
Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS)

Annual Report



July 2021–June 2022

www.vips.org
Kentucky • Indiana

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Letter from the Director



Diane Nelson
VIPS Executive Director

Another year is in the books at VIPS and we look forward to highlighting what we proudly and successfully faced despite the many challenges we were presented with last fiscal year relating to a tough economy and the continued fallout from COVID's omicron variant. With your generous support, we continue to be what we call #VIPStrong and because of that, have so very many things to celebrate!

We ended 2021/2022 serving 672 children and families. Although our numbers still have not returned to pre-COVID levels, more and more referrals are once again being made.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was our April 2022 Grand Opening of our new home – the Simon & Estelle Knoble VIPS Family Resource Center located at 1212 Southeastern Avenue in Indianapolis. This beautiful 6,300-square-foot facility is a place of welcome and comfort for families learning of their child's vision loss diagnosis.

Another huge milestone was the launch of our "Feeling This Life" podcast as part of a collaboration with Dr. Cathy Smyth and The Anchor Center for Blind Children in Colorado. This podcast has allowed us to share our knowledge and reach families across the United States and 17 other countries.

We continue to be blessed by the Irvin F. and Alice S. Etscorn Foundation who generously added two more fleet vehicles (now up to seven) for our travels across the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky and the State of Indiana.

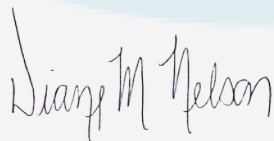
Since it has been almost 20 years since we first moved to 1906 Goldsmith Lane in Louisville it was necessary to update our security cameras & monitoring system, the HVAC units, our technology wiring, and all our appliances (thanks to the generosity of GE), and make much needed updates to our Kosair Charities Kids Town Preschool playground. We feel refreshed!

We continue to expand our VIPS family with the hiring this year of more teachers, teacher assistants, and direct interventionists. This year we also added our very first full-time database coordinator, a full-time volunteer coordinator in Indiana, and are planning on adding a Development Manager in 2022/2023. If you know someone wanting to join the VIPS family, please send them our way!

We were very proud to receive the Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics as a Finalist in the Non-Profit category. As they said, VIPS "set a high mark for excellence...also recognizing the company's leaders who demonstrate a high level of personal character and ensure the organization's practices meet the highest standards of ethics and consequently generate trust."

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 2023.

With love and appreciation,



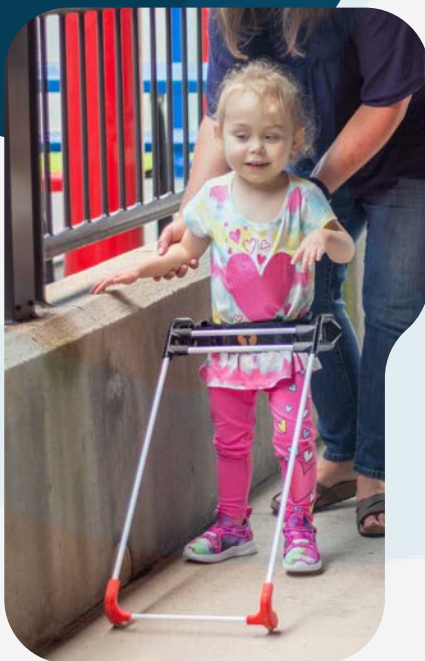
About

Our Team



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.



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, in April of 2022 we had the grand opening of our new home in Indianapolis, The Simon & Estelle Knoble VIPS Family Resource Center, located at 1212 Southeastern Avenue. This state-of-the-art facility will help us better serve children with blindness and low vision across Indiana.

Mission in Action

Story by Melisa, mother to Jacob

Jacob joined our family via domestic adoption in September 2020, at 10 months of age. At the height of the global pandemic, we had the delight and honor of welcoming our son, Jacob, home forever! What a joy!

Before Jacob's adoption, we were aware that he had experienced global developmental delays and had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy and failure to thrive. However, after transferring all of his medical care to our closest children's hospital following his adoption, Jacob was comprehensively assessed and received a diagnosis of Spinocerebellar Ataxia, Type 4, as well as other accompanying medical diagnoses, of which one was CVI and several brain anomalies, including a retinocerebellar cyst, white matter volume loss, and thinning of his corpus callosum.

After several hospitalizations, team assessments, and medical appointments, Jacob now is medically stable, thriving, and developing. He is dependent on a G-tube for all feedings, meds, and hydration, has severe epilepsy and is dependent for all mobility and activities of daily living. Jacob, now almost three years old, resides in eastern Kentucky with his family, which includes his parents and three older siblings. He is the joy of our lives and spending our days with him is the highlight of this season of family life.

Jacob loves his daily routines, which include morning playtime, therapy sessions at home, traveling in the car and out in our community, and spending time with family and friends. He is funny, mischievous, and playful. He smiles and laughs hysterically, and loves going for long walks with his family in his wheelchair near our home. His dog, Pippen, brings him lots of joy and fun. After Jacob came home, I (Melisa) left the full-time workforce as an occupational therapist to become Jacob's full-time caregiver, playmate, and mama. Although I had primarily worked with the elderly population throughout the last 24 years of my career, I did have just enough experience in pediatric therapy services to know the value of early intervention and know the right questions to ask to initiate services for Jacob.

