, Brandi Hitzelberger, Erik Hitzelberger, Audrey Lentz, Logan Lloyd, Megan Lloyd, Amanda Martin, Kay Mills, Marie Peterson, Sharon Peterson, Emily Schaefer and Jordan Schaefer* for their assistance with our Easter party.

For their faithful volunteer service in Kids Town Preschool, thanks to *Sharon Bohannon, Deanna Scoggins, Ella Springer and Fran Woodward*.

For a day of service cleaning windows and landscaping tasks, thanks to *volunteers from Dean Dorton, including Cathy Arnold, Faith Crump, Karen Davis, Austin Fox, Murphy Frankhouse, Joey George, Brittany Rebaky, Missy Schmitt, Noah Schmitt, Amelia Sebastian and Shyla Thomas*. In addition, *Amelia, Austin, Brittany, Joey and Missy* were joined by *Abby Kirk and Linda Schreck* as they volunteered at the VIPS Crusade Cookout. Also helping at the Crusade Cookout were *Lilly Dobson, St. Francis School and Anne Marie Murr, Assumption High School*.

Thanks to *Isabel Billings* for help with administrative tasks.

For help with the Tennis Ball and Tennis Tournament, thanks to *Suzanne Bigbee, Annaliese Billings, Kelly & Shelby Easton, Ashley Emmons, Debbie Hardesty, Kristin & Matt Horlander, Paige Maynard, Staci Maynard, Jan Moseley, Dani & Will Savick, Kirsten Schmidt, and Brittany Williamson*.

Thanks to the *Roy Limpawuchara* family, for their kind donation of infant-toddler clothing to be given to VIPS families. Roy is a student in the Teacher of the Visually Impaired training program at UK.

# 5k for the 5 Senses

## A Sweet Way to Help Our Sweet Kids!

Join us for *The Cupcake Classic*, our 3rd annual 5k for the 5 Senses, this year with the added twist of *BabyCakes* cupcakes for every participant at the finish line! *Forcht Bank* will also be on hand with their ice cream truck, and we will have tons of hands-on sensory activities for all ages in our SENSEsational Spot. Put together a team of family and friends, and bring your strollers, wagons or just your running shoes and join us for this great event. Register online at <https://runsignup.com/Race/KY/Lexington/VIPS5KForThe5Senses>.

## VIPS Student and Staff News

KSB and VIPS graduate *Alex Stine* received the 2019 Joseph Kuczvara Scholarship award in recognition of his positive attitude, good citizenry, leadership and service to others.

KSB and VIPS graduate *Taryn Seif* received the 2019 Dr. Franklin Jelsma Scholarship Award for outstanding achievement in academics.



VIPS graduate and current KSB student, *Carmynn Blakely*, competed National Braille Challenge in LA, winning 1st place in her grade level and the 2019 Excellence in Spelling award across all grade levels! Carmynn's winning mantra for the competition was "I am smart, I am strong and I am going to test well!"

VIPS is proud to share that our Regional Director in Indiana, *Meredith Howell* won the Outstanding Parent Award from the Indiana Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Like many staff members at VIPS, Meredith first became involved as a mom and has continued to be an incredible advocate for her daughter Lola. Congratulations to Meredith for this well-deserved recognition!



Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Developmental Interventionist, *Mary Lesousky*, is widely known as a baby lover. She cuddled and snuggled hundreds of VIPS babies over her years in the Louisville office. We are sad to report that Mary has retired but happy that she will still be getting baby fixes by snuggling her

own grandchildren. We will miss MerMer's smiling face but know that she'll be smiling with joy at her own tribe of babies! Mary, who was recently awarded the Kentucky Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired's (KAER) prestigious Touching Lives award, also received the equally impressive Dr. Finis Davis award from the Louisville Downtown Lions' Club.

Congratulations to *Staci Maynard*, KidsTown Preschool Teacher, who recently completed her TVI certification!

Congratulations to the new *Mr. & Mrs. Logan Ross*. *Ashley Romine Ross*, Development Coordinator for VIPS Indiana, married her college sweetheart, Logan, on July 27, 2019.

## Recent Grants and Donations

### VIPS Kentucky

#### Thank you Ford!!!

The day-long celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Ford Kentucky Truck Plant* also provided VIPS with a reason to celebrate. Thanks to the efforts of *VIPS Board Member Todd Kraus*, Ford Truck Plant Controller, VIPS was selected to receive the proceeds from the celebration, a \$65,000 donation! The VIPS staff members attending enjoyed the free food and tours of the plant but were absolutely floored when they learned of this wonderful donation! What a fabulous surprise!!

