

visability

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We Are Family

By Kathy Mullen, VIPS Director of Education and Pauletta Feldman, Special Projects

Ask any early interventionist and they will tell you that siblings make the very best therapists for a child who has special needs. Big sisters are relentless. Little brothers do not take no for an answer. That is only one way families are involved in the world of VIPS.

Let me just say: **We are family!**

VIPS was founded by Sharon Bensinger in 1985. Sharon was wise enough to secure her dear friend, *Maud Fliegelman*, to serve as the leader of VIPS first Board of Directors. Maud's daughter, *Ellen Prizant*, continues with the family legacy by serving on our board today; when policy dictates she take a break from the board, Ellen fills her calendar with VIPS committee work.

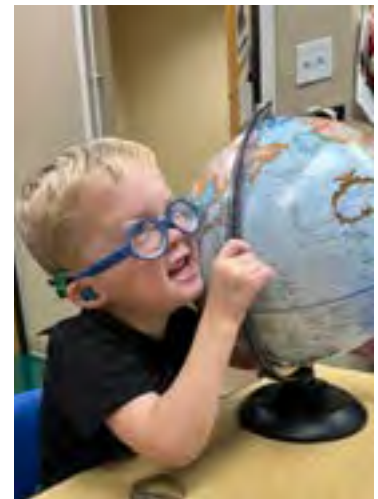
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Feeling This Life Podcasts

Since Feeling This Life gets posted through Spotify (along with other platforms) they gave us our own wrap-up, showing us data about our listeners. *This podcast has reached many families from all over the world and that's pretty awesome.* Take a look at some of the info we received from Spotify.

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VIPS 2022 Annual Report



[Check Out What's Going on in the World of VIPS](#)



Mission Statement

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

We Are Family

Continued from front page.

Our current Board President, **Nathan Holladay**, is the son of VIPS TVI/DI **Pam Holladay**. Nathan credits getting to know VIPS as a child with his dedication to VIPS today. Also, for the first time, a VIPS alumnus is a member of the VIPS Board, **Paul Frazier**, who graduated from VIPS in 1997.

VIPS's first Family Services Coordinator was **Pauletta Feldman**, mother to one of the first children served by VIPS, Jamie Weedman. (As a matter of fact, every VIPS Family Services Coordinator since has been a former VIPS parent!) You will still find Pauletta around, serving as VIPS Special Projects Coordinator. Jamie's father, **Maury Weedman**, has been long employed by VIPS as well as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and our facilities lead. The Weedman-Feldman family is an institution within our institution.

Our current Family Services Coordinator, **Jenny Castenir**, is also a former VIPS mom. Hannah, Jenny's daughter, received VIPS services in her Elizabethtown home and is a 2018 graduate of VIPS Kids Town Preschool.

Carol Dahmke, VIPS office manager, has called VIPS home longer than any other full time team member. She joined the VIPS family in 2000, feeling called as the mother of two young men diagnosed with visual impairments; Carol's father had the same diagnosis. Carol's grandson, Tyler, is another graduate of VIPS Kids Town Preschool, where he received specialized service to address his visual impairment. Mitch, Carol's husband, works at the Kentucky School for the Blind.

VIPS Indiana was founded through the extraordinary efforts of **Rebecca Davis**, mom of Eliza. Living in Bloomington when Eliza was born, Rebecca quickly discovered the services her daughter needed were not available in Indiana. She travelled to Louisville so Eliza could attend VIPS Kids Town Preschool. She was determined that other Indiana families should not have to undergo such hardships and worked to see to it that VIPS services were available in Indiana.

VIPS Indiana Regional Director, **Meredith Howell**, is the mother of VIPS graduate, Lola. Her experience as a VIPS mom led Meredith to plant her roots deep in our mission. She brought along her husband, Rob, who supports us through building and maintaining our website. Not to be outdone, Meredith's mother, **Rita DeVore**, has moved from the role of VIPS grandma to the position of VIPS Indiana Volunteer Coordinator and "Jill of all trades."

Paige and Staci Maynard spend workdays and holidays together at family gatherings. Paige is a Teacher of the Visually

Impaired/Developmental Interventionist (TVI/DI) serving children full-time in the community. Staci, also a TVI/DI, is the lead teacher in the Red Room in Kids Town Preschool; Staci also serves children through the Kentucky Early Intervention System. The two ladies are also sisters-in-law. **Chad**, Paige's husband and Staci's brother, leads a cleaning crew made up of even more Maynard family members each week in the cleaning of our VIPS Louisville campus.

Over the years, we have had several VIPS parents who joined their children in VIPS Kids Town Preschool as classroom assistants, former preschool director, or substitute. Our newest classroom assistant, **Sarah Potter**, is the mother of two former sighted peers who attended preschool at VIPS. Sarah is also Kathy's cousin! In addition to Sarah, currently working in Kids Town Preschool are **Suzanne Bigbee**, grandmother of VIPS grad Vance, a part-time classroom assistant, **Joni Santiago**, mom of VIPS Grad Connor and full-time classroom assistant, and **Charlene Flores**, mom of Avron, a classroom substitute. **Marchelle Hampton** came to VIPS within just weeks of the passing of her beloved son, Zacariah, who had disabilities.

Team members have entrusted the VIPS Kids Town Preschool team to educate their own family members. On any given day, you will find VIPS team members' children, grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews (Great ones, too!) in our preschool classrooms. Parents tell their friends about our school and our VIPS family grows even more.

Throughout VIPS history, many other parents and grandparents of VIPS children or relatives of VIPS staff have served on the VIPS Board of Directors and/or have worked at VIPS in a variety of roles.

VIPS Louisville has welcomed many VIPS parents as staff since 1989, including:

- **Robin Frazier**, mother of Paul (a current board member), started as a board member, then became our first Development Coordinator, a role she held for many years.
- **Mary Anne Reynolds**, mother of Ashley who has Retinopathy of Prematurity, became a VIPS interventionist, then a TVI; she is now VI Program Specialist for JCPS.
- **Judy Goldring**, mother of Ross, was an interventionist and PEP program teacher for many years.
- **Maria Jones**, who is visually impaired and a TVI, had three children go through VIPS (Kenny, Jr., Alicia, and Cameron); she became Family Services Coordinator and a VIPS preschool teacher. She now teaches at KSB.
- **Melissa Evers** was getting her TVI when she became Addison's mom – Addison has albinism; she did early intervention and taught preschool at VIPS before going to KSB several years later.
- **Melanie Peskoe** (mother of VIPS grads Megan and Peyton) is a visually impaired mom who served as Family

Services Coordinator for a time.

- **Jayne Seif**, whose daughters, Taryn and Riley, share her visual impairment, worked as a preschool assistant.
- **Martha Hack**, mom of VIPS child, JD, was a VIPS staff member for many years, serving as Family Services Coordinator and then Development Coordinator.
- **Greg Dutton**, father of Rachel, served on the VIPS board for many years; **Jenny Dutton**, Greg's wife, served a period as interim Education Coordinator until Kathy Mullen took the position.
- **Julie Broyles**, mother of Sarah, was a VIPS interventionist; she is now a TVI for JCPS.
- **Jeanette Buttler**, mom of Darcy, worked several years in the VIPS development office.
- **Andrea Bayard**, who was a dearly loved receptionist, had two grandchildren with visual impairments who lived in another state.
- **Brittany Clarkson**, mother of Addy, served as Receptionist, Volunteer Coordinator and Family Services Coordinator for several years.
- **Ashley May**, mom of Pyper, was a Classroom Assistant in Kids Town Preschool for a few years.
- **Kristin Horlander**, Maddy's mom, worked in Kids Town Preschool, becoming its Director for a few years.
- **Shai Mullins**, mom of VIPS grad Niyelle, was a classroom assistant when son Levi was in Kids Town Preschool.
- **Shelby Birchler and Valerie Toles** (niece and sister of VIPS Executive Director, Diane Nelson) have worked in Kids Town Preschool.

