

# VISability

the Parent Newsletter of Visually Impaired Preschool Services  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

[Family Event Details](#)

[Fundraising Event Details](#)

Saturday, April 2, 10 a.m.  
VIPS IN will host Toddler Cane Quest.

Saturday, April 9, 11 a.m.  
Indiana Brewery Running Series to benefit VIPS.

Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m.  
VIPS IN will hold a Play & Explore Day at the Family Resource Center for VIPS Families.

Saturday,  
April 30, 10 a.m.  
"Once Upon an Orchestra" will be held at the VIPS Louisville Office.

Tuesday, May 10  
Kentucky Gives Day will take place.

Saturday, May 21, 6:30 p.m.  
The VIPS Gala will be held.

Sunday, May 22  
Walking for Dreams will be held at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Thursday, May 26, 6:30 p.m.  
Kids Town Preschool Graduation will be held at VIPS Louisville.

Looking Ahead  
VIPS Summer Programs

### [Summer Program Details](#)

VIPS Louisville  
Summer Enrichment  
Mondays – Thursdays, June 6 - July 28

Park Pals  
Fridays, June 10 & 24, July 8 & 22

VIPS Indiana  
Cane Adventure Camp  
July 11, 16, 18, 30 and August 1.

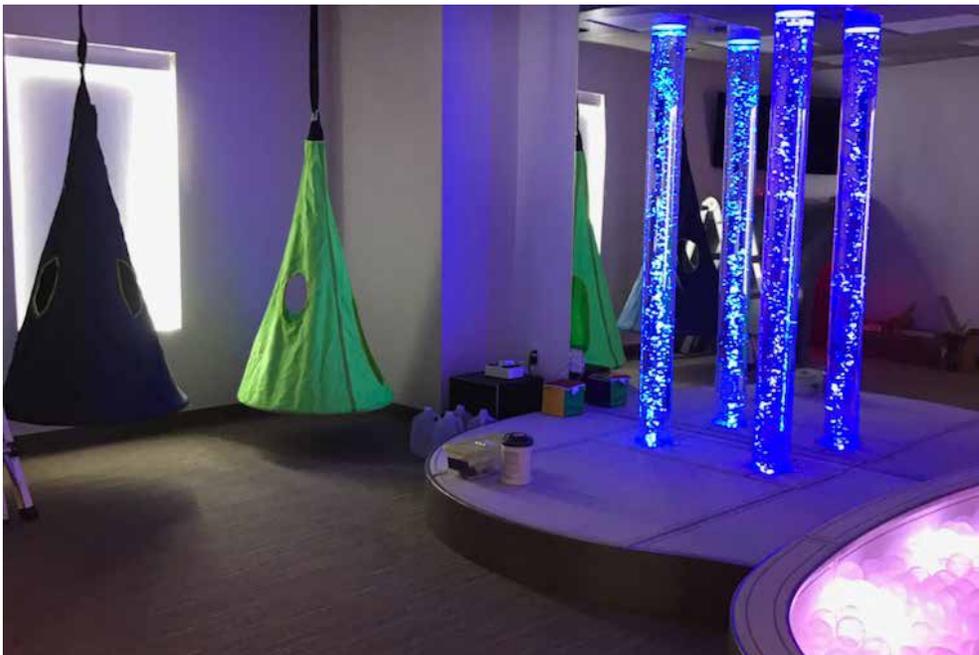
## The VIPS 2020-21 Annual Report Is Now Available

Check it out at:

<https://vips.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Annual-report-2020-2021-resized.pdf>

## It Just Keeps Getting Better!!!

Progress continues on VIPS Indiana's wonderful Simon & Estelle Knoble Family Resource Center. Two areas that are sure to be favorites of children and families are Toddler Town and the Sensory Room & CVI Den. Toddler Town has been designed to spark the curiosity of children and to give them child-sized adventures exploring a playspace that mirrors a tiny town. The Sensory Room & CVI Den beckon with colorful, giant bubbling tubes, a wall of fun, tactile activities, and cozy places to relax. This area is a perfect respite for children who might be overstimulated and need to decompress or for those who need gentle stimulation to get their vision and other senses activated. What child (or adult!) wouldn't want to crawl into the warm, red glow of the amazing CVI Den? Or have a calming swing while hiding out in one of the suspended tents? Corporate Interior Solutions has truly embraced our dreams for the Family Resource Center and made them come true!



There is a picture of the sensory room. It is dimly lit and has lighted floor to ceiling tubes with colorful bubbles inside, a glowing ball pit, and suspended tents for snuggling and rocking.

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# **The Incredible Women of VIPS History**

By Diane Nelson, VIPS Executive Director

March is "Women's History Month" so I feel it only appropriate to begin by celebrating the many women who identified the critical need for early education for children with blindness in Kentucky and then came together to change lives.

First and foremost we would not be here today if not for the efforts of Sharon Bensinger, VIPS Co-Founder and current member of the Board of Directors. Sharon holds a Bachelor's in Elementary Education and a Master's in Special Education but most importantly holds what should be called a "Doctorate in Getting It Done!!! From an excerpt of a presentation Sharon gave in 2017:

"It is hard to imagine, but in Kentucky in 1985, there were no publicly funded preschools, early childhood or early intervention programs for young children with disabilities. As someone who worked at the American Printing House for the Blind in the field of early childhood blindness, for 10 years I saw firsthand, as I traveled to different states, the difference early intervention made for blind and visually impaired infants and preschoolers. For those few states fortunate enough to have early intervention programs, the impact was confidence and the knowledge it gave to the parents that they could do a wonderful job raising their young blind child to grow up to be a successful productive adult. So, with the help of a dear friend, I pulled together a group of professionals and volunteers from across our community and we met, divided into committees and worked to create a program for birth to 5-year-old blind and visually impaired young children and their families. Almost a year later with lots of luck and hard work, and many rejections, Visually Impaired Preschool Services was born! We had two \$10,000 grants and this committee decided to hire me as the first employee serving 8 children."

Today, I cannot begin to imagine the future for Kentucky and Indiana's children with blindness if not for the courage, determination, innovative spirit and vision of Sharon Bensinger and her "willing group of volunteer professionals". We are thrilled that even though Sharon retired in December of 2008, she stays extremely engaged even today.

Leading that early charge for funding and structure was Maud Fliegelman (1923-2016) who devoted her life to advocating for civil rights and childcare. Maud, as the first President of the VIPS Board of Directors, brought a team of colleagues together to raise the money that allowed VIPS to become a reality. During Maud's life she was very active with the National Council of Jewish Women, both locally and at the national level. She was also co-founder and board member of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) which still provides support for children in the court system. This amazing lady was also past president for Keystone Learning Academy, and a board member for both The Family & Children's Place and Home of the Innocents. On two occasions, she was invited to visit the White House: once during the Kennedy administration for civil rights, and during the Johnson administration for child care. Maud's daughter, Ellen Prizant, continues today as a VIPS Board member, carrying the torch in many endeavors as her mother did before her. As they say, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

When VIPS was beginning, Jan Moseley was the Director of the Visually Impaired Program for Kentucky's largest school district, Jefferson County Public Schools, and knew the importance of introducing education prior to age five! She was on the founding VIPS Board of Directors and helped provide her insight and experience in the field to VIPS' mission. Jan actually joined the VIPS team upon her retirement from JCPS school system and currently still works part-time in collaboration with Pauletta Feldman, publishing the VISability Newsletter. It is because of Pauletta, that the VIPS Parent Newsletter and other parent services even exist today. Pauletta came to VIPS as one of the first volunteer parents when her son Jamie was referred for services some 35+ years ago. Over time, her "volunteer" position grew to a staff position, planning family events, family retreats, and producing our video series at various times throughout our history. Today, Pauletta still works part time as our "Special Projects" lead responsible for our VIPS Blips, parent and donor surveys, voice of history and anything else asked of her.

