

2020-2021

ANNUAL REPORT



www.vips.org
Kentucky • Indiana
Report from July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



As I look back on the fiscal year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 the underlying themes are resilience, creativity and determination. We call it **#VIPStrong!** This pandemic has affected all of us – clients, team members, donors and collaborators – but through it all VIPS has remained mission-focused and driven, finding ways to continue delivery of our critical services regardless of barriers. When 90% of learning occurs through vision, our children must begin education at birth in order to thrive so we knew we could not wait for the pandemic’s end. There were challenges to delivering services when referrals decreased and virtual instruction was not the best delivery method for some families, but we still provided 708 children and their families with frequent and on-going early education. Our teachers made almost 4,500 virtual home visits.

We have continued to keep our team members employed, our expenses low, and partners informed. We have been blessed with generosity of time, talent and treasure from our grantors and donors in support of our work during a difficult financial time. Our team went above and beyond by using any extra time capacity to write three new specialized preschool curricula tied to early childhood standards and the Expanded Core Curriculum for Preschool, Physical Education, and Orientation & Mobility; and are now working on a format to share this work internationally. We became accredited by the Association for Education & Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired “hitting it out of the park” for all its programs across two states – Early Childhood, Pre-school Services, Itinerant Services, Orientation & Mobility, and Referrals.

A few highlights from the administrative side include receiving our 3rd consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator letting us know that we were “outperforming most other charities in America.” We were re-certified by the Better Business Bureau for meeting all 20 standards for Charitable Accountability and successfully navigated a Payroll Protection Grant of \$336,000.

So you can see that your investment in the future of children with visual impairment is changing lives. We are so very grateful for your support and look forward to continuing to be #VIPStrong in 2022.

With appreciation,



ABOUT

OUR HISTORY

Before 1985, early intervention and educational programming were not available in Kentucky for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers who were blind or visually impaired until they entered kindergarten. VIPS became the pioneer in Kentucky in educating children when it opened its first office in Louisville. We then opened a second office in Lexington (VIPS Central KY) in 1990. VIPS further expanded services in 2011 to include the whole state of Indiana (VIPS Indiana). We are the only agency in Kentucky and Indiana providing regular and ongoing early intervention services to young children, birth to 5, who are blind and visually impaired.

In VIPS' continued expansion, our Indianapolis location finished the construction of the Simon & Estelle Knoble VIPS Family Resource Center. This state-of-the-art facility will help us better serve children with blindness and low vision across Indiana.

Also in 2021, VIPS became AER accredited for our Early Childhood Program, Preschool Services, Itinerant Services, Orientation & Mobility, and Identification & Referral with the note "This is an extraordinary accomplishment...Thank you for your commitment to excellence in service delivery."

With over 36 years of experience providing educational excellence to young children who are blind or visually impaired and their families, we continue growing as an agency; striving for diversity, equity, & inclusion; and supporting our staff during continued unprecedented times.

MISSION

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.

SIMON & ESTELLE KNOBLE VIPS FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER



VIPS OPENS NEW CENTER IN INDIANAPOLIS

In 2021, our Indiana staff officially moved into the new Family Resource Center located at 1212 Southeastern Avenue, just east of downtown Indianapolis! This center will not only house offices and storage for our staff, but, more importantly, will be a hub for VIPS parents to receive more resources and programming, and allow for children to receive intervention services onsite.

“Indiana will now have a space that is welcoming of all young children who are blind or visually impaired,” said Meredith Howell, regional director, and mom of a VIPS graduate. “It is imperative these parents know they are not alone—VIPS is here to help.”

For a parent of a child who is blind or visually impaired, the future is scary and unknown. But VIPS is changing all that—and we’re ready to change it for even more children and families in need. The Family Resource Center will be the first and only facility of its kind in the State of Indiana. It’s the culmination of years of effort that will allow us not only to serve more kids and their families but also to serve them better for many years to come.



GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY



DESIGN PLANNING FOR TODDLER TOWN



COMPLETED KITCHEN & FAMILY HUB



MISSION IN ACTION

STORY BY BRITTANY, MOTHER TO JACK

It was during one pandemic-summer afternoon that Amy with VIPS contacted us about vision therapy for our son, Jack. I remember her voice—calm, quiet, reassuring—cut through the chaotic scene unfolding before my eyes: three toddlers running around a small living room, and one fussy baby Jack in my arms. Undeterred by the mayhem, Amy kindly invited me to share Jack’s story. I explained that after 39 weeks of a healthy pregnancy, we learned that Jack’s brain was hemorrhaging in-utero. Jack’s diagnoses included bilateral intraventricular hemorrhage, grades 3 and 4, and ventriculomegaly. Among the consequences of the bleeds, Jack sustained damage to his optic nerve and right occipital lobe. It was suspected that Jack had some degree of left visual field loss and cortical visual impairment. These concerns were later confirmed by his neurologist and ophthalmologist. We were encouraged to pursue therapies for Jack immediately, but as Amy knew too well, therapies in April 2020 of the pandemic were simply not happening. Jack eventually participated in virtual PT and OT, but the vision piece was notably missing. I told Amy that Jack’s neurologist had enthusiastically referred us to VIPS—I even admitted that we tried to find vision therapy elsewhere, but quickly learned that the “elsewhere” options led us directly back to VIPS. After speaking with Amy, I knew that VIPS (and Amy) would become an indispensable resource for our family.