I began aggressively researching options for assessment and treatment for him, knowing that traveling the four hours each way to our local children's hospital was not feasible or reasonable for long-term services. After initiating First Steps Early Intervention Services, I reached out to VIPS in Louisville via email to determine if there were any options for virtual services, and to my surprise, they indicated that they had a service provider that lived in my county! Who knew?

We worked with VIPS and First Steps to coordinate services with Ms. Bekah Allen, who became our Developmental Interventionist and VIPS service provider. Ms. Bekah has blessed our family tremendously. She has provided innovative services, did research to assist us in locating equipment and services that would benefit us, as well as accompanying us virtually to Jacob's CVI Team Assessment at our children's hospital all while contributing and assisting in implementing strategies at home. She worked to acquire Jacob a lightbox, which has been invaluable for his development and learning. Ms. Bekah has been so playful and interactive with Jacob...he doesn't AT ALL realize he is working on skills! She has assisted with suggestions about home modifications to assist with his vision as well as identifying toys that would allow him to be successful with play and development. Once she taught me, I ran with it and we established a great repertoire of stimulatory toys and an environment that has helped him thrive visually and developmentally.

One particular emphasis that Ms. Bekah had was ensuring that we understood about simplifying Jacob's visual background and environment to allow him to thrive visually. We made a backdrop and changed his play floor mat to more simplistic, dark colors to allow the colors of his toys to pop! He loves it and has come alive with his independent play skills since we made the change.

I strongly advise other parents, physicians, and therapy services providers in the eastern Kentucky area to make referrals to the VIPS program. This service, in my estimation, is grossly underutilized in the eastern Kentucky region. In an area where services can be much more difficult to navigate, identify, and utilize, this service is accessible and so helpful! We are so thankful that we have been connected with VIPS and will always be grateful for the services of our provider, Ms. Bekah Allen.



Education & 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 is a weekly parent-child playgroup held at the Central Kentucky office. It provides hands-on activities in a social setting that lays the foundation for future learning.



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

Podcast: "Feeling this life"



Presented by **Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) & Anchor Center for Blind Children**, this podcast dives deep into the triumphs, challenges, and strategies that are part of the lives of those who care for young children with blindness and visual impairment, building an audio community of families, caregivers, and early interventionists

Co-Hosts: Dr. Cathy Smyth, Paige Maynard, & Jenny Castenir

E1 What to expect when taking your child to the eye doctor

E2 What to expect in your daily life with a child with a visual impairment

E3 What to expect when you need to speak up for your child

E4 What to expect when helping your child learn to get from place to place

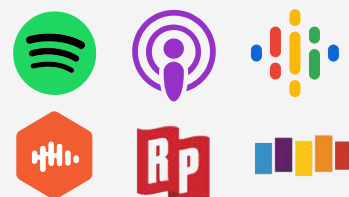
E5 What to expect when fostering your child's social skills

1,083

TOTAL PLAYS

18 **TOTAL COUNTRIES**

Available on



Financial Data

REVENUE

Contributions & Grants	\$1,607,931
In-Kind Contributions	\$1,110,345
Program Service Fees	\$886,530
Special Events	\$333,465
Net Investment Return	(\$121,497)
Gain on disposal of property & equipment	\$3,560
Misc Income	\$37,831
Rental Income	\$4,050

Total Revenue	\$3,862,215
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EXPENSES

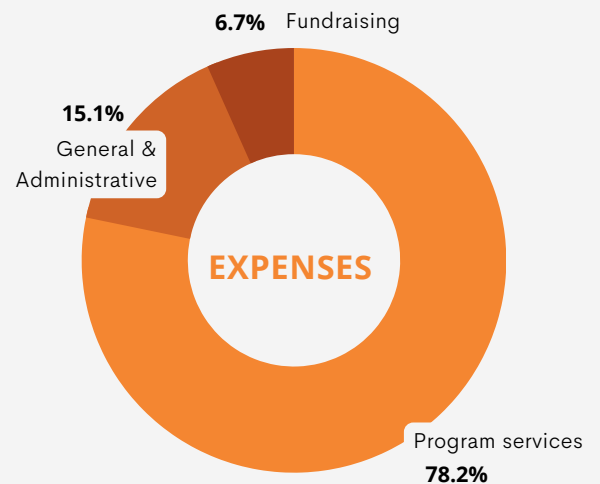
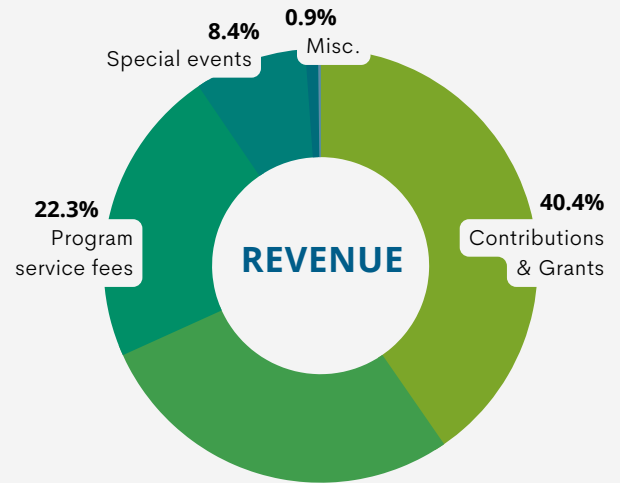
Program Services	\$2,119,239
General & Administrative	\$408,560
Fundraising	\$180,903