Although VIPS had always served Southern Indiana since inception, in 2011 VIPS expanded services into Central Indiana, under the leadership of another passionate parent – Rebecca Davis. Rebecca said, "The first blind person I met was my own daughter" and I needed help learning to educate her. Rebecca's search for services for Eliza ultimately led her to Louisville, Kentucky and VIPS. She drove Eliza two hours each way to preschool in Louisville, Kentucky from Bloomington, Indiana every week for two years just to make sure Eliza had every opportunity to learn and thrive. Rebecca's love

for her daughter and passion for the cause inspired her to help bring VIPS to Central Indiana by finding the funding to hire our first full time Teacher of the Visually Impaired and becoming the lead in Indiana. That amazing teacher, Annie Hughes, decided to retire from her 30+ year position teaching at the Indiana School for the Blind to join VIPS and lead the Indiana educational program from her home base in Indianapolis. Today, because of these two women, hundreds of children with blindness/low vision throughout the entire state of Indiana receive services each year.

I could go on and on describing the impact women have had at VIPS but I will end by thanking and acknowledging the many dedicated, passionate and hard-working women who have made a huge impact throughout our history and continue to do so today. This work is not easy, especially these last 104 weeks of educating our precious children with the added disruption of COVID, but these women do it because they are passionate about creating a wonderful future for children with vision loss. What I know for sure is thousands and thousands of lives have been changed since 1985 because of the work of many! Thank you for being part of our #VIPSstrong team supporting this life changing work.



The picture, above left shows Rebecca (left) and Annie (right) hugging and smiling. Rebecca is tall and has red short hair; Annie is shorter with very blond hair and a huge smile. The picture above right is an old picture of Jan, Ellen and Sharon outside the Spirit of Jefferson boat standing beside a sign that says "Welcome to VIPS 15th Anniversary Family Reunion."

## **FREE Print/Braille Books**

Free Print/Braille books are available through the Book Angel Program of Seedlings Braille Books for Children. By registering, your child, 0-21, is eligible to receive 4 free books per calendar year. Register below:

<http://www.seedlings.org/bkangel2009.php>

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## **VIPS and Anchor Center Join Forces to Produce Podcast**

VIPS Family Services Coordinator, Jenny Castenir, and VIPS Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Developmental Interventionist, Paige Maynard, have teamed up with Dr. Cathy Smyth, TVI, Ph.D., the Director of Research at the Anchor Center for Blind Children in Denver, CO and instructor in online classes at Lindenwood University and the University of Utah, to develop podcasts, *Feeling This Life*, for parents of children with visual impairments/blindness.

So far, the introduction to the series, Episode 1 and Episode 2 have been released. Remaining episodes will be published on the dates listed at 7 a.m. EST. You can listen to the podcast episodes below:

<https://anchor.fm/feeling-this-life>

### Series Description:

Introduction and Our Hopes and Dreams -- Jenny, Paige and Dr. Cathy introduce themselves and share their hopes for the series.

Episode 1 – What to Expect When Taking Your Child to the Eye Doctor  
In this episode, Dr. Cathy interviews pediatric ophthalmologist, Dr. Robert King, to get an idea of what parents should expect when visiting the eye doctor for the first time. He discusses what tools the doctor uses, what tests he performs, and why he performs them. Paige, Dr. Cathy, and Jenny conclude by chatting about what parents can do to be prepared for their child's visit to the eye doctor.

Episode 2 -- What to expect in your daily life with a child with a visual

impairment

Dr. Cathy, Jenny, and Paige talk about how your child's visual impairment may impact their access to daily activities and how to help your child participate meaningfully. Jenny shares her personal experience with helping her daughter participate in daily routines and talks about her feelings around how her daughter experiences the world.

Release dates for other episodes are given below. They will be available starting at 7 a.m. on the dates given.

April 4

Episode 3 -- What to expect when you need to speak up for your child  
Brooklyn Spirito, mom of two girls who have a visual impairment, shares her story of advocacy as she and her husband journeyed to find an accurate vision diagnosis. She dives into her grief and tells about learning to thrive. Dr. Cathy shares information about vision screening for infants.

May 2

Episode 4 -- What to expect when helping your child learn to get from place to place

Dr. Cathy interviews Dr. Penny Rosenblum about what to expect when teaching your child orientation and mobility skills. Dr. Rosenblum is a professional in the area of visual impairment, and has a visual impairment herself. She shares practical ideas for helping your child to become an active traveler.

June 6

Episode 5 -- What to expect when fostering your child's social skills  
Paige interviews Hailee Raymer, mom of a daughter with a visual impairment and complex needs. Hailee talks about how her time at the pool with her daughter taught her a new way to connect, and gives advice to other families about what to expect when fostering social skills in their children. Jenny, Dr. Cathy, and Paige talk about the potential for each moment to become an opportunity for building a strong foundation for social development.

Here are ways you can help make the podcast a success:

- Listen to it! After you listen, share it with friends, family members, VIPS families, whomever. We know each episode might not pertain to everyone,

but we want to reach as many people as possible to create a community of families, parents, teachers, etc.!

- Follow our social media accounts AND like and comment on things. Tag people in posts they might be interested in.
- Write a review and give us 5 stars on whatever platform you use to listen to podcasts. This will help more people find the podcast.

Feeling This Life can be found on Apple, Spotify, Google, and more (just search "Feeling This Life")! Feeling This Life also has a Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Feelingthislifepodcast>.

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## **Marvelous Milestones**

Children who are visually impaired often must learn how to do things through different techniques, and they also may reach milestones at different rates than children who are typically developing. Be sure to celebrate each demonstration of your child's progress and his or her hard work getting there. No matter how small it may seem, when you compare your progress child's to himself, you will see how far he has come!

Coralynn who has been working to improve her Orientation & Mobility skills by walking in her walker with Ms. Tommie. She is learning to detect obstacles and drop-off areas. O & M skills are so important to a child's safety and independence. Keep up the good work, Coralynn.

Faiqah has been using her vision to imitate actions and gestures such as clapping, waving, and patting a toy to hear a sound. During a recent visit with her VIPS teacher, Mr. David, she showed off her new skill by patting the quack stick just like her teacher showed her. Great job, Faiqah!

JP has Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), the most common visual impairment in young children, in which their brain struggles to interpret what the eyes are seeing. Recently, JP used his vision to explore the dishes in the sink. His mother was pleasantly surprised to find him on his tippy toes and pulling himself up to visually explore the sink area. Way to go, JP!

Jacob is a young VIPS kiddo who has Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), the most common cause of visual impairments in young children. Our VIPS teachers often use lights to provide a visual target for children with CVI. What a special milestone for Jacob and his family when he discovered the lights on the Christmas tree!

Over the holidays, Jaelynn explored the shapes and colors on her APH Lite Box with her family. Her mother sent this photo to her VIPS teacher, Ms. Amy, who was so excited to see Jaelynn using her vision and fine motor skills as she is looking AND holding the large red square. Good looking, Jaelynn!