The early intervention that VIPS provided for Jack has impacted his life in countless ways. What Amy did so well was to help us adapt our existing routines in ways that supported Jack’s vision development and cortical visual processing. Amy was acutely interested in our day-to-day activities, what mattered to us, and what we all liked to do together. I identified three simple but cherished daily routines—reading stories, praying the rosary, and getting fresh air. Amy took that information and found creative ways to maximize the benefits for Jack. For example, she showed me how to adapt his books so that certain characters, colors, or shapes would stand out to him. Additionally, knowing that Jack struggled to move his eyeballs past midline without darting back to the right side, Amy suggested we use Jack’s favorite wooden rosary with a chunky red cross for tracking (she later added the beloved “quack stick” to our pray-and-track routine). It did not take long for Jack’s tracking to improve after that. Outdoor activities were trickier, but Amy was never at a loss for good ideas. She gave us a handmade “leaf book” which we used to compare the textures of fake leaves with real ones outside. Amy’s multisensorial approach with the intentional use of more comparative language significantly improved Jack’s ability to process images over time.

Amy also advocated for Jack when he needed it the most. We are immeasurably grateful for this. Amy gave careful attention to Jack’s entire therapy plan and realized that Jack needed a formidable OT with a vision background in order for his development to truly thrive. Amy worked behind the scenes to make this change happen. We were paired with an excellent OT who came to our home on a weekly basis. Jack’s progress improved quickly and exponentially. We owe that to Amy’s advocacy. She saw something that no one else did, and she did not hesitate to intervene.

It is difficult to imagine where we would be without VIPS—as I tell anyone who will listen, VIPS made everything okay again. Despite his MRI scans and the gloomy prognosis from when he was born, Jack is thriving as a toddler. We owe so much of his success to VIPS. Amy—ever-patient, wise, creative, caring—has been nothing but pure sunshine in our lives, especially as we adjusted to life in quarantine with three toddlers and an infant who needed multiple therapies. As much as Amy has inspired us, we are constantly inspired by the amazing community of VIPS families. We look forward to “Milestone Mondays” and reading about each child who has achieved a new skill. We learn from them, and we are proud to be a part of this community. We are grateful that VIPS exists, because, at least in our case, VIPS helped us find our bearings and our voice, they advocated for our son, and helped us develop a routine that benefited our entire family.



EDUCATION & EARLY INTERVENTION

708
TOTAL KIDS SERVED

343 KIDS IN KENTUCKY
365 KIDS IN INDIANA



212
NEW REFERRALS

4,354
HOME/VIRTUAL VISITS



PROGRAMS



Home visits by teachers and interventionists equip parents and caregivers with vision-specific knowledge and resources to teach their children.



Orientation & Mobility (O&M) is a program that helps our VIPS children navigate their environment safely with the use of a white cane.



Kids Town Preschool is a nationally accredited preschool located at our Louisville campus that prepares visually impaired children for academic success & social integration.



Little Learners Enrichment Program is offered to 2 & 3 year olds in Central Kentucky. It provides a structured preschool setting and lays the foundation for future learning.

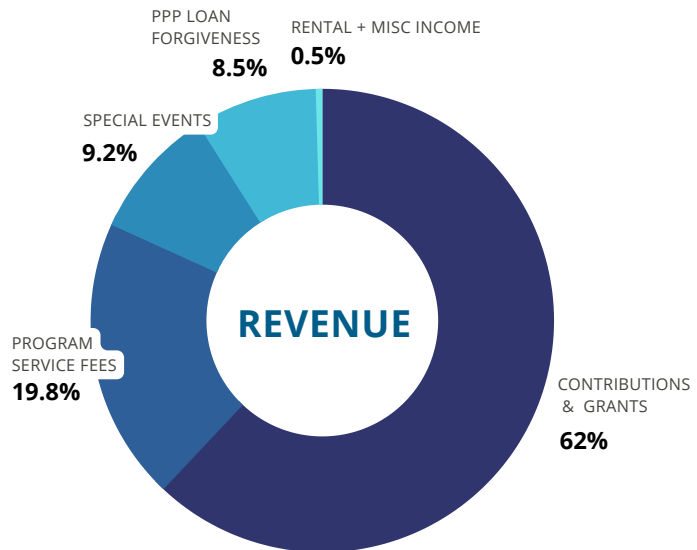


Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) is a space for VIPS families to socialize with one another.



