

VISability

Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS)
Quarterly Community Newsletter

May 2024
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Newsletter Highlights

There's no obstacle we can't overcome

By VIPS Parents Brooke & Luke

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Join us at the annual VIPS Gala this May

By Meredith Howell

"Last May, I attended the VIPS Gala for the very first time. At that point, I had been associated with this amazing organization, VIPS, for over 11 years as my daughter, Lola, is visually impaired and we received the VIPS services back in 2012 - 2014. Because the early intervention services made such an impact on not only Lola's life but my own as well..." Read more on [page 10](#)



The Impact of a Volunteer

By Rita DeVore

"Being the volunteer coordinator in Indy (one of my many hats), I get emails and calls from groups and individuals wanting to volunteer. One group in particular, that has been to the VIPS Family Resource Center (FRC) twice, led me to a woman who asked if it would be OK if she came back to the FRC again to make birthday cards..." Read more on [page 11](#)



Table of Contents

- 03 Letter from the Editor
- 03 In Memoriam
- 03 Highlight Article: VIPS Family Story
- 05 Spotlight on VIPS Children
- 07 New Arrivals
- 07 Info for VIPS Families
- 08 Thank You to Our Funders
- 08 Upcoming Fundraisers
- 10 Highlight Article: VIPS Gala
- 11 Highlight Article: The Impact of a Volunteer
- 11 Volunteer Shoutouts
- 12 Some Good News
- 14 Contact



Mark your calendar

*indicates an event for VIPS families only

- 05/11 Annual VIPS Gala (Louisville, KY)
- 05/19 Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk (Indianapolis, IN)
- 06/01 *Open Play @ VIPS Louisville
- 06/21 VIPS Day of Giving (online + VIPS Louisville & Indianapolis campuses)
- 07/12 *Indiana Talking Book & Braille Library Storytime at VIPS (Indianapolis, IN)
- 08/16-18 Pickleball Classic (Louisville, KY)
- 08/16 Cupcake Classic (Lexington, KY)

Letter from the Editor

By Ashley Ross

Dear reader,



To our new readers, welcome! To our regular readers, you may notice VISability has a redesign. Our VIPS parent/caregiver quarterly newsletter, VISability, was initially created to inform parents and caregivers about all the happenings at VIPS, to provide tips to help foster a child's development, and to celebrate the successes and milestones of other children and families.

While the newsletter will continue to discuss these topics, we have decided to move in the direction of making VISability a "Community" newsletter, aiming to keep all those connected to our organization up to date, and share stories from our staff, VIPS families, volunteers, and more.

So whether your child is a VIPS kiddo, you have volunteered at one of our campuses, you are a donor/grantor/company that has financially supported our mission, or however you have come in contact with this newsletter, please, enjoy AND get involved!

I would be remiss to not thank both now-retired Pauletta Feldman, newsletter founder, and Jan Moseley, previous VISability editor for their dedication to this newsletter.



Because of their work, thousands of families of children who are visually impaired found a sense of belonging amongst these pages. In a time when there were so few resources for families like the ones we serve at VIPS, VISability was a beacon of hope that came through mailboxes each quarter for many years. While we had to switch to delivering VISability online only in 2020, we know Jan and Pauletta's impact was not diminished and I hope to continue their work with the same dedication. Thank you, Jan and Pauletta!

Sincerely,
Ashley Ross
VIPS Communications Coordinator & Newsletter Editor

In Memorium

This issue of VISability is dedicated to the memories of:

Lucas Jordan Bevins, age 7, of West Liberty, Kentucky, who passed away Friday, January 19, 2024. Lucas was a former VIPS child and son of James Ashley Bevins and Sophia LaShae Ferguson Bevins.

Elena Rayne Hurley, age 3, of Middlesboro, who passed away on Friday, February 16, 2024. Elena was a VIPS child and daughter of Brandi Begley and Daniel Hurley.

