



variety[™]
the children's charity



Variety - the Children's Charity

Helping Children Live Their Brightest Lives



A Letter From Our Executive Director

In my role as Executive Director of Variety - the Children's Charity, I have the privilege of presenting specialized bikes and equipment to children living with special needs. I get to meet their families, hear their stories, and share their hopes and dreams for their child. But most of all, I get to see the smiles and experience the joy felt by the entire family upon seeing their son or daughter, brother or sister, grandson or granddaughter, receive a piece of specialized equipment that is going to forever impact their life.

I have seen Aurora (pictured on the next page), a four-year-old little girl who has lived her life in a wheelchair, finally be able to stand face to face and smile to smile with her twin sister because we were able to give her a stander mobility piece.

I have witnessed Charlie (pictured on the front cover), whose family was told he wouldn't ever walk, be able to walk with minimal support because he gained strength from the use of a gait trainer mobility piece that Variety provided. The smile on that little boy's face and the complete joy he experiences every time he is able to walk and play is breathtaking.

We all have something that "fills our bucket" and drives us to do more. For me, these kids are my motivation to come to work every day and do my best to make a positive impact in as many children's lives as I can - I invite you to help me accomplish that goal. Our mission is simple - to improve the lives of children who are at-risk, underprivileged, critically ill, or living with special needs.

We can all find a reason. We all have passion. We can all take action.

Together, we can ensure every child in Iowa has the ability to laugh, smile, and play freely.

Sheri McMichael, Executive Director of Variety - the Children's Charity

We Are

Variety - the Children's Charity



Aurora

OUR MISSION

Variety is dedicated to improving the lives of children who are at-risk, underprivileged, critically ill, or living with special needs.

WHAT WE DO

Variety is creating a better future for our community by connecting people who care, to programs that enable children to reach their full potential. Through grants and Variety vans, mobility equipment, traditional bikes, inclusive playgrounds, and the Compassion Fund, Variety strives to ensure that all children have the resources and support they need to live their brightest lives.

OUR TELETHON HISTORY

In 1975, four businessmen came up with a plan to raise dollars to help children. Stanley J. Reynolds, Steve Blank, Ray Johnson, and Mike Reilly created a locally produced Telethon to rally support around children's needs in the community. The first annual Telethon aired that year and raised \$151,000 to provide medical equipment to Blank Children's Hospital.

Since then, Iowans have joined together to contribute their time, talent, and hearts to the Variety Telethon. For 46 years, the Variety Telethon hosted a line-up of local and international celebrities who appeared on-air, along with thousands of corporate volunteers and donors who pledged their ongoing time and support to Iowa's children.

Telethon has transformed into a televised multi-million dollar fundraiser that highlights the many ways Variety helps children. Variety VIPs (Very Interested Persons who individually fundraise for Variety) generate over \$1 million of the annual total. This truly showcases the dedication of our volunteers who are committed to helping Iowa's children.

PROGRAMS

Variety helps children live their brightest lives through statewide programming efforts.

Each of Variety's valuable programs is supported by donations from individuals and companies in the communities that we serve. With your help, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands of children every day. Variety's initiatives focus on the five programs listed below.

GRANTS

Granting funds to nonprofit organizations serving children throughout Iowa on an annual basis.

MOBILITY

Awarding traditional bikes to underserved children and personalized mobility equipment to children living with special needs.

VARIETY VANS

Providing children's organizations with vans to assist with programming needs.

THE COMPASSION FUND

Fulfilling the immediate needs of families with children who are hospitalized or are receiving complex medical care.

VARIETY STAR PLAYGROUNDS

Building inclusive playgrounds in Iowa communities for children and families of all abilities to enjoy.



GRANTS

Variety provides funding to nonprofit children's organizations as they work to improve the lives of children by expanding and renovating buildings, purchasing equipment, developing inclusive programs, and more. Variety's funds enable children to make positive choices, attend inspiring activities, and play with peers.

Acute: Agencies that provide neonatal, pediatric, and youth critical care services.

Camperships: Camps and social activities for children who are underprivileged, critically ill, and/or children suffering from ongoing health conditions.

Convalescent: Agencies that provide residential or other services to children who suffer from physical, mental, or emotional afflictions.

Underprivileged: Agencies that serve children who may lack social or educational opportunities due to poverty, environment, and/or other factors.