Jayce's parents, Amber and Robbie, have been working on ways to help Jayce isolate his index finger as this will be an important step to fine motor development. As you can see pictured below, he loves using his index finger to ring the doorbell! Great work, Jayce!

Kade has been working hard on learning to mouth objects which will help with so many developmental skills. Ms. Paige had a virtual visit recently with Kade and his mom, Chelsey, and dad, Roy, and they were helping him to mouth one of his mouth toys. As they encouraged him, he was excited to explore and his mom placed the toy into his open mouth! His family and Ms. Paige were so excited to share his progress! You can watch the video here: <https://www.facebook.com/page/131180185964/search/?q=Kade>.

Recent VIPS graduate, Liam, is reading a simple sentence. He's been working on this skill during school and was able to use his knowledge of phonics, his visual recognition of the letters, and his skills in reading from left to right to decode the sentence. Big stuff is happening in his brain when he reads! Terrific work, Liam!

You can watch his video here: <https://www.facebook.com/VisuallyImpairedPreschoolServices/videos/1092962304810288>.

Otto recently learned how to clap his hands! Our teachers and interventionists get to be a part of such precious moments of a child's life. In this picture, you can feel Otto and his mother's excitement as he claps his hands!



Pictured above: Left, Otto with a big smile and blue glasses, is supported by his moms hands while he claps. Center, Jacob, laying on the floor beneath the Christmas tree, reaches up to touch a light. Right, Faiqah, dressed all in pink, shakes the quack stick to create a sound.

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## **VIPS Parents Recommend ...**

Chelsey, the mother of VIPS child Kade, shares that she bought several adapted toys for her son for Christmas on Etsy. She put "adapted toys" in the search bar, and found many options of toys that had been adapted for use with AT switches. Many are commercially available toys adapted by individuals/businesses to become switch activated. Some are as inexpensive as \$30. VIPS Louisville TVI, Paige Maynard, thinks that this is a good way to get switch-activated toys for kiddos -- not usually an easy task! She recommends checking reviews of each seller before purchasing.

Coralynn's family has made sensory toys for her to foster skills. One is a bin with green string lights inside and has a lid to which they have taped a ziplock bag full of water beads. When Coralynn is squishing the beads, the light will shine through! The other toy is a busy board full of common household items and textures that support Coralynn's fine and gross motor development. There are so many ways you can support your child's development, just by using a little creativity!

## Tips for Reading Aloud to Your Child

The National Braille Press is a wonderful resource for families and children with blindness. The following tips for reading aloud are summarized from an article on the NBP website. You can read the entire article and more complete discussion at the link below:

[https://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/programs/gep/ge\\_tips.html](https://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/programs/gep/ge_tips.html).

Every book is a world. Opening that world starts with you — but no pressure. If you're not yet comfortable reading aloud, here's a good place to start. It's a learning process. Even if you are comfy, here's a good place to start with making reading aloud easier and more fun for both you and your child.

1. Choose the right book.
2. Make reading a family tradition.
3. Take your time.
4. Before reading each page, describe the images.
5. Use vocal expression.
6. Describe — and model — the facial expressions and body language.
7. Ask simple questions that spark responses and foster empathy.
8. Use tactiles while you are reading — toys, objects found around the house, and natural materials found outside.
9. Let your child help tell the story.
10. After reading the story, ask your child questions about what you read and discuss characters, features, and plot of the story.

Reading to your child is such a pleasurable way to spend time together and teach your child so much! Take your clues from your child. If she becomes fussy, it's probably time to stop. If he wants to read the same book over

and over again, that just means he's really taking it all in and it is sparking something inside him. Before you know it, he will be "reading" the book, or parts of it, to you! Most of all, just have fun with reading!

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## **Beau's Story Highlights VIPS Service Provision**

VIPS is proud to serve children across the Commonwealth of Kentucky, regardless of what county they reside in. However, this means that our teachers are frequently on the road for hours at a time, ensuring that they can provide in person intervention services directly in children's homes. While we try to have providers serve children in the geographic area closest to where they live, sometimes a teacher from Central Kentucky may spend 1 or 2 days in Western Kentucky seeing children if that is where they are needed most. VIPS Developmental Interventionist Tammy Maynard lives in the central Kentucky's Madison county, but sees Beau in Western Kentucky's Daviess county monthly. Beau's mom, Lindsay, shares their VIPS story:

### **Meet Beau**

#### **By Beau's mom, Lindsay**

When Beau was born, we were prepared for his brain abnormalities. At Beau's anatomy scan, it was discovered he had enlarged ventricles in his brain. This is called Ventriculomegaly which progressed to hydrocephalus. But we had not anticipated visual impairment and possible blindness.

It wasn't long after Beau was born we discovered he was visually impaired. He has bilateral colobomas. We did not know if he could see anything or if he ever would. It was by far the hardest diagnosis for us to process.

Beau has had a pretty rough first year of life. At two months old, he had brain surgery to place a shunt to drain excess fluid. At three months, he was diagnosed with epilepsy. He has had two helicopter rides, two ambulance rides and 25 days in the hospital.

We are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel! We are controlling his seizures with the keto diet and he got glasses last month. He is improving by leaps and bounds daily and VIPS has been there every step of the way.

First Steps told us about the opportunity to work with VIPS. We got started with VIPS as soon as possible. I will never forget our first home visit. Beau

did not look at anything. He gave no indication he could see at all. I was crushed and devastated; but the VIPS teacher was very knowledgeable and convinced me his eyes could get stronger the more we helped them make connections with lights and toys. She also assured me there were resources and help if Beau was blind. I felt much better knowing I had VIPS and its community to lean on.

I took all the advice our VIPS teacher had to offer and got to work with Beau. We ordered every light up toy we could find, hung Christmas lights on his swing and worked with him every day. Beau started tracking light toys and, after getting glasses, he now tracks objects! It's not all objects all of the time, but he has shown us he can see. The therapy and advice we have received through VIPS has impacted our family and Beau in so many ways. I can't thank them enough!

Our DI Tammy comes a long way to see Beau, in our home and we have grown to love our sessions. What once was a very daunting task to sit down and see my baby struggle to interact visually is now a pleasure and I truly believe it's because of the therapy we were able to receive through VIPS.



Beau is shown on the left above. He is a darling, smiling little boy with fluffy sandy hair, wearing a black sweatshirt and black glasses. On the right, his VIPS Interventionist, Tammy Maynard is shown. Tammy has blonde hair, and gazes at the camera with a sweet, friendly smile -- just the kind of lady you want to let into your home to work with your child.

## **Meet Beau's Interventionist**

My name is Tammy Maynard and I am a developmental interventionist with VIPS CKY. Seeing VIPS children on my caseload may involve traveling hours or staying overnight in a different region. As a team, we are committed to serving families and assisting them any way possible.

After a coworker retired last year, I began to travel to Western Kentucky monthly to provide services to our families. I met Beau and his family and we immediately connected. Beau is a very cute, spunky and motivated little boy that loves his family. His family works with him daily in his routine to increase his skills every way possible and it has allowed him to demonstrate great progress. It is a privilege when families allow us into their lives to give them the tools and information they need to move forward. Thank you for allowing us to serve you!

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## **CVI Study Group**

Our friends from Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Medical Center are inviting VIPS families who share a diagnosis of CVI to participate in discussion/support groups.