VIPS Central Kentucky has also tapped into the skills of parents whose children have been served by the program.

- **Mary Jane Taylor**, mother of Hannah, was the first VIPS CK Family Services Coordinator.
- Subsequent Family Services Coordinators included by **Adrienne Clark**, **Joi Jones**, mother of Austin, **Tracy Jackson**, mother of Blade, and **Jill Haas**, mother of Sophie.
- **Rebecca Chin**, mother of William, was an assistant with Little Learners.

Wow! That's a lot of VIPS family involvement in the daily operations of VIPS throughout its history, with VIPS family members playing a role alongside other staff and board members in policy formation and in establishing the culture of family-first service that makes VIPS such a special place.

Hopefully you've heard before that once a VIPS family, always a VIPS family. As you can see, that is very true in more ways than one. Like all families, all are welcome at our table. VIPS knows we would not be the same without YOUR FAMILY being a part of our family tree, too!

Feeling This Life

Continued from front page

A look at the numbers for *Feeling This Life* from the Spotify data analysis.



Recently added *Feeling This Life* episodes:

“You’re not fixing it but you can fix the way you think about it,” with Amanda Jaksha Release Date, February 6

Dr. Cathy talks with Amanda Jaksha, mom to Ava, about embracing life when parenting a child with complex needs. Amanda shares vast wisdom and perspective about what it means to embrace life as a parent and about how to help your child thrive. Jenny, Paige, and Dr. Cathy then reflect about Amanda's attitude and story, the impact of involving family in home visits and therapy, taking breaks, and not vacuuming for your home-based providers.

“The Great IDEA Game Show,” with Megan Kuussalo and Sonnie Anderson Release Date: March 6

Have you ever felt confused, overwhelmed, or lost when it comes to the ins and outs of your child's transition to school? This installment of *Feeling This Life* is for you! Through this silly episode, Megan and Sonnie, both moms to preschoolers with visual impairments, go head-to-head to answer as many questions as they can about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Kathy Mullen, director of education at VIPS, shares everything a family needs to know to be empowered for

the transition from early intervention to school based services.

Follow us on Facebook @Feelingthislifepodcast and Instagram @Feelingthislife.

The 33rd VIPS Family Retreat

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The 33rd annual VIPS Family Retreat, November 4-5, held on the Louisville campus, buzzed with excitement as VIPS families from three offices and two states were “welcomed to camp,” beginning Friday night with a meet-and-greet dessert social. Families from more than 50 miles away spent the night at the nearby Holiday Inn. Participating families were asked to pay a \$25 registration fee and \$25 toward their hotel room; of course scholarships were available as needed.

Saturday was a day of learning for the parents as they attended sessions held at Sullivan University’s Gardiner Lane meeting center nearby, with lunch and a buffet dinner provided by the Sullivan culinary students. This annual collaboration is truly a marvelous blessing; we always feel so welcomed by the Sullivan team.

Throughout the day, parents were treated to several presentations, starting with Meredith Howell, VIPS Indiana Regional Director, who shared her challenges and successes as the parent of VIPS grad, Lola.

Next was a panel discussion that included adults with blindness and educators led by Amy Nichols, VIPS Indiana Teacher of Blind/Low Vision. Panelists included: Abby Hodge, braille teacher at the KY Office of the Blind (OFB), and husband Joe, who teaches IT at OFB; Indiana Regional Director, Meredith Howell; VIPS Family Services Coordinator, Jenny Castenir; Tommie Roesch, VIPS Indiana Orientation and Mobility Specialist; and VIPS Director of Education, Kathy Mullen. There was no specific topic of discussion for the panel; instead, parents could ask panelists whatever they wanted to know. By far, most questions were for the Hodges who both have a visual impairment. They told stories of their lives growing up and their lives today as well as things their parents and other adults did that they thought were helpful to their success.

The parents were then led through blindfolded O & M instructional strategies/games by VIPS Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Tommie Roesch, VIPS Indiana, and Ashley Emmons, VIPS Louisville, to help them better understand how to help their children with the freedom of safe movement.

Parents finished the day with Art Therapist, Shawna Dellecave, who stressed the importance of self-care and how to keep that in focus during life’s difficult times, as she led them in creating marbled art cards.

A parent got some instruction in the techniques of Orientation & Mobility.

While parents were learning, VIPS children and their siblings were having a wonderful time attending VIPS Kids’ Camp in VIPS Kids Town! They were in the expert care of VIPS instructional and administrative staff, volunteers and a registered nurse. Children were divided by age groups into five classrooms adorned with everything from rockers and cribs to tents and simulated campfires.

In several cases this was the first time the child had ever been away from their parents. Several of the parents were emotional about leaving their little ones, but were eased knowing that they were in the hands of such highly qualified caregivers.

There were so many fun activities to keep the children busy, engaged, socializing with one another and learning all day long. There were nap times when some age groups needed a rest and outdoor playtime for all. Because children with low/no vision are often fearful around animals they cannot see, special visitors Waylon the goat and a pet rabbit provided opportunities for interactions and feeding to allay such fears. To the great amusement of the staff, Executive Director, Diane Nelson, performed “other duties as required,” cleaning up Waylon’s frequent deposits!



While the parent conference was wonderfully enlightening, it was the incredible connections parents made that will remain in their hearts and minds – connections to answers to long-held questions, connections to new information, and most of all, connections to other parents facing similar challenges and concerns, in a supportive rather than judgmental environment.



Little Niklaus fell in love with Waylon the goat.



Delta Gamma fraternity, VIPS children and their siblings played games, jumped in a bounce house, and selected treats from our volunteer's decorated trunks.

Sherry and Granddaughter Ocean played some sensory games.

On December 10th, VIPS families and community members came out to **Forcht Bank in Lexington to enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast with Santa!** In addition to a fabulous breakfast of pancakes, sausage, fruit and pastries, children were able to participate in fun reindeer games and holiday crafts led by *Delta Gamma volunteers*, and, of course, have a chance to talk to Santa. This annual event was free and open to the community, with donations accepted to benefit VIPS. VIPS is so thankful for the continued support of Forcht Bank and all that they do to make this event such a success.



Left: William and his brother, Patrick, visit with Santa. Right: Delta Gamma volunteers showed they still have a thing for Santa, too.



Family Fun and Educational Events Around VIPS

KY Family Events

VIPS-CK

Over a dozen families came out to join in the fun at our **Trunk or Treat held at the Central KY office on October 29th.** With the help of volunteers from the *University of Kentucky*



It was a beautiful day for Trunk or Treat in the parking lot of VIPS CK. Pictured are mom Michelle, her daughter Vivian with VIPS DI, Tammy Maynard.

VIPS Louisville

What brings a dragon, a shark and a fairy to the Kentucky Science Center? VIPS families celebrating Halloween, of course! **We were so excited to see so many families at the Kentucky Science Center on October 15th.** Thanks to the graciousness of the Science Center, VIPS families and staff members took over all three floors, exploring fossils, building with blocks, and everyone's favorite, playing in the water table!



Left: Sophia enjoys some water table fun. Above: Twins Haven and Harlow, are ready to get out of that stroller!