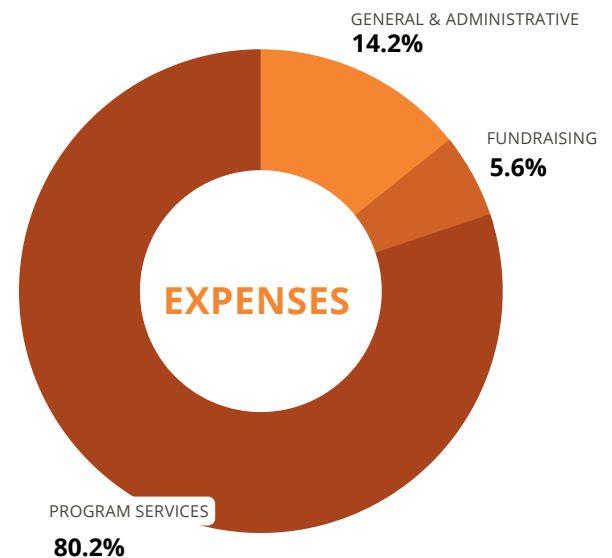
REVENUE

Contributions & Grants	\$2,447,517
Program Service Fees	\$779,788
Special Events	\$363,978
Net Investment Return	(\$447)
Forgiveness of debt PPP Loan	\$336,000
Misc Income	\$6,088
Rental Income	\$11,900
Total Revenue	\$3,944,824



EXPENSES

Program Services	\$1,894,719
General & Administrative	\$336,094
Fundraising	\$133,152
Total Expenses	\$2,363,965



NET ASSESTS

Unrestricted	\$3,001,108
Temporarily Restricted	\$1,076,381
Permanently Restricted	\$357,350
Ending Net Assets	\$4,434,839

BOARD & STAFF

Officers

Matt McMahan, President
Mike Johnson, Immediate Past President
William Jessee, Vice President
Andy Steinbach, Treasurer
Shari House, Secretary

Louisville Board Members

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Sharon Bensinger, Founder of VIPS
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Jerry Bizer, O.D.
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*Brittany Clarkson
Theresa Connolly
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Paresh Gupta, PharmD
*Bonita Helm
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Virren Malhotra
Gary Mudd, Honorary Board Member
Ellen Prizant
Mike Richardson
Mark Stiebling
Glen Stuckel, Honorary Board Member
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Virren Malhotra, Vice President
Dr. T. Rowan Candy
Rebecca Davis, Honorary Board Member
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Jena Fahlbush
Arvetta Jideonwo
Brian Madison
*Heather McDavid
Laurie Roselle
Brad Sugarman
Robin Thoma
John Wykes

Staff

Diane M. Nelson, Executive Director
Kathy Mullen, Director of Education
Suzanne Bigbee, Classroom Assistant
Jenny Castenir, Family Services Coordinator
Carol Dahmke, HR & Office Manager
Kristan Decker, Classroom Assistant
Rita DeVore, Administrative Assistant/Special Projects Coordinator
Rebekah Dunda, Classroom Assistant
Ashley Emmons, Teacher of the Visually Impaired & O&M Specialist
Kelly Easton, Central Kentucky Regional Director
Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects
Michelle Flora, Blind/Low Vision Specialist
Ashley Ford, Event Coordinator
Christina Frasher, Controller
Marchelle Hampton, Classroom Assistant
Debbie Hardesty, Classroom Assistant
Tracy Hibler-Aikin, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision
Pamela Holladay, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Meredith Howell, Indiana Regional Director
Brian Justice, Building, Grounds, & Maintenance
Mindy Koehne, Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision
Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist
Dixie Marz, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Melisa Matthews, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision
Paige Maynard, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Staci Maynard, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Tammy Maynard, Developmental Interventionist
Juanita Miles, Kids Town Preschool Director
Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist
Kathleen Moulden, Classroom Assistant
Amy Nichols, Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision
Katie Norris, Classroom Assistant
Brenda Pharris, Classroom Assistant
Elaine Reed, 2's Lead Teacher
Tommie Roesch, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision & O&M Specialist
Ashley Ross, Development Coordinator
Kirsten Schmidt, Guest Relations/Volunteer Coordinator
Mary Smyth, Grant Writer
Julia Sleder, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Preschool Teacher
David Sterne, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision
Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist
Maury Weedman, O&M Specialist & Maintenance Manager
Brittany Williamson, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

*board member served between July 2020-June 2021 but is no longer with VIPS.