We're looking for caregivers of children with CVI aged 17 and under to share their experiences and describe the needs of their children. Join other caregivers and tell the story about your child's needs and therapy experiences. We want to learn what was and was not helpful so that we can create therapy programs to meet the needs of you and your child. It is OK if you only want to participate in part of the study, either the survey or the focus group. You don't have to participate in both.

You can learn more about the survey by reading through an information sheet and/or access the survey below and enter the code: EAH9M8P47.

<https://redcap.research.cchmc.org/surveys/>

If you prefer to complete a paper copy of the survey, want to participate in the focus group, or want more info, contact Karen Harpster by calling 513-803-3604 or emailing her at the address below:

[Karen.harpster@cchmc.org](mailto:Karen.harpster@cchmc.org)

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## **There's Still Time To Apply for the Bret Dahmke Scholarship**

A scholarship of \$500 is available to assist a Kentucky family with a visually impaired child attend an educational conference to enhance their abilities to care for their child. The scholarship funds may be used for transportation, lodging, or conference fees. In order to be considered you must have a child with a visual impairment (birth to high school age), and you must be a resident of Kentucky.

Five hundred dollars would go quite a way in helping to defray the costs of attending a national convention or conference. This spring and summer, there are major national conferences going on that offer incredible learning opportunities for parents and they are being held in some interesting locations. The exhibits alone are worth going for, offering all the latest technology and products to enhance ease of living, productivity and access for the blind and visually impaired!

Deadline for submission is Friday, April 15. You can apply below:

<https://vips.org/bret-dahmke-scholarship/>.

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## **Upcoming Conferences Offering a Wealth of Learning Opportunities for VIPS Parents**

The following is a listing of conferences of interest to parents of children with visual impairments that are coming up this spring and summer. A \$500 scholarship (see above) could really help you attend one of these great conferences that are in locations that would make for a great family vacation!

\*(Two are conventions put on by blind and visually impaired adults to address their needs for technology, training, employment, mobility just to name a few. But the best part is you will meet visually impaired adults who are doing what you want your child to be doing as an adult -- traveling independently -- in this case, to and around the convention city -- advocating for themselves, and having a wonderful time.)

Early Connections Conference  
Sponsored by Perkins School for the Blind,  
April 30, 9 a.m. – Virtual  
Focus on children birth to seven years.

<https://www.perkins.org/event/early-connections-conference/>

## VISIONS2022

Foundation Fighting Blindness Annual Conference,  
June 17-18, Lake Buena Vista, FL

This conference has a focus on latest research in blindness prevention and treatments and vision technology.

<https://www.fightingblindness.org/visions-2022>

\*American Council of the Blind National Convention,  
July 1-8, Omaha, NE

The ACB is a consumer group made up of individuals who are visually impaired. Conference focus is on issues related to living with visual impairment and blindness. Massive exhibit area.

<https://acbconvention.org/>

\*National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2022,  
July 5–10, New Orleans, LA

The NFB is a consumer group made up of individuals who are visually impaired. Conference focus is on issues related to living with visual impairment and blindness. Massive exhibit area.

<https://nfb.org/get-involved/national-convention>

NOAHCon2022 – National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation  
July 14-17, Orlando, FL

The focus is issues related to albinism and hypopigmentation.

[www.albinism.org/NOAHCon](http://www.albinism.org/NOAHCon)

AER International Conference

July 20-24, St. Louis, MO

AER is the primary professional organization for individuals in the field of

blindness and visual impairment. Education and rehabilitation focus.

<https://aerbvi.org/2022-aer-biennial-international-conference/>

The 2022 American Conference on Brain-Based Visual Impairment (CVI),  
July 28-29

This will most likely be a hybrid conference, with both in-person and virtual participation options. Registration will not open until March and finalized details (types of participation, registration fees, CEUs and full agenda) will be included in the registration information. Presented by the Children's Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha, NE

[CME@childrensohama.org](mailto:CME@childrensohama.org)

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## **In Memoriam**

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memories of:

- Gates Pottoroff, son of Laken and Greg Pottoroff of Carmel, IN, who passed away on March 11, 2022 at the age of 9 months
- Eli Schlafer, son of Jason and Laura Schlafer of Indianapolis, IN, who passed away on January 11, 2022 at the age of six
- Mark Preston, father of VIPS child Jubie and his 7 siblings and husband of Marsha, of Williamsburg, KY, who passed away January 4, 2022 at the age of 58
- Matthew Jacob Percy , son of VIPS Contractor Lisa Percy and Stephen Percy of Indianapolis, IN, who passed away January 3, 2022 at the age of 22
- John Auforth, also known as "Chris P. Chicken," a regular visitor at VIPS YUM Golf Tournaments and VIPS family events, who passed away Dec. 7, 2021 at the age of 73
- "Indy Santa Fred" Imhausen, husband of Kat and the real Santa to VIPS IN children, of Indianapolis, IN, who passed away on Dec. 7, 2021.

Our hearts go out to all of their loved ones.

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## Upcoming VIPS Family Events in Detail

All VIPS families may attend any VIPS family event, regardless of where you receive services and where an event is held. Please register and RSVP as requested below.

Toddler Cane Quest, Saturday, April 2, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Indianapolis, IN  
VIPS families, past or present, can come to the Family Resource Center (1212 Southeastern Ave, Indianapolis IN, 46202) for our inaugural Toddler Cane Quest! Your kiddo can work on her/his Orientation & Mobility skills with VIPS teacher, Ms. Tommie. A cane is not required to come, but if your child does use a cane, please bring it! This is a free event. Sign up below:

<https://secure.vips.org/np/clients/vips/eventRegistration.jsp?forwardedFromSecureDomain=1&event=1287>

Family Resource Center Family Open House & Free Play, Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Indianapolis, IN

Come out to our beautiful new Simon and Estelle Knoble Family Resource Center and check out our newly completed Toddler Town, sensory room, activity rooms, and family hub. This is an "open gym" time for our VIPS families (past and present) to try out the new space! This is a free event. Sign up below:

<https://secure.vips.org/np/clients/vips/eventRegistration.jsp?forwardedFromSecureDomain=1&event=1288>

Once Upon an Orchestra, Saturday, April 30, 10 a.m., Louisville, KY  
Join us at the VIPS Louisville facility for a fun, interactive storytelling through music performance. Once Upon an Orchestra, a 60-minute, all-ages program, weaves together storytelling adventures with creative music making. Louisville Orchestra education staff will even help participants make instruments from recycled materials and you will get to take home your very own instrument! RSVP by 4/15 and register below:

<https://bit.ly/Ouorchestra430>

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# Fun In the Sun Summer Programs On Your Local VIPS Campus

You can ask ten bystanders how they know summer is coming and you will learn of ten different signs of summer. Some people will refer to the opening of the swimming pool or a family cookout on Memorial Day weekend. Others will report they know it's summer when major league baseball takes over radio and television stations. One might consider the arrival of lightning bugs and mosquitos as a true indicator of the heat that lies ahead. Finally, some people will refer to the calendar where the first day of summer, June 21, is circled in bright red ink.

At VIPS, we have our own signs of summer: the initiation of planning the summer programs in our three VIPS offices. While we would like to say the planning is finalized, we know you recognize that we will be tweaking the details until the very morning when our summer doors fling open to welcome our VIPS children and families. Even though the locations of our summer events are organized by our VIPS campuses, the events are open to all qualifying VIPS families regardless of your home address.