On December 10th, VIPS families gathered in Kids Town to celebrate the holidays with cookie decorating and a surprise visit from Santa. We thank the Louisville *Downtown Lions Club* for their generous donation allowing us to provide a fun-filled party and braille books as gifts for the children. Each family took home cookie-filled boxes along with the books. Volunteers not only supervised the cookie decorating but also took photos of the children with Santa. So many families were eager to participate that two party sessions were scheduled with a short clean-up time in between.



Left: LaMichael and mom, Katherine, get ready to squeeze some icing on his cookie. Right: Jaiden is proud of his cookie-decorating work!

VIPS Indiana

VIPS Indiana families attended an informative workshop, held September 17th, on how to advocate for children on a legislative level. Regional Director of VIPS Indiana, Meredith Howell, spoke on the work that has already been done at the statehouse, and Hannah Carlock from The Arc of Indiana presented on how to best advocate and interact with legislators. We are grateful to the families that attended and to Hannah for sharing her valuable knowledge.

We had a spooktacular time at our Halloween event at the Family Resource Center in Indianapolis! We thank The Joseph Maley Foundation, FUSE, Easter Seals Crossroads, and the Indianapolis Alumnae of Delta Gamma for passing out

resources and goodies to our VIPS families. We also thank Starbucks on Emerson for providing the refreshments. This is one of our favorite family events of the year— we love seeing VIPS families connect with each other!

Children had a wonderful time playing in the Sensory Room and gross motor games in one of the new classrooms.



We were so excited to host the Toys for Tots Toy Giveaway in Indianapolis this past holiday season! It was so heartwarming watching VIPS children and their siblings pick out a toy and play together in Toddler Town. Thank you to the families who came and to our VIPS team for putting this event together!



Not only were there tables loaded with toys for kids to choose from, there was also time to play! Little Jaelynn loved the light table.



Little Learners

The VIPS Central Kentucky office was excited to resume the Little Learners program in-person this fall after a 2-year hiatus due to Covid. The program is now offered as a Parent-Child playgroup and meets weekly on Fridays from 10 -11:30 a.m. Children and their parents/caregivers enjoy a welcome song during circle time, participate in hands-on sensory learning activities, work on gross motor skills during outdoor play and build relationships with other families.



VIPS mom Katie sent this sweet text to TVI Dixie Marz about her son Rowan's experience: "Kalli (Rowan's caregiver) couldn't stop talking about what a blast today's play group was!!! Rowan loved it!! Thank you so much to all of you for putting all those activities together. It was so wonderful hearing about what a great experience he had. So appreciate it!! Means a lot."

If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Regional Director Kelly Easton at keaston@vips.org or 859-685-6716 for more details.

A Day in the Life of a Blind Person

By Ashley Neybert,
Accessibility Specialist with ViewPlus
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Hello everyone! My name is Ashley Neybert and I am ViewPlus' newest Accessibility Specialist. I am also legally blind and thought it might be good for everyone to know some of the adaptations I make in my daily life. I have heard a lot of people saying that blind people don't use Braille anymore, but in my experience, this is usually because like me, these people have some residual vision and are frequently told that print is better, so they are not taught Braille. This frequently causes all kinds of issues such as eye pain,

headaches, back injury from leaning close to things all the time, and possibly even quickening vision loss in some conditions. Plus, you know how often sighted people need reading glasses when older? Well blind people's eyes get worse as we age too, and it is MUCH easier to learn Braille as young as possible!

I didn't learn Braille until I was 19 years old. It was hard but it is SUCH an integral part of my life now! So where is it important and why is it so critical? I'm going to virtually walk you through an average day in my life so you can find out. I am a PhD student in Education with a focus on STEM Accessibility, so my day is always jam packed. I wake up at 8am to feed and relieve my guide dog Phoebe, the fashionable standard poodle. Then it's off to make my breakfast. My oven and microwave both have braille labels to help me navigate otherwise inaccessible equipment. They do make talking microwaves and I'd love one, but accessible tools always cost more. At \$500, a talking microwave is half of my month's rent so until one of you lovely people buy me one, then braille labeled microwave to the rescue!

I live in campus housing so waking up earlier assures that the braille labeled washer and dryer are available. There's only one of each and it's never fun to discover someone else's clothes there when there are 20 plus other washers and dryers available for sighted people. I throw

Editor's note: This article, about the accommodations that must be made due to legal blindness, may open the eyes of those unfamiliar with blindness and for that matter, even those who are familiar. In our opinion, it should be required reading for everyone taking education courses, current teachers, and everyone working in the field of blindness. And be sure to check out ViewPlus.com.

my clothes in, no color sort detergent is the greatest invention of our time, and I set a timer with Siri on my phone. Then it's off to research! Unfortunately, most journals do not make accessible documents so enter my wonderful SpotDot embosser! This embosser is one of the reasons I joined ViewPlus Technologies. The fact that I can make a graph that is accessible to both me and my sighted peers on the same device is amazing to me and the option to have text and braille on the same page allows me to choose my preferred reading medium on the go. Before I had an embosser that could print direct from PDF, I would always have to send a graph or image to the Disability Support Services office where I'd see my graphic in a week but now, I have an option that even if the printed version isn't beautiful the first time (we're still working on making it easier for the blind to create their own graphics) I can now independently get a vague idea of what my classmates might be seeing.

I go grab and switch out my laundry then it's time to cook lunch. I usually make one more involved meal throughout the day so for either lunch or dinner I will pull out my braille cookbook

because I embossed a collection of my favorite recipes to avoid the fact that so many accessible recipe websites have randomly disappeared then you have to find a new one. I cannot imagine how I'd handle this one if I couldn't read Braille! After eating and washing my dishes I go let out the dog again and then we head off to class where you guessed it: I use the Braille signs to tell where my classroom and the restroom are! I wish people hired more blind people though to review their Braille signs before posting them as sometimes the signs just say "Restroom" and you're left to wonder if it's men's, women's, or all gender. I frequently also encounter things like everyone calling something the meeting room and the braille simply reads "#235" so please remember to have people that use your accommodations do an accessibility check to make sure it's right!

In class I either use a screenreader on my computer or a slate and stylus to take my notes. For any teachers reading this, slate and stylus is SO much easier to transport than a Perkins Braille so please make sure students know how to use both! I find it so useful to be able to make labels and take down phone numbers on a slate and stylus so I don't need to worry if my phone dies. After class I walk home, let the dog out and feed her again, make some dinner then play with the dog (she needs time off too!) followed by my dinner and homework.

I cannot imagine my life without Braille and I love working for a company that values my independence and making a more inclusive world. We even can make tactile coloring sheets now! Things are getting better than ever for blind people but we're still working at it. If I could share one thing with TVIs out there it would be to make sure that all of your students get proper Braille and Tactile graphics education. Reading print and Braille are not mutually exclusive and the more skills our students have the higher the likelihood of getting jobs. Thank you for joining me for a day in my life!

Those Marvelous Milestones

Because of the variety of visual impairments and other disabilities that VIPS children experience, their milestones may look a bit different. The milestones below, which are the result of much hard work on the part of the children and their families and caregivers, are truly cause for celebration.

Angel's mom, Maria, has been working to help **Angel** become more tolerant of different textures. VIPS teacher Ms. Paige spent a visit helping Angel explore textures; he tested out a bin of rice

with his feet, and then used his hands to dig in the rice and find toys placed in it. Maria noticed that letting him explore at a slow pace increased his interest and attention, and tolerance. After this visit, Ms. Paige went back to see Angel and Maria two weeks later and he had made even more progress! Maria held a bin of dried corn out to him and he immediately reached into it to investigate! He has even started to explore mixed textures, a more difficult skill. Keep up the great work, Angel and Maria!