*Our hearts go out to those who loved
Lucas and Elena.*

There's No Obstacle We Can't Overcome

By VIPS Parents Brooke & Luke



"Our Brynnie girl is a Mono-Di twin—two sacs, and one placenta that our girls shared. Her twin sister's name is Blake. My pregnancy was incredibly high-risk, and we had no idea how tough of a road we would have. To make a very long story short, I was monitored weekly with ultrasounds to make sure that the girls had even fluid levels and blood levels because they shared a placenta. One day in June, I had an appointment and the ultrasound did not turn out as well as we had hoped. Two days later, I found myself at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital having a surgery called twin-twin transfusion (TTTS). It's a condition in which the blood flows unequally between twins that share a placenta. They told me that Baby A, Brynnie Sue, was not doing well and she might not make it. There were two doctors that offered us to terminate Brynn before this surgery.

Continued on the next page...

Luke and I said no, that is not our call, we knew we were blessed with two baby girls, and we would bring two home, by the grace of God! They did tell us that terminating Baby A, would not terminate Baby B, Blake Leigh. That option still did not matter to us, we wanted to do everything we could to save BOTH girls. Many hours later, we all survived this surgery, and they highly monitored Brynn for days.

The doctors were SHOCKED she survived because she was so close to death. Weeks later, we found out that Brynn had suffered a stage four brain hemorrhage while she was so sick during the surgery. We were then offered back in Indy the option to terminate her again, but we still said, NO. We would be bringing our girl home with us. We knew we had a long road ahead of us to bring our girls to term, but I was willing to do anything to keep them safe! There was bed rest, and limited lifting, which was challenging because we had their older brother at home with us, almost a year old at this point.



Many doctors told us Blake would survive, but Brynn had a VERY low chance of surviving outside of the womb. They said she would never breathe on her own, feed on her own, and everything else was a question mark to them. We had ONE neurologist say she believes she will breathe on her own, so Luke and I said, that's enough for us! We had faith of a mustard seed.

As a precaution, the hospital had asked us to make Brynn's funeral arrangements and plan out final details on how we would like to proceed in that way. Heart-wrenching is not a term that is large enough to describe

this feeling. I was feeling the heavy weight of that truth, but Luke never ever wavered on his belief that the Lord would protect both of our girls.

I was not due with our girls until November, but we delivered them on October 10, 2022. It was such a wonderful day, hearing BOTH of our babies cry! They instantly took Brynn to the NICU. She stayed there for 34 days, just to regulate her breathing. We prayed for a wireless baby to bring home. No oxygen, no feeding tubes, but pure, chunky baby girl. We got exactly that. Our girl came home to us with zero machines, and bottle-fed!!

Luke and I were not told until the day we were leaving the NICU that Brynn might be visually impaired. That thought never crossed my mind before we were told this. I remember saying to them, "Well, we have made it this far, our girl is strong and a warrior. There is no obstacle we can't overcome!"

Our girls are almost 15 months old now, and it has been the most challenging and rewarding year of our lives. Brynn has four different types of therapies, one of them being VIPS. Ms. Sheila is our VIPS "teacher" we say. We love having "class" with her. I knew the moment she walked through our front door she was meant to be in our family. We never want to let her go. She has already told us so many great things to do with Brynnie. She is a fighter for our family too, so we are so thankful to have her on our team! We have faced many obstacles along the road, but our strong girl seems to



overcome every hurdle that has been thrown at her. She is small, but oh so mighty. Our girls are a true miracle, and warriors. I always say one could not have made it without the other. I'm not sure why the Lord chose us to be their parents, but I'm so very grateful He did. Brynn's story is a redemption story. A little girl who will fight and be a warrior to the very end. To God be the glory."

Spotlight on VIPS children

Sharing updates from the amazing children served by VIPS!



Leiland visited the VIPS Family Resource Center in Indianapolis and loved using his vision to explore the bubble tubes and ball pit in the sensory room. Many of our VIPS children love the sensory room as it is a calm, dim space with many light-up features to focus their attention and vision.



Kids Town Preschool student, James, joined our two's class this new year. He has been exploring the concepts of in/out, full/empty, nesting, and pouring as he explores with cups, shiny balls, and bells. All children learn best by doing; James shows this is especially true for the children we support at VIPS.



can use her hands to explore her world when she is in a sitting position!

Oaklynn used both hands to reach out for cause and effect when she interacted with the iPad- as she tapped the stars lit up the screen. She is learning that she



Sonny recently mastered the skill of using his vision and motor skills to operate apps on his tablet. He loves watching the lights and hearing the sounds as he makes music on his piano app!