### Book Rich Environments

Because emergent literacy is always a need for children with low vision or no vision, we were absolutely thrilled when VIPS Founder Sharon Bensinger's neighbor, *Lorena Steirle*, brought her church group to visit VIPS. *Pam Bischoff*, who was in the group, works for the Louisville Metro Housing Authority, one of the partners with the Louisville Free Public Library, Friends of the Library and other local literacy partners who are all involved with the National Book Foundation's "Book Rich Environments." This program distributes free books to underserved children aged birth to 18, and Pam thought VIPS might be an agency that could help distribute the books. Thanks to each of these ladies' interest in VIPS, we are the proud recipients of 100 childrens' books appropriate to our age group!

We will work with volunteers to braille and/or add tactual representation to the pages of the print books we received. We will be able to use the books for Christmas gifts, for our teachers to take on home visits, and even add a copy of each to our library. We are thrilled that this chance encounter led to helping us improve literacy skills in the children we serve!



### **VIPS Kentucky received funding from the following organizations and events over the past few months:**

\$175,000 from *Kosair Charities* for Kids Town Preschool;  
 \$145,000+ from the *VIPS Tennis Ball and Tournament*;  
 \$125,000 from *Kosair Charities* in capital funds toward the recent home and land purchase;  
 \$87,000 from the *WHAS Crusade for Children* to fund direct services;  
 \$47,000+ from the *VIPS/YUM! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament*, co-sponsored by BB&T/McGriff Insurance ; and  
 \$2,500 from the *Norton Healthcare Foundation* to fund direct services.

### **VIPS-Central KY received funding for the Early Childhood Intervention program from the following organizations:**

\$45,000 from the *WHAS Crusade for Children*;  
 \$16,200 from the *United Way of the Bluegrass*; and  
 \$5,000 from the *Heart of Kentucky United Way*.

### **VIPS Gives Back, Too!**

VIPS also gave as well as received. We held cookouts and donated \$1,100 to the *WHAS Crusade for Children* in May and \$985 to *Kosair Charities* in June.

## **VIPS Indiana**

### **Walking for Dreams**

Unfortunately, Walking for Dreams was canceled due to bad weather. However, we still raised over \$22,000! While we truly missed being able to walk the canal with our VIPS supporters, we are so thankful for the donations that were raised despite the weather. We would especially like to acknowledge our sponsors:

*ALLIED Wholesale Electrical Supply, Inc.*; *Bosma Enterprises for the Blind*; *Eric Bruun*; *EYE CAN SEE, INC.*; *Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma*; *MassMutual Special Care*; *Papa John's Pizza*; *Republic National Distributing Company*; *The Spectacle Shoppe*; *Steele Pediatric Dentistry*; *Visionworks|Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates, PLLC*; *Wendy Vivirito Realty*; and *Washington Township Lions Club*. Thank you so much for supporting our mission! We look forward to seeing everyone at Walking for Dreams 2020!

### **VIPS Indiana has received program funding from the following organizations over the past few months:**

\$10,000 from *Wolf Vision and Home Care*, granted through the *Community Foundation of Elkhart County*;  
 \$5,000 from the *Junior League of Indianapolis* for PEP; and  
 \$3,500 from *The Samaritan Foundation* for the Early Childhood Intervention Program.

## **In Memoriam**

This issue of the VISability is dedicated to the memory of  
**Charles "Burt" Boyer**  
 who passed away on Sept. 13, at the age of 79.

As a child with albinism and visual impairment from Eastern KY, Burt became a student at the KY School for the Blind. He went on to become an educator, champion and mentor for children with visual impairments and their families. His expertise, compassion, and advocacy will be sorely missed. He was a friend and hero to many. Burt served on the VIPS Board of Directors for a number of years.