Ezra recently engaged in some very intentional play during a session with Ms. Tracy. His mom and Ms. Tracy were both so thrilled to see him become very excited every time he saw the yellow rattle. Way to go, Ezra!!



During a recent visit, **Harlow and Haven** explored crayons and paper. They both made their marks in their coloring book with their crayons then smiled and clapped for themselves when

their parents celebrated this amazing new visual motor skill! Their mom, Lauren, did an excellent job choosing a coloring book with simple bold pictures. Way to go, girls!



Hudson enjoys playing with the homemade light board his mom made for him by putting holiday lights in a plastic bin. This is a clever way to allow Hudson to more easily see the toys he is playing with as it provides a backlight. In this photo, you can see Hudson playing with his toys on a white tub with a lid. We are so proud of the strides Hudson is making, but we are also proud of his family for taking the knowledge they learn during their VIPS in-home sessions to adapt Hudson's environment to fit his needs!



Isaiah was able to actively participate in an activity with his siblings for the first time. His mom, Tirzah, said "This picture



shows the first time that all my four kids are enjoying an activity together that they came up with on their own. Isaiah was sitting in his chair and my big kids brought over the music toy and were all dancing and singing together and helping Isaiah push the button. What a gift to be able to do something all together!" Isaiah has really shown a lot of interest in the Joy player music device and button switch loaned to him by VIPS and is beginning to demonstrate more of an understanding of cause-and-effect play.

Jayce has really been enjoying the outdoors lately. He has learned to spot objects at a distance while on walks around the neighborhood. Recently he learned how to ride on a two-wheeled scooter. Jayce is growing and thriving!



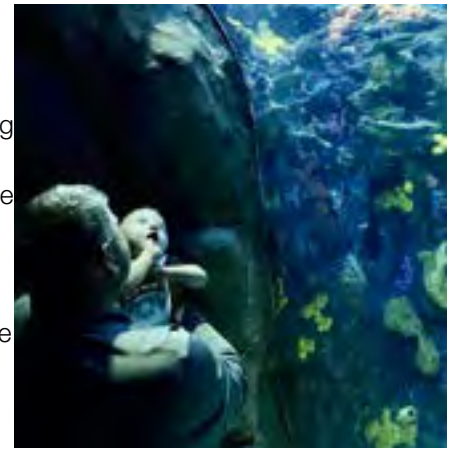
Jayda has started holding her own bottle! She has been working on the skill for a couple of months, and we are so proud of both mom and Jayda for all of their hard work and progress. Jayda is learning independence one milestone at a time.



Ms. Paige begins all her sessions with a hello song. During a recent visit with VIPS kiddo Kaylee, Ms. Paige began singing the song and **Kaylee** looked at her and then vocalized in response to the song! Great work, Kaylee! See the precious video of Kaylee and Ms. Paige.

<https://www.facebook.com/page/131180185964/search/?q=Kaylee>

Mason visited the aquarium recently. He has Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) and has been working on using his upper field of vision. You can see in these pictures he is enjoying watching the fish and penguins! In one picture, he is even looking up at the fish swimming above him. Way to go, Mason!



Niklaus has been working on accepting new textures, especially with eating. He recently started handling stage-one baby food without gagging. His mother was excited to report that he loved exploring his birthday cake and actually ate some of the icing. Good job, Niklaus!

Noah just turned three years old and aged out of the Indiana VIPS program. His last visit with Ms. Kim, his VIPS Interventionist, was a celebration! Noah pulled shiny silver streamers out of a present as they sang happy birthday, and even got to play on the LiteAide. We are so proud of all the progress he made during his time with VIPS and we can't wait to see all he accomplishes in the future! Happy 3rd Birthday, Noah!



Ms. Julia works with Violet, who has CVI and is currently seeking treatment for her second cancer removal. Violet continues to work hard even when obstacles arise! She is so strong and so smart

and her family is amazing at adapting her environment, even in a hospital setting. Her family shared this video showing how well Violet is visually attending to track lights using her central vision while lying on a black contrasting towel with a sensory bean bag. This video not only showcases Violet's progress but also shows how her family has overcome recent challenges. Watch this beautiful video at: <https://www.facebook.com/page/131180185964/search/?q=Violet>

Walker and his VIPS Interventionist, Ms. Lesley, have been working on looking toward his left side. Recently, his grandfather has been teaching him to play drums, and even got him this drum set for his birthday! In this video, he is playing the drums, looking left and right to hit all the drums and cymbals! Way to go, Walker! Watch Walker rock in this darling video at: <https://www.facebook.com/page/131180185964/search?q=Walker>



This beautiful video about **Zhy'mir**, filmed by the WHAS Crisade for Children, shows how far he has come! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BITOieFzbGI>

Parent Recommendation

VIPS Classroom assistant, Ms. Becky, spoke with a family who had visited the Ark Encounter* with their 5-year-old daughter who is blind. They said that the Ark offers a tactile experience created specifically for visitors with blindness/low vision. The family said their daughter greatly enjoyed it! The following information as well as additional accommodations for hearing/mobility/sensory issues can be found at <https://arkencounter.com/tips/#accessibility>.
*(*VIPS does not promote or endorse any religion; this is shared as a developmentally inclusive experience for children who are visually impaired.)*

VIPS is HIRING!

VIPS is looking for the right person to support our growing "family" as the Assistant Director of Education. This person will be responsible for assisting the Director of Education with the overall management and daily operation of VIPS services provided throughout the state of Indiana. This position is 40 hours per week; full-time with benefits.

For more information, click on the link below. We hope to hear from YOU!

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D_AJ0dEHu3T-Oulv2IXOiegIhc9X-CYO/edit



Welcome New Children

VIPS is pleased to welcome the following new children and their families into the VIPS Program.

- Aerial – 2 years, Mishawaka, IN
- Anakin – 1 year, Lexington, KY
- Andrew – 2 years, Paducah, KY
- Antonio – 1 year, East Chicago, IL
- Aria – 1 year, West Lafayette, IN
- Avalynn – 3 years, Kokomo, IN
- Avelyn – 2 years, Milroy, IN
- Bentley – 1 year, Anderson, IN
- Blessing – 3 years, Lafayette, IN
- Brandon – 2 years, Lafayette, IN
- Braunson – 1 year, Marion, IN
- Bryan – 1 year, Martinsville, IN
- Cainen – 2 years, Van Buren, IN
- Carson – 3 years, Louisville, KY
- Carter – 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
- Charli – 1 year, Marengo, IN
- Cheyenne – 1 year, Glasgow, KY
- Christopher – 1 year, Louisville, KY
- Clyde – 10 months, Florence, KY
- Cohen – 1 year, Ft. Wayne, IN
- Colton – 10 months, Indianapolis, IN
- Connor – 2 years, Williamsport, IN
- Cung – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN
- Dai'Twan – 10 months, Ft. Wayne, IN
- De'Airic – 10 months, Louisville, KY
- Diego – 2 years, Munster, IN
- Eleanor – 6 months, Wabash, IN
- Elena – 2 years, Middlesboro, KY
- Eli – 2 years, Anderson, IN
- Ezekiel – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN
- Frances – 3 years, Greenwood, IN
- Georgia – 1 year, Portage, IN
- Grayson – 1 year, Austin, IN
- Haley – 3 years, Noblesville, IN
- Harvest – 8 months, Crown Point, IN