Luna's parents had a big surprise as their daughter was not expected to crawl soon, but suddenly she took off after Ms. Sheila's bag of toys. Mom exclaimed, "Did she just crawl?" Mom and Dad immediately had tears. She crawled after toys and went back and forth between her parents for the rest of the visit.



Want to share about your child?

Send in your photos and updates to Ashley Ross at aross@vips.org or to your VIPS teacher/interventionist.

Story Time with The Indiana Talking Book & Braille Library



The Indiana Talking Book & Braille Library stopped by the VIPS Family Resource Center in February for a morning filled with stories, songs, and movement. Afterward, the families were able to enjoy the open gym time in the fun spaces the Center has to offer such as the Sensory Room, Toddler Town, the outdoor playground, and more! The Indiana Talking Book & Braille Library is a wonderful resource, free for anyone living in Indiana with a visual impairment. You can have braille books, large print books, and audiobooks shipped for free right to your own home.

There will be another Story Time on July 12! Sign up at bit.ly/49O7CwB

A visit from USPS mail carrier, Rory!



VIPS Kids Town Preschool learned about community helpers in February. Students were joined by our USPS mail carrier, Rory, who has been bringing our packages, light boxes, letters, checks, and cards for three years now. He told us all about his job which entails walking 13 miles per day, six days per week, twelve hours each day so we can have mail delivered quickly. In one of the pictures, you can see Mr. Rory and Finn were excited to be matching! We are so grateful for the United States Postal Service and Rory!

Fund for the Arts + Louisville Ballet



Fund for the Arts, in collaboration with the Louisville Ballet, provides support for VIPS Kids Town Preschool through weekly classes designed to joyfully develop balance, body movement, and spatial awareness. In February, the children explored emotions through movement and music!

Kosair for Kids + The Botner Family

On March 1st, Aaron & Katie Botner, parents to VIPS child Carson and his little brother Brayden, were invited to the Shrine Center's Friday night dinner to share their story of how the critical Kosair for Kids support of VIPS has changed the future for their child. Carson currently attends Kids Town Preschool at VIPS which Kosair for Kids helped to build. Kosair for Kids' mission is to enhance the health and well-being of children by



delivering financial support for healthcare, research, education, social services, and child advocacy. Their vision is to be the catalyst to create a world where children in need live life to the fullest! Since 1999 Kosair for Kids has been doing just that at VIPS. In fact, to date, they have generously donated nearly

\$3,600,000 to change the future for children with blindness and vision loss!

VIPS Louisville's Egg Hunt



VIPS held a sensory-friendly Egg Hunt at the Louisville campus on March 16th. Families were able to make a suncatcher craft and of course, hunt eggs! There were several different kinds of eggs to find including, beeping eggs, light-up eggs, and eggs filled with playdough and toys! Everyone was excited when a very special guest, the Easter bunny, made an appearance! The bunny hopped along passing out suckers and taking pictures with families.



Keep up with VIPS!

Follow us @vipsorg or search "Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS)"

NEW ARRIVALS



We want to welcome these children to our program!

Alexander (IN)	Frances (IN)	Margot (IN)
Alexander (IN)	Grayson (IN)	Maya (IN)
Amira (IN)	Greyson (IN)	Naomi (KY)
AnaLynn (IN)	Gurbaaz (IN)	Nehemiah (IN)
Andrew (KY)	Imane (IN)	Oakley (KY)
Aria (IN)	Isla (IN)	Olivia (IN)
Ariel (KY)	Jacaden (IN)	Rilynn (IN)
Baker (IN)	Jacob (IN)	Rosemary (KY)
Bella (IN)	Javari (IN)	Ruth (KY)
Christian (IN)	Jesse (IN)	Ryen (IN)
Christopher (KY)	John (KY)	ShaNyla (IN)
Colin (IN)	Judah (IN)	Simon (IN)
Conrad (KY)	Kathleen (IN)	Skyler (IN)
Dante (IN)	Kaye (IN)	Sofia (IN)
Devyn (IN)	Kayelee (KY)	Tayshawn (KY)
Eden Olivia (IN)	Keondre (KY)	Titus (IN)
Eleanor (IN)	Lamoni (KY)	Vianney (IN)
Elijah (IN)	Leo (IN)	Willow (IN)
Emerson (IN)	Lian (IN)	Zakariya (IN)
Everleigh (IN)	Lilliana (IN)	
Everlynn (IN)	Maggie (IN)	

Info for VIPS families

Summer time fun at VIPS!