We hope you and your family are able to join us for one or all!

## VIPS Indiana

### O&M Adventure Summer Camp

This new addition to our summer programming is open for all VIPS children who are receiving orientation and mobility (O&M) services or have received an O&M assessment through VIPS. Children may sign up for one, two, or three days of O&M Adventure Summer Camp; camp dates are: JULY 11, 16, 18, and 30, and August 1, 2022. For more information on this wonderful opportunity, please contact Mindy Koehne at the email address below:

[mkoehne@vips.org](mailto:mkoehne@vips.org).

Keep your eyes open for more information regarding Open Play at VIPS, when the VIPS Family Resource Center will be open for exploration of Toddler Town and the Sensory Room and the soon-to-be-finished playground!

## VIPS Central Kentucky

Be on the lookout for a questionnaire being sent to families served out of

our VIPS Central Kentucky (Lexington) office regarding a two-day summer camp (one day in June and one day in July). Activities galore will be planned for outside fun and adventure. If you would like more information regarding the VIPS Central Kentucky Summer Camp days, email Kelly Easton below:

[keaston@vips.org](mailto:keaston@vips.org).

#### VIPS Louisville

This summer, VIPS Kids Town Preschool will offer summer programming for students who have attended Kids Town Preschool for this current 2021-22 school year. The enrichment program will run four days a week, Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. from June 6 through July 28. Tuition assistance is available for this fee-based program. For more information and to register, please email Juanita Miles below:

[jmiles@vips.org](mailto:jmiles@vips.org).

In addition, VIPS Louisville will once again offer Park Pals during the summer months of 2022. Park Pals is a program where Kids Town Preschool and community-based VIPS team members meet our VIPS families at a designated community park for some playground fun and parent socializing.

This year we will hold four Park Pal events:

June 10, 2022 - VIPS Kids Town Preschool Playground

June 24, 2022 - Beckley Creek Park Playground/Splash Pad

July 8, 2022 - Iroquois Park Playground

July 22, 2022 - Indiana Park/ TBD

VIPS Louisville will also be launching Open Play at VIPS in August 2022. Kids Town, the Sensory Room, and the outdoor playground will be opened for non-structured play for our VIPS children and their families one Saturday morning each month. More information to come soon!

So let's all pack away our turtlenecks, snow boots and mittens. Let's turn a few pages on the 2022 calendar. Let's pull out the sunglasses and visors and update our sunscreen. Let's plan to enjoy summer with our VIPS families and team members. Who's ready??

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## Welcome New Children

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

Acrey - 8 months, Greensburg, KY  
Adhara Jorge - 1 year, Lexington, KY  
Ashton - 9 months, Corbin, KY  
Aurora - 10 months, Fort Wayne, IN  
Aviana - 8 months, Elwood, IN  
Charolotte - 11 months, Carmel, IN  
Colton - 1 year, Vanceburg, KY  
Corrine - 9 months, Lexington, KY  
Daniel - 1 year, Greenfield, IN  
Easton - 8 months, Columbus, IN  
Elanor - 1 year, Harrodsburg, KY  
Emma - 11 months, Walton, KY  
Felicity - 9 months, Louisville, KY  
Ford - 8 months, Lexington, KY  
Illyana - 1 year, Greenwood, IN  
Jensy - 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
Joshua - 10 months, Seymour, IN  
Kaison - 2 years, Louisville, KY  
Levi - 7 months, Greenfield, IN  
Levi - 2 years, Owensboro, KY  
Lillian - 1 year, Louisville, KY  
Lucilia - 1 year, Connersville, IN  
Maeve - 7 months, Indianapolis, IN  
Mason - 2 years, Harrodsburg, KY  
Mateo - 1 year, St. Paul, IN  
Maverick - 7 months, Rennsaler, IN  
Maxwell - 2 years, Erlanger, KY  
Melany - 2 years, Elkhart, IN  
Navaeh - 1 year, Odon, IN  
Orion - 2 years, Bedford, IN  
Owen - 2 years, Morehead, KY  
Owen - 2 years, South Bend, IN  
Paisley - 8 months, Warfield, KY  
Rylan - 8 months, Bowling Green, KY  
Sawyer - 10 months, Bowling Green, KY  
Scarlett - 1 year, Dry Ridge, KY  
Sylas - 2 years, Frankfort, KY  
Wyatt - 1 year, Indianapolis, IN  
Zaire - 1 year, Indianapolis, IN

## VIPS Staff News

### VIPS Indiana

We are thrilled to announce that Rita DeVore is now full time in our Indy office. We are excited to have the opportunity to see more of Rita's get-it-done efforts. How lucky are we?

### VIPS Louisville

We are very pleased to announce that Maury Weedman has accepted the position of Instructional Assistant in Ms. Ashley's classroom. "Mr. Maury" is not only certified to teach O&M, but his willingness to help children with challenges, coupled with his dry sense of humor in his work with adults, ensures that this is a fantastic match of skills with a vacant position! Welcome back to the classroom, Mr. Maury!

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## The Amazing Kathy Mullen

Many of you have read VISability articles written by Director of Education, Kathy Mullen, who applies her common-sense approach to everyday happenings in the halls of VIPS, while still maintaining a sense of wonder and joy as she describes those that stand out. Because March is Women's History Month, we decided to write an article ABOUT Kathy instead of begging her to write yet another article. Our facts were gleaned from an article by Executive Director, Diane Nelson, in one of her inspirational and informative Friday Messages.

What makes Kathy such a game changer? She is a known leader of excellence in the field of education and developmental disabilities and a source of great knowledge, having served in state, local school district and non-profit agency positions prior to her 9-1/2 years with VIPS. She holds teaching certifications in Early Childhood Special Education, Elementary and Special Education/Learning and Behavior Disorders, and has 30 years' experience in the field.

Kathy has not only taught Early Education courses at the University of Louisville but is also a certified VIISA trainer from Utah State University, expanding the numbers of much needed of teachers learning about blindness and low vision.

Her record of achievements since joining VIPS include expanding the number of children served from 280 to almost 800 this year; grown our education team from 7 to over 26+ members and over 20 contractors; directed VIPS to becoming accredited by varied accrediting agencies for young children and for blind/visually impaired children (first in the US!); kept VIPS in strict accord with legal state and federal regulations; sought and maintained supplies, materials and trainings for instructional staff to meet/exceed national standards; and collaborated with local, state and national agencies and organizations.

Kathy's knowledge and collaborative skills have brought her memberships in numerous national, state and local educational leadership and advisory organizations such as the Prichard Committee for Educational Excellence, the International Preschool Symposium Cohort for Children with Blindness, the Council of Schools for the Blind, the Kentucky Governor's Council for Children with Disabilities, and the Indiana Interagency Coordinating Council.

Her interpersonal skills are both warm and accepting yet always professional. Kathy has proven herself to be a critical, integral part of the services VIPS provides to families and children with blindness and low vision and we are extremely pleased to call her our friend and colleague. Thank you, Kathy, for all you have done and continue to do for the children and families of VIPS and the VIPS staff.