Welcome New Children Continued from previous page

Hudson – 1 year, Vanceburg, KY
 Isaiah – 10 months, Goshen, IN
 Jackson – 1 year, Louisville, KY
 James – 1 year, Loyall, KY
 James – 1 year, Louisville, KY
 James – 1 year, Louisville, KY
 Jaxon – 1 year, Terre Haute, IN
 Jocelynn – 1 year, Bloomfield, IN
 Leandro “Leo” – 10 months, Fishers, IN
 Ledger – 1 year, Morgantown, KY
 Lorenzo – 7 months, Louisville, KY
 Lucas – 1 year, London, KY
 Maddilynn – 2 years, Muncie, IN
 Maddox – 2 years, New Carlisle, IN
 Matteo – 1 year, Goshen, IN
 Miles – 1 year, Bowling Green, KY
 Miles – 4 years, Louisville, KY
 Mmunga – 1 year, Bowling Green, KY
 Monroe – 8 months, South Bend, IN
 Nicola “Nico” – 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Noah – 10 months, Ashland, KY
 Noah – 2 years, Kendallville, IN
 Ocean – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN
 Ocean – 1 year, South Bend, IN
 Oliver – 2 years, Evansville, IN
 Oliver – 2 years, Valparaiso, IN
 Owen – 11 months, Brownsburg, IN
 Paisley – 10 months, Owensboro, KY
 Patrick – 1 year, Granger, IN
 Preciana – 1 year, Florence, KY
 Reed – 2 years, Hodgenville, KY
 Roxanna – 1 year, Connersville, IN
 Ryder – 2 year, Mount Sterling, KY
 Rylie – 1 year, Florence, KY
 Rynn – 10 months, Crown Point, IN
 Santiago – 1 year, Ft. Wayne, IN
 Sawyer – 3 years, Mulberry, IN
 Selah – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN
 Sonny – 1 year, Franklin, IN
 Theo – 2 years, Indianapolis, IN
 Valor – 2 years, Bluffton, IN
 Versie – 2 years, Independence, KY
 Waverly – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN
 Willadean – 1 year, Greenfield, IN
 Zion – 1 year, Indianapolis, IN

VIPS Staff News

Congratulations to our own **Ashley Emmons** (VIPS Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and Early Childhood Specialist), who was honored recently at the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) Awards Banquet for her participation in their inaugural Leadership Fellows class. Each COSB Fellow chose a project(s) to improve procedures in their respective organizations.

Ashley chose to focus on transitions for our VIPS Kids Town Preschoolers moving on to their next educational setting with great success. By doing so, Ashley also strengthened her advocacy skill -- another outcome she had identified for the program. VIPS teachers are always learning, always preparing for the future and always sharing their expertise. Thank you, Ashley, for your time and commitment to this learning opportunity and for representing VIPS so well!!

~ ~ ~

We welcome **Sarah Potter** to VIPS Louisville where she works as a Kids Town Preschool Instructional Assistant. Sarah writes: *“I am from Louisville, born and raised. My first love is dance, I went to Webster University in St. Louis and received a BFA in Dance after many years of training at the Louisville Ballet school. After a few years of dancing, I*



decided to make a career change and went to nursing school at Spalding. I have been a registered nurse since 2010, working in ICU and open-heart recovery. I have taken a break for the last year to enjoy family life with my husband Ryan and two girls, Lena and Violet (who are former VIPS sighted peers). In my free time I love to cook, hike, and see live music.”

~ ~ ~

Congratulations to **Meredith Howell**, who has accepted the position of VIPS Director of Development, in which she will be overseeing development activities for all three locations. Meredith has done a tremendous job with the VIPS Indiana Capital Campaign to fund the beautiful Simon and Estelle Knoble Family Resource Center in Indianapolis and in working with the Indiana state legislature for funding



for VIPS services, to name just a couple of her accomplishments. Formerly, Meredith served as Regional Director of VIPS in Indiana. Recently, Meredith and her family were featured in Special Needs Living Magazine! Check it out at https://issuu.com/specialneedslivingindy/docs/sep_2022_special_needs_living_indianapolis_surro.



Joni Santiago has recently become a classroom assistant in Kids Town Preschool. She is the mother of former VIPS graduate, Connor. Watch for more info about Joanie in the next issue.



Thanks to some braille elves around VIPS, a number of materials were made available in braille to VIPS children and families. They include: **Kirsten Schmidt and Maury Weedman** at VIPS Louisville and **Rita DeVore** at VIPS Indiana.

*Right: Kirsten and Maury place clear braille overlays in gift books for the Holiday Party.
Below: Rita shows a volunteer how to braille labels to adapt greeting cards.*



Some interesting statistics compiled by Kathy Mullen, Education Director:

- 95% of teachers feel respected by their coworkers. I'd definitely say the same is true at VIPS!
- 68% of teachers feel respected by their school board. We think more than 68% of VIPS staff members feel appreciated by the VIPS Board of Directors based upon responses to recent supportive emails sent to/from our Board President, Nathan Halliday.
- Professional satisfaction in the education profession is higher than other professions with the single exception of physicians. An example might be our fairly low staff turnover rate which seems due primarily to life changes rather than dissatisfaction.

Way to Go Kids Town Preschool Team!!!

We are exceptionally pleased to announce that we had a surprise licensing visit from the Kentucky Division of Child Care during the first days after school opened in August. We passed the inspection with no deficiencies thanks to the dedication and hard work of the instructional and administrative staffs! Congratulations, team!

In Memoriam

This issue of the VIPS Parents Newsletter is dedicated to the memories of:

Addison Carpenter

daughter of Ryan Carpenter and Meleah Blankenship of Vanceburg, KY, who passed away on Dec. 24, 2022 at the age of 15 months

~ and ~

Niyelle Carter-Mullins

daughter of Shai Mullins of Louisville, KY, who passed away on January 7, 2023 at the age of seven.

~ and ~


Peggy Fishman, M.D.

Pediatric Ophthalmologist of Louisville, KY who passed away on January 22, 2023.

Our hearts go out to all of those who loved Addison, Niyelle, and Dr. Fishman.

Dr. Fishman's staff shared this note on their Facebook page:

"It comes with great sorrow that we announce the passing of our much-beloved Dr. Peggy Fishman on January 22nd. Our Eye Care for Kids family knows how much she truly cared about and loved our patients and their families. Her passion and devotion to the children will carry onward, as Dr. Kelly Borgman will continue Dr. Fishman's vision for improving eyesight and the well being of all the children. We honor her and rejoice in all of the wonderful and happy memories we have with her."



Notes of Interest

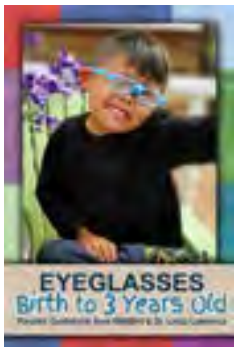
Sensee, Inc. has Braille coloring books available on three topics -- animals, vehicles and fruits. The books are \$13.50 plus shipping and handling from Amazon.com. https://www.amazon.com/SENSEE-Braille-Coloring-Vehicle-Toddlers/dp/BOBN2C7LX2/ref=sr_1_3?crd=3PKKNSQA SOOUJ&keywords=sensee+coloring+book s&qid=1677960091&prefix=%2Caps%2C 137&sr=8-3



Clarke Reynolds is a British artist with his first London solo exhibition. He also happens to be blind. His Exhibition, *The Power of Touch*, uses bright colors to showcase braille dots that tell the story of his journey as an artist who gradually lost vision and that conveys the experiences of blind and visually impaired people. See his work (and checkout the bright yellow Braille suit he is wearing!) at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-london-64223800>.