Total Expenses	\$2,708,702
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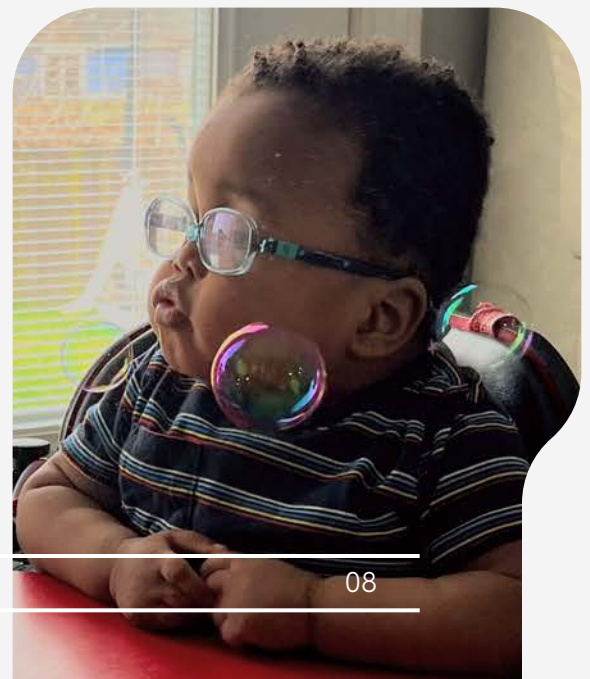
NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$4,943,496
Temporarily Restricted	\$312,528
Permanently Restricted	\$332,328

Ending Net Assets	\$5,588,352
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VIPS



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VIPS Team Members

Current Board Officers & Directors

Nathan Holladay, President
Mike Johnson, Vice President
John Anders, Treasurer
Taylor Gehring, Secretary
Virren Malhotra, Indiana Representative
on the Executive Committee

Board Members

Jennifer Arington
Sharon Bensinger, Founder of VIPS
Aaron Benson
Jerry Bizer, O.D.
Jelisa Chatman
Theresa Connolly
Jena Fahlbush
Alejandro Erick Franco
Paul Frazier
Ashima Gupta, M.D.
Paresh Gupta, Pharmacy
Arvetta Jideonwo
Emily Krauser
Donna Brostek Lee, Ph.D.
Ellen Prizant
Mark Stiebling

Current VIPS Employees

Diane M. Nelson, Executive Director
Kathy Mullen, Director of Education
Kim Berghoff, Blind/Low Vision Specialist
Suzanne Bigbee, Classroom Assistant
Jenny Castenir, Family Services Coordinator
Carol Dahmke, HR & Office Manager
Kristan Decker, Preschool Assistant
Rita DeVore, Office & Volunteer Coordinator
Rebekah Dunda, Classroom Assistant
Kelly Easton, Intake Coordinator and Central
Kentucky Regional Director
Ashley Emmons, Teacher of the Visually
Impaired & Certified O&M Specialist
Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects
Michelle Flora, Blind/Low Vision Specialist

Ashley Ford, Event Coordinator
Marchelle Hampton, Classroom Assistant
Debbie Hardesty, Classroom Assistant
Pamela Holladay, Teacher of the Visually
Impaired
Meredith Howell, Indiana Regional Director
Brian Justice, Building, Grounds, &
Maintenance
Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist
Dixie Marz, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Paige Maynard, Teacher of the Visually
Impaired
Staci Maynard, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Tammy Maynard, Developmental Interventionist
Juanita Miles, VIPS Kids Town Preschool
Director
Jan Moseley, Visual Impairment Specialist
Amy Nichols, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision
Brenda Pharris, Classroom Assistant
Sarah Potter, Classroom Assistant
Elaine Reed, Developmental Interventionist &
2's Teacher
Tommie Roesch, Teacher of Blind/Low Vision &
Certified O&M Specialist
Ashley Ross, Development Coordinator
Joni Santiago, Classroom Assistant
Kirsten Schmidt, Guest Relations/Volunteer
Coordinator
Julia Sleder, Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Laurie Smiley, of Blind/Low Vision
Mary Smyth, Grant Writer
Emma Strange, Classroom Assistant
David Sterne, TBLV, Indiana First Steps &
Cultural Quality Assurance Coordinator
Emily Thornton, Database Coordinator
Malinda Vogel, Classroom Assistant
Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist
Maury Weedman, Maintenance Manager
Christina Welsh, Controller

Contact Information



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