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## **Thanks to Our Wonderful Volunteers**

VIPS Indiana

- We thank our Indiana Advisory Board member Robin Thoma and CHILL (Colleagues Helping Implement Lifelong Learning) for making and delivering these amazing concept books to give to our VIPS families.
- We are so grateful to Annie Hughes, co-founder of VIPS in Indiana, for volunteering to help set up and organize the Lending Library at the Family Resource Center. We love Ms. Annie and are lucky to have her expertise when it comes to young children with blindness/visual impairments.
- Thank you to the Department of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Riley Children's Hospital for bringing the donation of snacks to use at our family events and to stock the kitchen in our family hub! We were so excited to be able to give them a tour of our new Family Resource Center and teach them about Braille!
- Thank you to Steve DeVore for helping us put together furniture, hang

assorted items on the wall and even make cards. There is much to do around the Family Resource Center and we are so grateful for Steve's willing help!

- Thanks to the generous efforts of Rob and Meredith Howell, our beautifully designed HOPE holiday cards arrived across all three offices. Teams of people joined together to quickly, sort, stuff, address, stamp and mail this most critical piece of our annual giving campaigns.

#### VIPS Central Kentucky

- We greatly appreciate the time and efforts of our volunteers to make Pancakes with Santa so successful. Thanks to Shelby and Tinley Easton for teaching children how to braille and to members of UK's Delta Beta Chapter of the Delta Gamma Fraternity who led children in creating tactile ornaments, painting with jingle bells, and with other festive creations.

#### VIPS Louisville

- Thanks also to Kayli Hartlage, our intern from Holy Cross, for her work in the preschool classrooms.
- We are so thankful for the physical presence and skill set of Fran Woodward who continues to serve as a classroom volunteer for the Twos Classroom.
- Thanks to VIPS grad, Jamie Weedman, for helping make this issue accessible for blind and visually impaired readers.

#### **Meet Fran Woodward -- Volunteer Extraordinaire**

I began volunteering at VIPS in 2009, after I retired from working as a service coordinator with the First Steps program for twenty years. When I was deciding what I wanted to do after retirement, I thought about my years with First Steps, as well as the ten years before that when I taught young children who had special needs.

I realized VIPS was where I wanted to volunteer, because I had seen the children who were involved in VIPS make such great progress in learning and development while having so much fun!

One of my favorite things about volunteering with the playgroup for children who are two years old is seeing the children become more confident when they learn to do things that had been very challenging for them before. That's always exciting!

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## VIPS Announces 2021 Beacon Awards

Each year, VIPS hosts the Beacon Awards, recognizing volunteers and benefactors who serve as beacons of hope for VIPS and the children and families we serve. They are shining the lights of generosity. This year, the awards are virtual. Watch the VIPS Facebook page for individual presentations!

The Beacon Award recipients are:

- Individual Benefactor Awards

Veronica Mackin – Veronica, a fifth grader, has requested donations to VIPS Louisville in lieu of presents for her last several birthdays! Her latest donation was \$5,000!

Georgia Hocker – Georgia has been a generous supporter of VIPS services in Central Kentucky, with donations totaling over \$15,000. Her son was a former VIPS Central KY Advisory Council member and president.

- Individual Volunteer Awards

Laurie Roselle -- In the years since Laurie began to support VIPS Indiana, she has been responsible for the donation of thousands of dollars to VIPS. She has planned and organized FIVE Trivia Nights as well as a unique fundraiser called Tables That Bloom. She has played with VIPS children during parent activities, organized projects to make sensory items, and even donated \$8,000 from an auction of her personal treasures.

- Corporate Benefactor Awards

Caldwell Tanks, Inc. and Preload, LLC – Caldwell Tanks, Inc. & Preload, LLC have been VIPS donors since 2003. In recent years, during some very difficult economic times, this generous donor has not only continued to support and further our mission, but has generously increased their corporate gifts.

TWG -- The Whitsett Group (TWG) and its leader Tony Knoble believe in changing lives and building community and that couldn't be more apparent than in the partnership between TWG and VIPS. TWG offered VIPS Indiana space to expand our operations in a new building they were constructing to provide housing for elderly who are visually impaired. TWG donated over \$1.1 million in in-kind gifts. The facility is cutting edge in that it welcomes those with vision loss in such a thoughtful and thorough way. The VIPS Simon and Estelle Knoble Family Resource Center will be the gift that keeps on giving and changing lives.

- Parent Ambassador Award

Taylor and Ryan Gehring – Since becoming involved with VIPS Louisville in 2019 when their son, Wells, started receiving VIPS services, the Gehrings have been incredibly generous in sharing their time with other VIPS families and through Taylor’s service on the VIPS board. Through their employment with GE, VIPS has also been the beneficiary of increased generosity from this long-term corporate donor.



A lovely family photo of the Gehrings is shown above. Ryan, at left, dressed in a light blue shirt, holds Wells, their child who receives VIPS services. Wells wears the same light blue as his dad. Taylor, with thick, long, curly blond hair, wears a bright pink shirt. Their older son, Warren, stands next to his mom. All are smiling. They are outdoors in front of a large bush.

- Social Services Award

Holy Cross High School -- Since the fall of 2018, two Holy Cross students per school year have been spending their Tuesdays on our Louisville campus. Each week these students arrive on the Holy Cross bus ready to pitch in to help in VIPS Kids Town Preschool or on the administrative side of our agency, cheerfully undertaking whatever tasks are requested of them.

Kiwanis Club of Bloomington -- Since the inception of VIPS in Bloomington back in 2011, the wonderful members of the Kiwanis Club of Bloomington have been incredibly supportive of VIPS and the babies and toddlers with blindness/low vision we serve. Over the years they have made tactile items for the children, donated their time and treasure from their yearly fundraiser, Operation: Chili for Children, and have made numerous monetary contributions.

- VIPS Ambassador Awards

Irvin F. and Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation – A generous supporter of VIPS since 2007, the Etscorn Charitable Foundation has most recently blessed VIPS with a fleet of five vehicles to provide for tremendous cost savings as VIPS teachers travel over 250,000 miles per year delivering services throughout all of Kentucky and Indiana.

Fred B. and Opal S. Woosley Foundation – The Fred B. and Opal S. Woosley Foundation is a long-time, very generous supporter of VIPS' critical mission of providing early intervention to children with blindness or vision loss. Since their very first gift of \$2,000 in 1998, The Woosley Foundation has touched the lives of hundreds of VIPS children. Their total contribution to date of \$410,000 has funded family events, needed supplies, this newsletter, and additional program and staff costs.

- Collaborative Partner Awards

Lilly Endowment and Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust - Two Indianapolis organizations share this year's Collaborative Partner award because they were truly synchronous of one another. The Lilly Endowment and the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust helped propel the VIPS Indiana Envision the Future capital and operations campaign to the finish line with their combined donations. We are deeply honored to have both as our collaborative partners.

The VIPS and Lilly Endowment relationship funded a consultant whose analysis resulted in the launch of the VIPS capital campaign. After the capital campaign committee found success, a grant proposal to the Lilly Endowment resulted in a \$300,000 donation from the Lilly Endowment that helped close out the campaign, resulting in the building of the Family Resource Center.

The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust - NMPCT's founder, Nina Mason Pulliam, had a unique fondness for organizations that served the blind after

she herself had been temporarily blinded resulting in her designating blindness as an area of passion for her foundation. The Trust's relationship with VIPS began after it funded a much-needed teacher and supplies. After Trust administrators went on a home visit with a VIPS teacher, the Trust's generous funding of \$250,000 was awarded, memorializing Nina's legacy in the building of the new VIPS Family Resource Center.

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## **Time to Submit Art to the APH InSights Art Program**

The American Printing House for the Blind is currently accepting entries through April 22, 2022 for the InSight ART Program.