VIPS Kids Town Preschool will close the book on another successful school year this May. On Wednesday, May 22, we will celebrate our twelve graduates as they receive their preschool diplomas. The celebration will continue the next day, May 23, when VIPS hosts our annual cookout benefiting the Crusade for Children. May 23 is our last day of school, too. We hope families will come to VIPS to mark the end of the school year while supporting one of our biggest supporters.

Our preschool team will take the next week to clean up from our school year and then set up for our summer program. We may let them catch their breath a bit, too.

Kids Town Preschool summer program is offered for two or three days a week for our current preschoolers. The children will be led by the preschool teachers and assistants in exploring the great outdoors and indoors as they continue learning through hands-on activities, music therapy, special visitors, and the familiar preschool routine. The summer program will run Monday through Thursday from June 3 through July 25, with no programming the week of July 1-4.

We will open Kids Town, the sensory room, and the playground on Saturday morning, June 1, for our VIPS families to visit and play together. There is no formal programming on our Open VIPS mornings - just an opportunity for good family fun.

However, the Louisville VIPS team members are not the only ones preparing for a fun and enriching summer for the children and families we serve.

Take a look at the fun that will be offered by our VIPS team over the summer months:

Our Indianapolis Family Resource Center will host a story time and open gym for our VIPS families on July 12, 2024. Families are invited to play in our outdoor sensory yard, Toddler Town, and the sensory room. Once again, this is time for you and your family!

Our very popular VIPS Orientation and Mobility (O&M) camp will be held on all three VIPS campuses again this summer. This special day will be filled with fun and safety tips as our little ones hone their travel skills. The VIPS O&M specialists are busy planning already. Once dates are confirmed, VIPS will announce them in VIPS Blips and on Facebook.

And let's not forget the other big push for the summer months! Our teachers will be attending trainings, conferences, and professional development days. We will be students at some and the instructors at others.

It will truly be a summer filled with growth for all of VIPS. We hate to wish away time, but we are ready for some sunscreen and sunglasses!

Open Play VIPS Louisville, June 1, 2024



Join us for “Open Play” at the VIPS Louisville campus. There will be no scheduled programming- this will be a time for children to play in Kids Town and the Sensory Room while parents chat and connect. RSVP at bit.ly/3ICCncu.

Oral Health Books for Your Child



Dr. Nelly Chawla, Director of Oral Health for the State of Indiana, stopped by the VIPS Family Resource Center to drop off brailled toddler books, large print books, and other brailled books all about the importance of brushing teeth,

going to the dentist, and more! The books are now available for checkout at the VIPS Lending Library at the Family Resource Center. Please contact Rita DeVore at rdevore@vips.org or 317-694-3909 if you would like to check out a book or you may ask your VIPS teacher.



If you have any questions about VIPS family events reach out to Jenny at jcastenir@vips.org (KY) or Rita at rdevore@vips.org (IN).

Thank you to our funders!

The following foundations and organizations have granted or raised funds to cover programming, operations, technology, and more.

- Alex G. Campbell, Jr. Foundation, \$1,000
- Anonymous Foundation, \$2,000
- Ball Brothers Foundation, \$5,000
- Caesars Foundation of Floyd County, \$7,500
- Copia Foundation, \$7,500

- Costco Wholesale, \$10,000
- CViConnect + Council of Schools & Services for the Blind, in-kind donation of NAVEG kits
- Fred B. & Opal S. Woosley Foundation, \$25,000
- Gheens Foundation, \$20,000
- Impact100 Louisville, \$11,600
- IPA Foundation, \$18,843.65
- Irvin F. & Alice S. Etscorn Charitable Foundation, \$25,000
- King's Daughters & Sons Foundation of Kentucky, \$4,755.34
- Kiwanis Club of Bloomington, \$1,350
- KSB Charitable Foundation, \$98,500
- Legacy Foundation of Kentuckiana, \$75,00
- Linda Neville Trust, \$35,000
- Louisville Downtown Lions Club, \$40,000
- Norton Healthcare, \$2,500
- Old National Bank Foundation, \$10,000
- Osmondson Charitable Fund, \$55,000
- Psi Iota Xi, \$500
- Stouts Footwear, \$500
- William Stamps Farish Fund, \$20,000

Upcoming fundraisers

Funds raised at events go towards providing vision-specific early intervention to children who are blind or visually impaired, and resources to their families.