A request for information about *safe sleep beds* from a VIPS teacher on behalf of one of her students was met with several helpful responses. A variety of safe beds are described in this article <https://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/special-needs-beds>. Funding and technical assistance are offered through Kentucky Medicaid for eligible children. Contact VIPS Family Services Coordinator, Jenny Casterinir at jcastenir@vips.org for more sources.

VIPS Executive Director Diane Nelson was recently interviewed by Avitel Elkayam in a Spotlight Session from *AccessiBe*, the Tel Aviv software company that VIPS uses to make our website more accessible. Spotlight Sessions are a “series dedicated to conversations with change-makers and people have made an impact on the community of people with disabilities.” To watch the interview go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1shv69Pc1A>



Our friends at New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI), along with Dr. Linda Lawrence, a member of our Early Childhood Visual Impairment Alliance (ECVIA) group, have written a *book on the importance of wearing glasses*. VIPS board member, Dr. Ashima Gupta, has received permission for us to share the book with

families as needed. The book is available in English, Spanish, and several African languages. NMSBVI will work with us to have it translated into other languages as well. You can download the book [here](#).

An alert VIPS staff member recently found *puzzles that celebrate diversity*. The large floor puzzle is \$16.99; a group of 6 smaller puzzles is \$74.99. Go to: <https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/search/products?Ntt=diversity%20 and%20inclusion%20 puzzles>



The Oklahoma School for the Deaf is offering free online ASL classes. If you have always wanted to learn ASL but cost has prevented you, this is a great opportunity. ASL 1 and ASL 2 are available as prerecorded self-guided classes. This is a great resource for parents and teachers wanting to learn ASL. <https://courses.osd.k12.ok.us/>

Let's Talk About Grief, with Amanda Griffith-Atkins of Perkins CVI Now is a candid discussion of grieving the lost dreams for your child with disabilities. You can tune in at: <https://www.perkins.org/let-s-talk-about-grief-with-amanda-griffith-atkins/>. Also check out all of the fantastic resources at the Perkins School for the Blind's site CVI Now at <https://www.perkins.org/cvi-now/>

Gifts of Time, Talent and Treasure

VIPS Indiana

Thank you to **John Wykes, VIPS Indiana Community Council** member, for purchasing the bourbon for our raffle!

We so appreciate the new **Hoosier Chapter of the Kentucky Colonels** who volunteered to make World Braille Day cards. World Braille Day was January 4th, and we loved sharing these cards with legislators at the beginning of the year to let them know our VIPS families are a part of their local communities.

We are so grateful to the **Key Club International students** for creating birthday cards for our VIPS kiddos and even making

some matching cards as well. Key Club members around the world are learning how to lead and stand for what's right through service and volunteerism. In partnership with their local Kiwanis club, high school students are making a positive impact as they serve others in their schools and communities. These students have certainly had an impact on VIPS through their yearly volunteerism.

We greatly appreciate retired art teacher, **Mrs. Phyllis Newton**, and the Broadway United Women in Faith group for making VIPS some amazing birthday cards and donating a bag of stuffed animals for our VIPS children and their siblings.

Thank you to **Old National Bank** for volunteering staff time as part of Old National Bank's Better Together Volunteer Days! They had 17 team members who each volunteered two hours to make greeting cards for VIPS, totaling 34 volunteer hours.

We are very grateful to volunteers who have supported VIPS in celebration of Blindness & Visual Impairment Awareness Month. Thank you to both **Indiana State University C.H.I.L.L.** (Colleagues Helping Implement Lifelong Learning) students and **Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (SMWC) Education Students** for creating some amazing tactile books for our VIPS families! We love being able to give our families something made with them in mind and that is appropriate for the development of literacy for VIPS kiddos.

Morgan Boehler, a junior from Terre Haute at Saint Mary of the Woods, created the words for the books. "I think it's really cool and special," Boehler said. When someone reads the words, the children will be able to feel the accompanying artwork, whether the "soft, warm hat," the "bear with the button eye," or the "smooth, scary bat." This was just one of the projects the St. Mary's students did on the service day and we are so grateful they chose VIPS! Click on <https://loom.ly/fSftE9w> to read the whole article in Terre Haute's Tribune Star.

In a synchronistic moment, VIPS Louisville's database manager, Emily Thornton, not only received her master's degree from St. Mary in the Woods but is herself a native of Terre Haute. She was tickled to read in her local paper the news about the St. Mary's students volunteering to help the children she herself is employed to assist!

VIPS Kentucky

A presentation Executive Director Diane Nelson recently made to Leadership Louisville's Encore Group, composed of retired leaders in law, business, healthcare, education, etc., has resulted in the formation of an elite team with multi-state business experience. Their goal is to help us examine our growth

over the past 10 years and suggest what infrastructure and tools would be necessary to support us through the next 10 years with a focus on sustainability. Seven volunteer executives stepped up to be part of our project, including **Al Cornish**, who was VP of Norton Healthcare and served on our board for many years, and **Harold Butler**, retired managing partner of Stites/Harbison Law Firm. They will co-lead this exciting team, which has already begun work!

Thanks to **Diane Nelson** who donated her Dyson vacuum cleaner so now the preschool will have two vacuums to clean with each afternoon and the wait for a vacuum won't be so long!

Fran Woodward has donated one day per week of her time for 15 years to assist in the Twos Classroom. Her expertise, dependability, consistency and cheerful demeanor have endeared her to VIPS staff and children alike!

Holy Cross intern **Kayleigh Herbert** has made herself very useful by completing numerous tasks including laminating and copying items for teachers, purging files, cleaning out cabinets, filing, and cleaning doorknobs and light switches. We appreciate her efforts on our behalf, making life a little easier for the staff. Kayleigh was joined by several other Holy Cross students for the Great Day of Service to make bead curtains and shakers to be given to every new VIPS family. Joining her were fellow students **Cohen Andrews, Tyler Ballard, Jacob Brown, Raegan Glover, Kelsey Johnson, Abby Konshak, Trenton McKeehan, Victoria Phan and Will Scubee**; they were accompanied by Holy Cross Art Teacher, **Mary Rose Weiter**.

VIPS mom **Charlene Flores** has helped with numerous and varied administrative duties such as laminating and copying items for teachers, purging files, addressing and stamping envelopes, filing, organizing binders, watching the front desk, signing holiday cards, wrapping braille books, and cleaning googles and masks. Thanks so much, Charlene!

One of the most enlightening, heart-warming and anticipated VIPS event is the annual Family Retreat, which also requires extensive assistance from staff and volunteers. This year's volunteers who earned our gratitude included **Katie Dunda, Aaron Miles, Ryan Potter**, and former VIPS preschool teacher, **Brittany Williamson**.

The Delta Gamma motto is Do Good, and these ladies from the local DG alumnae group did just that, helping with our holiday card campaign; our largest fund-raiser of the year has become an annual event for them, as well. This year's helpers included **Lisa Bajorinas, Gayle Bonnarrens, Angela Feldman-Harkins, Ginny Fuller, Melissa Hofer, Elinore Jeffcoat, Debra Johnson, Teresa Lawrence, Samantha Mogab, Christine**

Okada, Lily Reinhardt, former VIPS Board member Kristie Saffer, Jane Stahl and Karin Tyren. Thank you so much for donating your time and skills to help us with this gigantic task!