For the 2022 season, all artists -- students and adults -- may e-mail a digital picture (JPG) of their artwork with the entry form for the judging, instead of the original artwork. If the artwork is selected for the exhibit, we will ask for the artwork to be shipped at that time.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Rob directly at [rguillen@aph.org](mailto:rguillen@aph.org). You may complete an application at the link below:

<https://insights-art.org/enter-the-contest/>.

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## **Notes of Interest**

Some local libraries are welcoming children with visual impairments and striving to meet their needs.

The Johnson County, Indiana Greenwood Public Library has started a new program in which they create sensory kits. VIPS Indiana staff members have participated in their latest kit that is all about Braille! A video featuring our very own VIPS Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision, Ms. Amy, has been created for Greenwood Library users to learn about what is in the sensory kit so that you can check it out from the library. If you would like to make your own kit, this website elow bprovides great ideas:

<https://youtu.be/Mk0wkeo4Kts>.

Any GPL library cardholder can now find the kits in the Kids' Department, or search for them and place a hold on the library's catalog at <https://www.greenwoodlibrary.us/>. All Johnson County residents should be eligible for a library card.

Kentucky's Campbell County Public Library has a wonderful project with funding from the local Lions Club to create book kits specifically for children who are blind and visually impaired. VIPS teachers/interventionists, Tammy Maynard and Dixie Marz, have consulted with library staff to locate materials to go with each book. See a video below:

<https://www.cc-pl.org/early-literacy-services#play>.

The American Foundation for the Blind recorded an amazing performance to celebrate their 100 years of "creating a world of no limits for people who are blind or low vision." The Art of Inclusion: AFB100 Concert and Celebration features jazz, hip-hop, and Grammy awarded singers as well as students from the New York Institute for Special Education Choir. It includes a beautiful rendition of What a Wonderful World featuring hiphop artist Aloe Blacc, jazz pianist Matthew Whitaker and students from the Institute. You can read a transcript of the event and listen to What a Wonderful World at the links below:

<https://www.afb.org/afb100/art-inclusion>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVIiuPRhLqI?em-ci=18c3453b-df52-ec11-9820-a085fc31ac93&emdi=5fcc58b6-b75d-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&ceid=8257125&contactdata=iKQUWMDIb0vXclyXPUQ-39FO3q6SVKi%25252Bf1QtqIMjSP2FJSjCFoopR%25252BPHDWnxRTDgY&-sourceid=N422DEC1EM1>

Mattel has created a Helen Keller Doll as part of its Barbie® Inspiring Women Series. The Inspiring Women™ Series pays tribute to incredible heroines of their time; courageous women who took risks, changed rules and paved the way for generations of girls to dream bigger than ever before. After becoming the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, Helen Keller attained countless lifetime achievements as a renowned author, speaker, educator and advocate for the blind, deaf, and deafblind. Barbie® celebrates Helen's courageous determination with a collectible Barbie® doll created in her likeness. This fully poseable Helen Keller Barbie® doll comes dressed in a style inspired by Helen's time as a student in the early 1900s and carries a book with molded braille on its cover. Designed in partnership with the National Federation of the Blind, displayable packaging includes

braille to create easy readability for sighted and non-sighted fans alike. Helen Keller Barbie® doll makes a great gift for Barbie® collectors and kids ages 6 years old and up. Includes doll stand and Certificate of Authenticity. Other dolls in the series include Rosa Parks, Susan B. Anthony and Maya Angelou. Purchases can be made at the links below:

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08J4HYSRQ/ref=cm\\_sw\\_r\\_cp\\_api\\_glt\\_i\\_QEEVMNFYDY3A2YVN6TVE](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08J4HYSRQ/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_api_glt_i_QEEVMNFYDY3A2YVN6TVE)

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/781107423>.

APH FamilyConnect and The Chicago Lighthouse are pleased to offer this virtual support group for parents and families of children who are blind or visually impaired. These monthly sessions, held the first Wednesday of the month, are for families to connect with and learn from each other about the joys, challenges, and adventures of raising children with visual impairments and blindness. Sessions are scheduled for:

Apr. 6, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

May 4, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

June 1, 2022, 7:20 p.m.

You can register below:

<https://aph.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0rcOyhrzgrHNKIcMlgqoSgQtAOxsH-jbKX3>.

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## Recent Grants & Donations

VIPS has been blessed with the following donations that make it possible to provide the programs that are so critical to the children and families serve.

VIPS Kentucky

- \$97,000 from the KSB Charitable Foundation for the Early Childhood Intervention program, the Lynn Family 5K for VIPS, and the Family Services program
- \$47,500 from Kosair Charities for teacher salaries
- \$27,231 from the George S. Weeks Trust for Early Childhood Intervention in Fayette and Bourbon counties
- \$25,000 from the Irvin F. & Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation for a fleet vehicle
- \$15,020 from the IPA Foundation for SMART Boards in the Kids Town pre-school classrooms

- \$15,000 from the Cralle Foundation for general operating support
- \$15,000 from the Fred B. & Opal S. Woosley Foundation for the Family Services program
- \$10,000 from Caldwell Tanks, Inc. & Preload, LLC for sponsorship of the VIPS Gala
- \$5,998 from the King's Daughters and Sons Foundation of Kentucky for Teller acuity cards
- \$4,178 from the King's Daughters and Sons Foundation of Kentucky for IT
- \$4,080.96 from the Jacob C. Koch Charitable Trust for iPads, screen protectors, cases, and internet services.
- \$2,000 from William Barth Foundation for Family Retreat

Thanks to Family & Children's Place, we have received 200 print-braille books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Family & Children's received the books through an anonymous donor and shared them with the children and families of VIPS.

To see the wonderful new appliances provided by GE, and how they benefit VIPS children, checkout the video below.

[https://www.wdrb.com/ge-appliances-partners-with-louisville-based-company-to-help-visually-impaired-children/video\\_f3f8e648-7878-5180-839f-82f719becd6a.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share%0D](https://www.wdrb.com/ge-appliances-partners-with-louisville-based-company-to-help-visually-impaired-children/video_f3f8e648-7878-5180-839f-82f719becd6a.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share%0D)

#### VIPS Indiana

- \$50,000 from the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation for the Sensory Garden (story on next page)
- \$20,000 from United Way of Central Indiana for teacher salaries.
- \$5,000 from Costco Wholesale Corporation for our Early Childhood Intervention Program.
- \$5,000 from the Nicholas H. Noyes Jr. Memorial Foundation for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Marion County, IN

Thanks to Eric Bruun for taking Regional Director, Meredith Howell, on a \$1,000 shopping spree to get supplies for the new VIPS IN Family Resource Center.

We had so much fun at the first-ever VIPS Topgolf Tournament in Fishers, IN on Sunday, February 6! There was a great turnout, delicious food, amazing silent auction items, and of course a lively tournament that resulted in a shoot-off tie-breaker! We want to give a huge thank you to TWG and The

Spectacle Shoppe for sponsoring this event that ended up raising thousands of dollars for Indiana's youngest children who are blind or visually impaired. We hope you'll join us at our next Topgolf event!

## **VIPS Indiana Receives \$50,000 for Sensory Garden**

Thanks to the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, the VIPS Indiana Sensory Garden will soon be a reality. Dr. James Lemler, the Foundation's President said their support was in recognition of what a unique space and facility VIPS Indiana has built for the children and families VIPS serves. "This garden," he said, "offers plantings and art that can be accessible to all of the senses of children and adults who enjoy it."