## **VIPS Wish List**

### **VIPS Louisville**

- Brown/white lunch sacks
- White uncoated paper plates (large and small for craft projects)
- Washable markers such as Crayola
- Cotton balls
- Spring clothes pins
- Tongue depressors
- Jumbo colored glue sticks that dry clear
- Bottles of colored glue that dry clear
- Small bottles of school glue
- Assorted colors of feathers
- Clear contact paper
- Full-size slinkies

- Mardi Gras beads
- Solid color duct tape
- Large bottle of yellow washable tempera paint
- Gallon size baggies
- Facial tissues
- Scented markers
- Dry erase markers
- Pencil grips
- Playdoh (name brand)

### **VIPS Central KY**

- Cardstock (all colors)
- Baby wipes
- Disinfectant wipes
- Gluesticks

### **VIPS Indiana**

- Clorox disinfectant wipes
- Metal whisks
- Silicone baster brushes
- Vinyl by the yard
- Plain white baby bibs
- Large, clear storage bins/totes
- 2-sided tape
- Rotary cutter for fabric
- Glasses Board Book

Amazon Wish List:

<http://a.co/aeRar2N>

Change Service Requested



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

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday, October 26

**Fall Parent Empowerment Program (PEP),**  
10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Indiana Interchurch Center, 1100 West 42<sup>nd</sup> St., Indianapolis IN 46208. For more information, contact Meredith Howell at [mhowell@vips.org](mailto:mhowell@vips.org).

### Saturday, October 26

**Halloween Fun will be on tap at VIPS Louisville, 10:30 a.m.** The playground will be the scene of trick-or-treating this year, instead of trunk-n-treat in the parking lot. Those wishing to hand out candy can set up a table on the playground. There will be Halloween crafts & games. Don't forget to come in costume! Contact Kristen Horlander at [khorlander@vips.org](mailto:khorlander@vips.org).

### Sunday, October 27

**Join us for The Cupcake Classic—the 3rd annual 5k for the 5 Senses!** Registration begins at 3 p.m., 5K starts at 4 p.m., and SENSEational Spot activities go on until 5:45 p.m. The event will be held at the Club at UK's Spindletop Hall (3414 Iron Works Pike, Lexington, KY 40511). Contact [keaston@vips.org](mailto:keaston@vips.org) for more information.

### Friday, November 8

**The Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gammas will hold a Trivia Night** at the Woodland Country Club in Carmel, Indiana. Registration begins at 7:30 p.m., with official trivia rounds beginning at 8 p.m. Proceeds will go to the VIPS Indiana Family Resource Center. There will be light

food and a cash bar. Please contact VIPS Indiana board member, Laurie Roselle at [laurie.roselle@sbcglobal.net](mailto:laurie.roselle@sbcglobal.net) for more information.

### Friday & Saturday, November 8 & 9

**VIPS Family Retreat Weekend in Louisville, KY.** You don't want to miss the wonderful opportunity to learn from the experts, take inspiration and support from other families, and to do it all in an atmosphere of family fun. The theme of the 2019 Family Retreat is "Tell Your Story!" While parents attend the educational conference, children will have a wonderful time playing in Kids Town Preschool under the watchful eyes of highly qualified and caring staff and volunteers. For information, contact Kristin Horlander at [khorlander@vips.org](mailto:khorlander@vips.org) or 502-498-2941.

## 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

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  
Christina Frasher, Accountant  
Carol Dahmke, Office Manager & HR Director  
Christina Allen, TVI in Training/Preschool Teacher  
Suzanne Bigbee, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Shelby Birchler, Instructional Assistant/After School Care  
Bob Boyd, IT  
Kristan Decker, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Ashley Emmons, TV/COMS/Preschool Teacher  
Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects  
Julie Hampton, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Marchelle Hampton, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Debbie Hardesty, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Dani Harper, Development Coordinator  
Pam Holladay, TVI/Developmental Interventionist  
Kristen Horlander, Preschool Assistant Director  
Paige Maynard, TVI/Developmental Interventionist  
Staci Maynard, TV/Preschool Teacher  
Juanita Miles, Preschool Teacher/Developmental Interventionist  
Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist  
Shai Mullins, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Beth Owens, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Brenda Pharris, Preschool Instructional Assistant  
Wrae Sanders, 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, TV/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/Intake Coordinator  
Mary Smyth, Assistant Director  
Rebecca Chinn, Little Learners Assistant  
Tammy Maynard, Developmental Interventionist  
Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist  
Dixie Miller Marz, TV/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 Barrick, Blind/Low Vision Specialist/OTR  
Rita DeVore, Administrative Asst./Special Projects Coord.  
Melisa Matthews, Blind/Low Vision Specialist  
Amy Nichols, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision  
Ashley Ross, Development Coordinator  
David Sterne, Lead Blind/Low Vision Specialist