Level 4 students from Sacred Heart Model School recently took a stewardship field trip to VIPS with their teachers and **Ms. Leah Mullen, Principal, who is the daughter of Kathy Mullen**, Director of Education at VIPS. The students learned through hands-on activities how visually impaired and blind students complete everyday tasks and work to reach their full potential.

VIPS joined **Bullitt East High School students who are enrolled in their Early Childhood Education Career Pathways** program to share about working with young students who are blind or visually impaired. We shared about strategies for intervention in the home and instruction in the preschool classroom. We had students wrap Christmas presents while blindfolded or wearing simulator goggles.



A recent visit from **Joy Wall** and grandson Colton was music to the ears of Kids Town Preschool Students. Joy played her guitar and led a sing-along with the children, to the delight of all.

Recent Grants & Donations

VIPS Kentucky

\$800 in fuel cards - **Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government** to be used for visits to VIPS kids in Fayette County.

\$1,000 - **Flaget Alumni Association** for general support.

\$4,665 - **The King's Daughters & Sons Foundation of Kentucky** for assistive technology devices for the Lexington campus.

\$5,000 - **The Children's Charity of the Bluegrass** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Central Kentucky counties.

\$5,000 - **The Elsa Heisel Sule Foundation** for the Early Childhood Intervention program in Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties.

\$5,000 - **Heart of Kentucky United Way** for Early Childhood Intervention Program in Boyle, Garrard, Lincoln and Mercer counties in Kentucky.

\$6,834 - **Kings Daughters & Sons Foundation of Kentucky** for computers for the Louisville campus.

\$7,000 - **The Cralle Foundation** for general support.

\$9,493 - **Mary P. Gill Foundation** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Louisville.

\$10,000 - **Anonymous** holiday gift from a very generous donor.

\$10,000 - **The Eva Juneja Foundation** gifted VIPS with a very generous donation in memory of sweet Eva Juneja, a former VIPS child.

\$12,500 - **Karston A. and Ethelyn O. Osmondson Charitable Foundation** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Lexington.

\$18,000 - **Lexington Lions Club** for general support and sponsorship of the Cupcake Classic.

\$15,000 - **The Gibney Family Foundation** for Every Child Can Curriculum Resource.

\$20,000 - **The Fred B. and Opal S. Woosley Foundation** for the Family Services Program.

\$20,000 - **The Gheens Foundation** for general operating support of the Louisville campus.

\$23,052 - **George S. Weeks Trust** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Bourbon and Fayette counties.

\$23,624.11 - Previous VIPS Louisville board member and his wife, **Steve and Jeanie Deeley**, to support our work.

\$23,750 - **The Kueber Family Foundation** (the local family that owns franchises of Planet Fitness, Buff City Soap and Sun Tan City), made this donation as part of our holiday gratitude campaign.

\$37,500 – **Irvin F. and Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation** for the purchase of a fleet vehicle, including five years of repair/maintenance and insurance, our seventh from this remarkably generous foundation.

\$40,000 - **Linda Neville Trust** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Central Kentucky.

\$50,000 - **Thornton Capital** (see story below).

\$98,500 - **The Ky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation** in support of Early Childhood Intervention Program in Kentucky, Family Retreat, sponsorship of the Lynn Family 5K for VIPS and sponsorship of the VIPS Gala. We are so very grateful for all the support they have provided us over the years.

\$100,000 - **Team Kentucky Non-Profit Assistance Fund** to support our work.

\$208,468 (including \$10,500 from **Indiana’s Giving Day**) – Multiple sources for **VIPS Holiday Gratitude campaign** for all three offices. We cannot give enough credit and praise to everyone who helped us exceed our target goal.

\$250,000 of the \$500,000 grant for this fiscal year - **Kentucky Department of Education** for general operating support.

The contributions from the **Amazon Smile program** for the period July 1 to September 30 was \$216.33 based upon purchases designated for VIPS. *Unfortunately, this program is being discontinued.*

Thornton Capital’s Matt and Fran Thornton set aside a very generous pool of dollars each year for an annual **Thornton Capital Charity Competition**. Their team members gather to “pitch” or tell the story of a non-profit’s impact that has touched their heart. The team members then vote and the non-profits receive a donation based on the votes. *This year, we were so very blessed when our supporter, Tom Jones,*



Tom Jones, Lauren Leonhardt and Michael Lynch presented the check to Diane Nelson and Kathy Mullen.

decided to share the story of VIPS as his chosen charity. That alone was most touching and a huge compliment to us. We were thrilled when *Tom, accompanied by two of his team members, Lauren Leonhardt and Michael Lynch,* let us know that VIPS was the overall winner of their competition.

It was wonderful that Tom chose to tell our story but utterly overwhelming when they presented VIPS with a check for \$50,000! This great gift will make a huge difference in these tough economic times and we thank Tom, the team at Thornton Capital and of course, Matt and Fran Thornton for supporting our children.

VIPS Indiana

\$5,000 - **3Rivers Credit Union** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Northeastern Indiana.

\$5,000 - **Louis and Mary Haddad** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Indiana.

\$9,120 - **The Caesar’s Foundation of Floyd County** to support VIPS families in Floyd County.

\$9,300 - **Sheehan Charitable Foundation** for the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Hamilton County, IN.

\$15,000 - **Nicholas H. Noyes Memorial Foundation** to support the Early Childhood Intervention Program in Marion County, IN.

\$50,000 (the final installment of a \$250,000 pledge) - **VIPS Indiana Board Member, Virren Malhotra and wife Shea,** to build the Family Resource Center.

\$75,000 – **United Way of Central Indiana** for capacity building in Indiana.

\$180,000 total over a three-year period - **Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust** for operations and programming.

Fundraising Events -- Past and Future

Yum! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament

Monday, October 3rd, 2022 marked our 34th Annual YUM! Brands Corporate Cup Golf Tournament. The Corporate Cup has raised over 1.4 million dollars for VIPS since 1989! The 2022 tournament raised a net of \$29,000 to support the VIPS program.

For the second year in a row, Stock Yards Bank & Trust was our Tournament winners! Willis Towers Watson won our Turtle Trophies and Ball Toss.

We appreciate all who joined us and participated this year! We are so grateful for **Tito's, Print Tex USA, and Pepsi** for their donations.

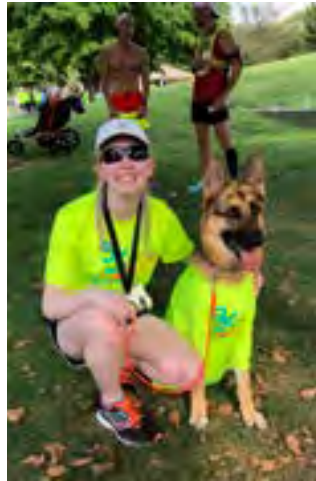
We are thankful for all of our sponsors who continue to support this event, and this year we welcomed a few new sponsors - **Derby Supply Chain Solutions, Zoeller Pump Company and Old National Bank.**

Our upcoming YUM! Brands Corporate Cup is set for October 2nd, 2023 at Wildwood Country Club.

Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS 5K

September 17th, 2022 was the 20th year of the Dr. Mark Lynn & Associates Stampede for VIPS 5K, renamed the Lynn Family 5K for VIPS. Due to the 2020 pandemic, this event was held virtually the past two years. This year our participants were once again able to run or walk with us in-person at the Louisville Waterfront Park. The event netted over \$51,000!

Dr. Mark Lynn made his appearance at our event, welcoming our participants. *VIPS graduate Addy Clarkson* beautifully sang the national anthem and sent the runners off on their 3.1 mile journey through Louisville's Waterfront Park.