Annual VIPS Gala, May 11, 2024

Mark your calendar and get ready to be part of something extraordinary! We extend a special invitation to individuals who share our passion for making a difference. Secure your spot at the 2024 VIPS Gala, happening at the Louisville Boat Club on Saturday, May 11, 2024.

Additional Details

- Suggested cocktail attire
- Cocktails + silent auction: 6pm, then dinner & live auction to follow
- Bourbon Pull opens May 8
- Silent Auction: Opens May 3, ends May 11 @ 8pm

View more details at:
one.bidpal.net/vipsgala2024

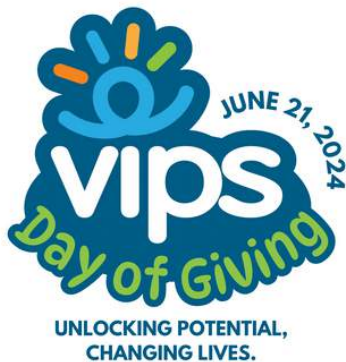
Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk, May 19, 2024



Join us for the Walking for Dreams Family & Pet Walk at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis, May 19! This 3Kish family and dog-friendly event and we hope to raise \$23,000 to support our critical programming.

There is a NEW and IMPROVED website this year that makes signing up to walk, starting a team, and/or donating a breeze! Register at tinyurl.com/53pd5233

VIPS Day of Giving, June 21, 2024



Exciting news! We have loved participating in the various giving days each year: Kentucky Gives Day, Give for Good Louisville, and Giving Tuesday. However, we are thrilled to announce that VIPS will celebrate our VERY OWN giving day each June!

Join us on June 21, 2024, for our first-ever VIPS Day of Giving!

All funds raised during our VIPS Day of Giving in June will provide vision-specific education to VIPS families across Indiana and Kentucky.



Want to sponsor an event?

For event sponsorships, reach out to Ashley Ford at aford@vips.org (KY) or Meredith Howell at mhowell@vips.org (IN).

Pickleball Classic, August 16-18, 2024

We are excited to announce the dates of our 2024 Pickleball Classic. Mark your calendars for the weekend of August 16th - 18th, 2024 at Louisville Indoor Racquet Club.



This three-day tournament includes various engaging activities commencing with an Open Play session on Friday evening, available to every Pickleball skill level including beginners!

Our Friday Open Play kicks off the Tournament with live music, food, and raffles. Saturday and Sunday will feature our Doubles & Mixed Doubles segments (all skill levels welcomed). This event highlights the local Pickleball community, gathering about 220 players. Stay tuned for registration details!

Cupcake Classic, August 16, 2024



On Friday, August 16, 2024, Visually Impaired Preschool Services will hold the 7th Annual Cupcake Classic 3K at Wellington Park in South Lexington. All proceeds will go towards the education of children with blindness and low vision throughout our Commonwealth and 100% of sponsorships go directly towards putting a VIPS Developmental Interventionist/Teacher of the Visually Impaired in a child's home for an early intervention visit. We invite walkers, runners, joggers, and rollers (baby strollers and wheelchairs) of all ages to come out and participate. Even if you can't join in the race, come support a great cause and have a good time doing so!

Schedule:

6:30 PM - Registration opens
7:15 PM - Little Cupcake Kids' Dash
7:30 PM - 3K run/walk begins

Join us at the annual VIPS Gala this May

By Meredith Howell

Last May, I attended the VIPS Gala for the very first time. At that point, I had been associated with this amazing organization, VIPS, for over 11 years as my daughter, Lola, is visually impaired and we received the VIPS services back in 2012 - 2014. Because the early intervention services made such an impact on not only Lola's life but my own as well, I joined the VIPS Indiana team as the part-time family services coordinator in 2014 and since then have gradually worked my way up through the nonprofit. I now proudly wear the Director of Community Outreach & Advocacy title.