With features such as plants with tactile components and vibrant scents, indigenous trees, tall grasses, an orientation and mobility track, and more, the sensory garden will be a destination spot that VIPS parents will be able to call their own. "Because a child who is blind or visually impaired must learn about the world through various senses, the organization felt it was imperative that the Sensory Garden was incorporated into the design," said Meredith Howell, Regional Director of VIPS Indiana.

The sensory garden was designed by local outdoor architectural firm, Browning Day. Construction of the sensory garden is currently underway.

## **Community Partners Made Sure the Holidays Were Happy for VIPS Families**

Toys for Tots donated over 200 toys to make sure that every child served by VIPS Indiana received a holiday gift. The real blessing is that the items were personally selected in order to assure they are able to be enjoyed and used by our children.

VIPS Central Kentucky is so grateful to Forcht Bank for once again inviting us to participate in Pancakes with Santa on December 11. In addition to providing a wonderful time for VIPS families, over \$1000 in donations were raised to benefit VIPS early intervention services.

Thank you to the Louisville Downtown Lion's Club for their generous donation that made the VIPS Louisville Holiday Party so merry! The most exciting part was, of course, a visit from Santa, thanks to Lion Mark Webster who played our Santa Claus!

Generous partners stepped in to make dreams a reality for families that

needed special support this holiday season. The American Printing House for the Blind adopted two families, the Louisville Metro Fire Department supported one family and the Louisville Delta Gamma Alumna filled the wish list for another family.

### **Holiday Hope Campaign**

Our Hope Holiday Campaign was a tremendous success, bringing in \$141,144, thanks to your wonderful generosity. We exceeded last year's giving level and reached 94% of our very ambitious goal of \$150,500. Thank you so much!!!

### **VIPS Receives Guidestar Platinum Seal**

VIPS has been awarded a "Platinum Seal" (the highest level) from GuideStar, a division of Candid. Every year, millions of nonprofits spend trillions of dollars around the world. Candid finds out where that money comes from, where it goes, and why it matters. Candid's data tools on nonprofits, foundations, and grants are the most comprehensive in the world. Foundation Center and GuideStar joined forces to become Candid in 2019. Recognition with the Platinum Seal is a high honor. To view VIPS Guidestar profile go to: <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/61-1061973>.

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### **Upcoming Fundraising Events**

VIPS & the Indiana Brewery Running Series  
Indianapolis  
Ash & Elm Cider Co.  
April 9, 11 a.m.

You can support VIPS while enjoying this 5k-ish, fun run event, which starts and ends at this awesome taproom in Downtown Indianapolis! Run, walk, jog - whatever goes! Complete the course and celebrate with us and a FREE, local craft brew at the finish line. You can register below:

<https://z-p3-upload.facebook.com/events/986430055243778/>

Kentucky Gives Day  
All Kentucky  
Tuesday, May 10

Please donate on May 10 and help VIPS Central Kentucky!! KY Gives Day

2022 is the 10th annual statewide day of giving! Nonprofits such as VIPS register for this day of giving and ask their donors to participate. There are often contests, bonus funding if donors meet certain criteria such as the first ten donors at 5 a.m., etc. along with other enhancements.

## VIPS Gala

Louisville

May, 21, 2022, 6:30 - 10:30 p.m.

DINNER • AUCTION • DRINKS • MUSIC

VIPS is hosting our annual dinner and auction at the Louisville Boat Club (4200 River Road, Louisville KY 40207). The past two years, this event was held virtually, and we are excited to announce our plans for an in-person Annual VIPS Gala to commence our 2022 events calendar.

- Every raffle ticket wins in our Bourbon Pull Event
- Chance to win items in the silent & live auctions
- All proceeds of the event will go toward VIPS

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out! We are accepting in-kind Bourbon bottle donations, for our annual Bourbon Pull Event. Please contact Ashley Ford at the email below to make an in-kind donation.

[aford@vips.org](mailto:aford@vips.org)

## Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk

Indianapolis

Sunday, May 22

We have a new location this year! In the past, it has been held along the downtown canal in Indianapolis. This year, join us at Crown Hill Cemetery, the largest green space inside the Indianapolis beltway. Crown Hill isn't just a cemetery -- it's an Indiana landmark that is visited by thousands of people each year! We are looking forward to a scenic walk and raising funds for Indiana's youngest children who are blind or visually impaired! We'd love it if your family joined us. Here's what you can do:

- Sign up to walk! By signing up, you are committing to walk at Crown Hill with us, or in your neighborhood, at a park or wherever you choose -- on behalf of VIPS and/or to raise funds to support our critical programming. So what's next? Set a goal amount and start asking family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to donate on your behalf!
- Start a team! When you sign up, you have the option to start a team and build your own profile, allowing you to start your very own fundraising

team on which your family and friends can register to walk and/or make donations. This is a great way to get your family and friends excited about raising money to support our VIPS families!

- Make a donation! We get it. Not everyone will want to attend this fundraiser or participate virtually but making a donation will make an impact. Every dollar counts!

You can do all of this by visiting the link below:

[www.walkingfordreams.org](http://www.walkingfordreams.org)

Contact Meredith at the email below for more info

[mhowell@vips.org](mailto:mhowell@vips.org)

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## VIPS Wish Lists

VIPS Indiana

We are in need of many items for our new Family Resource Center!

Amazon Wish List:

<http://a.co/aeRar2N>

VIPS Central KY

12 clear plastic tubs with locking lids (66 qt)

Amazon Wish List:

[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/RX9MO78574TY?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/RX9MO78574TY?ref_=wl_share)

VIPS Louisville

Amazon Wish List

<https://a.co/0zrxZja>

From Kaplan:

<https://www.kaplanco.com/>

-Butterfly Life Cycle Specimen Set \$33.95

-Solar System View Finder \$19.99

-Insect View Finder \$19.99

- Sea-Life View Finder \$19.99
  - Life Cycles View Finder \$19.99
  - Birds View Finder \$19.99
- From Lakeshore Learning:

<https://www.lakeshorelearning.com>

- Sea Life Specimen Center \$34.99
- Reptiles Specimen Center \$34.99
- Birds Specimen Center \$34.99
- Moth Life Cycle Specimen Set \$49.99
- Sea Life Specimen Set \$49.99
- Insect Specimen Set \$49.99
- Plant Specimen Set \$49.99
- BlueTooth dual pairing Speaker set
- White construction paper
- Adhesive Hook and Loop Velcro, Black, 1-Inch x 10-Foot Industrial Grade and Wear and Tear Resistant
- Colored duct tape
- Large paint brushes (large handles)
- Wet Ones Antibacterial Hands and Face Wipes Fresh Scent
- Natural Care Unscented Baby Wipes, Sensitive, Hypoallergenic, Water-Based
- Cottonelle Ultra ComfortCare Toilet Paper, Septic-Safe
- Sparkle Paper Towels
- Clorox Wipes & Clorox Bleach
- Zippered plastic bags, gallon, quart & sandwich sizes
- Facial tissue
- Lysol spray
- Disposable gloves
- Bath Towels/gray or beige (no hand towels or washcloths needed)

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## **VIPS Non-Discrimination Policy**

VIPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law in policies or practices related to: children and/or families served; employment, contractors, or volunteers; and membership on the VIPS Board of Directors or advisory boards.

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

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