VIPS Grad, Addie Evers, and dog guide Dorie, ran a great race. Dorie earned a race shirt, too!

Highlights of the race included *Joseph Burket*, a runner who is blind and uses a guide runner, returned to the finish line 18 minutes later. *VIPS graduate Addie Evers* who uses a Dog Guide finished in 27 minutes while VIPS board member, *John Anders*, crossed the finish line in just under 30 minutes. *VIPS graduate Jamie Weedman*, who also uses a Guide Runner, received his medal at the finish line at the 36-minute mark.

We appreciate all of the runners and walkers that joined us this year, and we look forward to seeing everyone again next year! The Lynn Family 5K for VIPS is the ONLY race in the Louisville Metro area that features a division for blind and visually impaired runners.

Mark your calendars for our next Lynn Family 5K for VIPS on Saturday Sept. 30th, 2023 at Louisville Waterfront Park.

Giving Tuesday

Thank you to everyone who made Giving Tuesday 2022 (November 29th) such a success! We raised over \$11,000, achieving our fundraising goal. We were blown away by the support we received! Indiana Development Coordinator Ashley Ross's extraordinary efforts showcased VIPS' presence on social media by profiling VIPS staff and volunteers and, especially, families served by VIPS. We appreciate so much everyone who helped us achieve our goal. Special thank yous to **Virren and Shea Malhotra** for a generous \$5,000 match and thank you to the amazing families that allowed us to share their stories on this giving day.

The Holiday Gratitude Campaign

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!! The Holiday Season of 2022-23 brought VIPS an amazing level of support from our wonderful donors who responded to the Holiday Gratitude Campaign! We exceeded our goal, with our donors reaching deep to produce a total of \$208,468 to help us meet the needs of VIPS children and their families throughout Kentucky and Indiana.

Topgolf

We want to thank everyone who came out to our Topgolf event in Indy on Sunday, February 5, 2023! We had a great turnout and some pretty awesome silent auction items. The event raised over \$8,000 which will go towards supporting our mission of serving children who are blind or visually impaired.



Mark Your Calendars Now!!

The VIPS Gala -- May 20

Plan now to attend the wonderful VIPS Gala, Saturday, May 20, 6 p.m. at the Louisville Boat Club. The evening promises to be lots of fun. Register [here!](#)

Our Bourbon Pull sells out within hours, so be sure to set your alarm! We will host our Annual Bourbon Pull during the week leading up to the event. This year, be prepared to buy bourbon raffle tickets on May 17th, 2023. To keep the tradition, we are in need of bourbon donations! Please reach out to Ashley Ford (aford@vips.org).

We are in need of Live Auction donations!

Own a vacation cabin? Donate a weekend get-away! You can submit a donation [here](#).

Silent Auction donations are also needed. Own a business? Donate your product or services! You can donate [here](#).

If you would like to be an event sponsor, contact aford@vips.org. All sponsors receive a table that seats 10 guests.

Walking for Dreams -- May 21

<https://vips.org/event-calendar/walking-for-dreams-family-pet-walk/>



Sign up to walk!



By signing up at www.walkingfordreams.org, you are committing to walk on behalf of VIPS and/or 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 at www.walkingfordreams.org you can start a team + build your own profile. By making a team, your family & friends can register to walk on and/or make donations to. 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! You can still make an impact by making a donation. Every dollar counts!

Make a donation at www.vips.org

SUNDAY MAY 21, 2023 WALK BEGINS @ 2PM

Kicks off at Crown Hill Cemetery (700 38th St, Indianapolis, IN 46208). You can even bring your dog! Registration will start at 1PM, the walk will start at 2PM, then awards and closing remarks will be immediately following.

All funds raised at the event will help VIPS continue to provide early intervention services to Indiana's babies & toddlers with blindness/low vision and support to their families!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Meredith Howell | (317) 902-0931 | mhowell@vips.org | 1212 Southeastern Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46202

Cupcake Classic, August 18

Register now at <https://bit.ly/3IJobR> to secure early bird prices--Price increases after March 31, 2023 at 11:59pm EDT



The 6th Annual VIPS Cupcake Classic 3K will be held on Friday, August 18th, at 7:30pm at Wellington Park in South Lexington (565 Wellington Way Lexington, KY US 40503). 3K Run/Walk--\$20 7:30PM EDT

- Little Cupcake Kids' Dash (1/4 Mile)--\$12 7:15PM EDT
- Virtual Runner/Walker--\$25

RACE FEATURES

- Commemorative Race T-Shirts
- BabyCakes cupcakes and ice cream (Thanks Forcht Bank!)
- Paved course in beautiful Wellington Park
- Overall and Age Group Awards (5 Year Age Divisions, Top 3 M/F)
- Free Race Photos
- DJ
- Social Teams to enhance your race experience. Largest Team wins a prize!
- 3K Run/Walk, Kids' Dash (1/4 Mile), & Virtual option
- Referral Rewards (Invite your friends and family and get a refund on your registration)

VIPS WISH Lists

VIPS Indiana

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

- Amazon Wish List: <http://a.co/aeRar2N>
- Non-Amazon items that we would like:
 - Leo Learns By Doing DVD: <https://www.good-lite.com/products/790000>
 - Basic Spanish for Orientation and Mobility: A Phrase Book and Dictionary: <https://www.aph.org/product/basic-spanish-for-orientation-and-mobility-a-phrase-book-and-dictionary/>

VIPS Kentucky

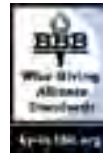
- Amazon Wish list: <https://a.co/0zrxZja>



1906 Goldsmith Lane
Louisville, KY 40218

Visually Impaired
Preschool Services

Change Service Requested



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



Upcoming Events

Fridays, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

Little Learners Class will be held at the VIPS CK Office, Contact keaston@vips.org.

Saturday, March 25, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

VIPS Louisville will offer a Sensory Egg Hunt, (egg hunt starts at 10:15 a.m.) featuring beeping and musical eggs and visual location features, such as balloons. For details, contact Jenny Castenir, Family Services Coordinator at jcastenir@vips.org.

Thursday, April 13, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

The VIPS Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) will offer an online workshop via Zoom on financial planning for your special needs child, to address such critical issues as protecting government benefit eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Special Needs Trusts, ABLE Accounts, and the importance of a will. Watch for more information.

Saturday, May 20, 6 p.m.

VIPS Louisville will hold the VIPS Gala, a festive night of dinner, music and auctions to benefit the children and families served by VIPS. To purchase tickets, donate auction items or become a sponsor, visit: <https://one.bidpal.net/vipsgala2023/welcome>. Or contact aford@vips.org.

Sunday, May 21

Walking for Dreams will take place at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. We hope you and your family will walk

on behalf of VIPS. Keep an eye out on our social media for details, or reach out to mhowell@vips.org.

Thursday, May 25

VIPS Kids Town Preschool Graduation.

Now Taking Applications

Lion's Camp Crescendo for School-Age Students with Visual Impairments

The 2023 Lion Camp Crescendo, Visually Impaired Camp online apps are now available. This camp helps kids of all levels of visual impairment by providing a week long, completely FREE camp featuring all the typical activities of hiking, boating, fishing, swimming and more!. Staff are all volunteers who have a passion for helping children. For camper app for 6-15 years (5 year-olds may be allowed on a case by case bases) go to: <https://lionscampcrescendo.org/youthcamp-blind>. (Siblings are welcome, if space allows).

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.

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

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