But if I had worked at VIPS for so long, why hadn't I attended the Gala sooner? If I can be totally honest, Lola, her health, and her development consumed so much of my life that the thought of leaving her in Indianapolis so I could attend a fancy Gala in Louisville wasn't even on my radar. We were in survival mode—literally—trying to get Lola's intractable seizures identified and controlled. But over time, with the right neurologist and the right medication, Lola is now on a much better path and that has meant that I feel much more comfortable leaving her with loved ones. So when it came time for the 2023 Gala, I knew I wanted to be there and I'm so glad I went as I had a lovely time with my husband, Rob, and my other child, Sebastian. Since Lola is not too keen on crowded and unfamiliar environments she stayed home with Grandma and while

it was fun having Sebastian in attendance—I think I would have been more relaxed if I wasn't in "Mom Mode" the entire evening.

Immediately upon arrival, champagne was available and check-in was quick and easy. We perused the fun

silent auction items, took goofy pictures with props at the photo booth, felt glamorous getting our photo snapped at the Step & Repeat, and chatted with the attendees at our table. I had the pleasure of sitting with



the generous folks from Kosair for Kids so it was nice to be able to share firsthand what an impact VIPS can have on a family as we were living and breathing proof of it. Dinner would be served and it was delicious. I had never had Derby Pie, being from Michigan, so that was a welcomed treat! Throughout dinner, we heard from various speakers—Diane Nelson, executive director, and Jerry Bizer, long-time board member. What especially touched my heart was listening to the two VIPS families share about the importance of the services their children had or were receiving. There weren't many dry eyes in the room after hearing their stories. It was just the reminder we, the crowd, needed to hear as the auctioneer began his quest to dig into our pockets but for good reason—we were there to make a difference in

the lives of these children.

The live auction and Fund-A-Vision would help VIPS do just that as people opened their hearts (and wallets) generously. VIPS would raise close to \$130,000 that evening and as someone who went through the VIPS program, I couldn't have been more grateful for all of the support.



Our next Gala is set for May 11, 2024 at the Louisville Boat Club. We have a lofty goal this year—we hope to raise \$148,000. What can you do to help? Buy a ticket to the Gala or better yet—buy a table and invite all of your friends! If you can't make it that night, consider purchasing a silent auction item through our mobile bidding, buying a ticket for our Bourbon Pull, or you can simply donate. By doing so, you are helping VIPS serve families just like my own. I can't imagine where Lola's life would be without VIPS—and the same can be said for me. I've found my purpose through my career at VIPS. I get to ensure that other parents who have young kids with vision loss in Kentucky and Indiana are not alone on this unexpected journey in parenting as VIPS will be there every step of the way and that means everything to me. I hope to see you at the Gala in May!



Find more info at one.bidpal.net/vipsgala2024

The Impact of a Volunteer

by Rita DeVore



Being the volunteer coordinator in Indy (one of my many hats), I get emails and calls from groups and individuals wanting to volunteer. One group in particular, that has been to the VIPS Family Resource Center (FRC) twice, led me to a woman who asked if it would be OK if she came back to the FRC again to make birthday cards that I send to our VIPS kids each month. She is a soft-spoken lady of few words and she reminds me of my sister-in-law, who even looks like her. I'll call her MB.

MB would send me an email and we would set a day, usually once a month, for her to come in and work on cards for a couple of hours. I would set craft items and cards that needed edits out for her, and she would ask for nothing. No water, coffee, snacks, or anything. I felt my exceptional hosting skills were lost on her! She would never stay longer than two hours and her cards were always exceptional. I learned a lot about MB over the months she has volunteered with VIPS—she shared about her adult son who was diagnosed with MS, her husband's love of running, and the small office she has set up for making cards which I found out was her hobby and passion. MB came to the FRC in December to work on cards but only stayed



one hour. On her way out she handed me a small envelope and I thought, "Oh how nice, she made me a Christmas card." It sat on my desk for an hour then I decided to open it and it was much more than just a card. MB had written a check for \$2,500.00 to VIPS. I sat stunned and in tears. Here was a woman who just wanted to do good in the world and she could have chosen to spread her kindness anywhere and yet she chose VIPS. Her generosity hit me hard but in the best way. I feel emotional when I think of her kindness. I haven't heard from MB for any future dates but I know I will and I also know she doesn't want to be treated any differently. She just wants to volunteer and make cards for VIPS. I couldn't be more thankful for this special woman who has come into my life through VIPS. She has made quite an impact on me!

Volunteer Shoutouts

NCAA PR Team



The NCAA PR Team came to the VIPS Family Resource Center to help make tactile birthday cards for the VIPS kids we serve. The team enjoyed a tour of the center, then spent the rest of their time at VIPS getting crafty and creative, and some even learned how to braille their names. We are incredibly grateful to the NCAA PR Team for taking the time to make such special birthday cards for the VIPS kids!

SCI Kiwanis Club



We would like to express our gratitude to the wonderful Vanessa McClary and the SCI Kiwanis Club for making shaker tubes for the children we serve at VIPS! These shaker tubes are the perfect size for small hands to grasp and shake to listen to the fun noises they can make.

Indiana University Delta Gamma Theta Chapter



VIPS would like to give a special thank you to the ladies of the Indiana University Delta Gamma Theta Chapter for spending part of their Saturday with us! The DGs started their morning with a tour of the VIPS Family Resource Center in Indianapolis then made tactile books that will be included in Welcome Bags for the new children enrolled in our program.



What made their visit unique was that a former VIPS child and daughter of the VIPS director of development was in attendance with her mom. The Delta Gammas were able to see firsthand the impact the VIPS services have had on a child who has gone through

the program. Lola sure loved being part of the action with the ladies! We are so grateful to the IU DGs for their continued support of VIPS over the years.



Want to volunteer with VIPS?

To help in the Kentucky offices, contact Kirsten at kschmidt@vips.org, and for the Indiana office contact Rita at rdevore@vips.org.

Other ways to support VIPS:

Check out our Amazon Wish Lists!

- Kentucky's list tinyurl.com/mr2f9j8j
- Indiana's list tinyurl.com/ep6vrzjf

Host a supplies drive! Here are some items we are always in need of:

- Bead necklaces for making bead curtains
- Copy paper
- Black towels bath size
- Manila file folders
- Glue sticks (hot and regular)
- Duct tape

Some good news!

Braille Challenge

Congratulations to the 2024 Braille Challenge participants and winners! On February 22, 20+ students gathered on the Kentucky School of the Blind campus for a day of friendly competition on reading comprehension and speed and accuracy in braille. This year, every first place finisher was a graduate of VIPS services! A special congratulations to Kaily Arellano, Bradley Wines, Krishna Malhotra, Addy Clarkson, and Braeden Robinson. Each of these five students will move on to the national competition to be held later in the spring.



Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency

We are proud to share that VIPS has received the Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency on GuideStar! Check out our nonprofit profile at <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/61-1061973>



VIISA (Vision Impaired In-service of America) training



We were honored to host a VIISA (Vision Impaired In-service of America) training at our Family Resource Center in Indianapolis! This training allows participants to gain and develop skills in understanding the unique needs of infants and toddlers who are blind or visually impaired in a home-based setting. Interested in joining the next training or want more information? Reach out to Kathy Mullen at kmullen@vips.org.

World Braille Day



In honor of World Braille Day on January 4th, VIPS Director of Development Meredith Howell went to the statehouse to deliver handmade cards to all Indiana state legislators, including Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and Governor Eric Holcomb. We hope these cards bring

awareness to the blind and visually impaired community and the critical need for investment in early intervention!

Check out the podcast!



Catch up on season 3 of Feeling this life! 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 impairments.

Episodes in Season 3

- E1 Lola's story with Meredith Howell
- E2 We all have different self-care needs with Ali Huckins
- E3 Look at What You Can Do with Amy Nichols
- E4 Book Club - Thunderdog by Michael Hingson with Susy Flory
- E5 What self-care means to us with Ashley Reynolds and Brian Runyon
- E6 Caring for Your Relationship with Your Partner with Sarah Cawthon
- E7 Catarina Rivera (Blindish Latina)
- E8 The Importance of Grandparents with Rita Devore

Child Advocacy Day in Frankfort



VIPS was honored to represent the voice of Kentucky's youngest children with blindness and vision loss at Child Advocacy Day in Frankfort earlier this week. We made our way to the statehouse to express our gratitude for the critical support for our statewide mission. Thank you to Kentucky Youth Advocates for organizing Children's Advocacy Week at the Capitol!

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2022-2023 VIPS Impact Report

We are extremely proud to share the highlights of our most recent fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

Check out the Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) 2023 Annual Impact Report available at vips.org/financial-documents



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 councils.