Preventative: Agencies that direct children to make positive choices regarding behavior and lifestyle or that seek to raise community awareness regarding the well-being of children.



Photo Credit:
Easterseals

"We are so grateful for Variety - the Children's Charity's ongoing support allowing us to serve Iowa's most vulnerable children and families. The support we receive allows us to continue to innovate and meet the complex needs of our community."

– Sherri Nielsen, President and CEO of Easterseals Iowa

Variety at Work: Special projects or recreational activities for children who are at-risk, underprivileged, critically ill, or living with special needs.

Youth at Risk: Agencies that serve children who are living with special needs due to physical or chemical abuse, behavioral problems, or are in need of emergency shelter.

MOBILITY

All children should have the chance to ride a bike, and Variety makes that dream a reality.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

Variety helps children living with special needs gain mobility, confidence, and freedom by providing personalized mobility equipment. Variety provides equipment such as adaptive bicycles, gait trainers, mobile standers, specialized strollers, and more.

In addition to bringing smiles to children's faces, these pieces of equipment offer great therapeutic and physical benefits. However, they are cost-prohibitive for many families and are rarely covered by insurance. That's why Variety works with physical therapists to identify children who would greatly benefit from mobility equipment.

TRADITIONAL BIKES

Bikes go hand-in-hand with being a kid, but for many children in our community, the idea of having their own bike and pedaling freely is just a dream. Variety helps make that dream a reality by gifting brand new bikes, helmets, and locks to hundreds of children throughout Iowa each year.

Variety bikes help children and families think about exercise and good health, and they provide an opportunity to teach the importance of safety and responsibility. These are skills that will last a lifetime!





Lucas

VARIETY VANS

Often seen at the zoo, doctor's offices, parks, and playgrounds, Variety Vans are a critical link for children to explore and join in the fun of their communities.

Over the last 45 years, Variety has provided vans to children's organizations in Iowa, making it easier and more affordable to transport youth to appointments, therapy sessions, and special outings or activities.

"Our goal at the end of the day with every one of our youth is to give them all the tools they need to become self-sufficient. Whether it is traveling to appointments, moving into a new apartment or getting people on the street connected with our services, this van is essential in reaching our youth where they are at in life." - Iowa Homeless Youth Center

"This bike has allowed him to continue to be like everyone else - to be independent and able to go on rides with his brother and neighborhood friends. He can be safe and feel so much pride in doing something on his own. Knowing that he has some limits, being able to enjoy life and his own freedom like so many others shouldn't be one of those limits."

- Alyssa, mom of Lucas



Photo Credit: Iowa Homeless Youth Center

COMPASSION FUND

The Compassion Fund is a safety net that provides support for families during their most difficult time, so they can focus on being there for their child. Social workers at Iowa hospitals have access to financial support, so they can identify needs and distribute funds immediately, providing much-needed relief for families with a child who is critically ill or receiving specialized medical treatment. The Compassion Fund helps to fulfill immediate needs such as:

- Gas cards for frequent travel to appointments
- Meals for a parent who spends weeks in the hospital
- Payment of immediate bills such as phone, heat, electricity or water
- A birthday cake for a child who spends their special day in a hospital bed
- Care for siblings when parents need to stay with their children receiving medical care
- Sleep sacks for newborns to help prevent SIDS

"The funds really did help us a lot with unexpected everything - bills, gas, clothes, food, it really did help us because we did not expect this. It changed us when we were at the hospital, and we are just forever grateful. "

– Jordyn and Andrew, parents of Parker



VARIETY STAR PLAYGROUNDS

Variety believes that playgrounds should be thrilling for all children. However, the majority of playgrounds in Iowa don't offer adaptations for children who live with special needs. That's why Variety has built four Variety Star Playgrounds in Iowa, two in Des Moines, one in Clive, and one in Cedar Rapids. Variety has also provided grant funding to many other inclusive playground projects throughout Iowa.

Playgrounds are the perfect place to support inclusive play by creating awareness, breaking down barriers and fostering new friendships, in addition to promoting healthy physical activity and learning for children of all ages and abilities.

Some of the features of Variety Star Playgrounds include:

- Rubberized safety surfaces
- Swings with adaptive seats and harnesses
- Ramps throughout the playground
- Equipment at heights that are accessible by wheelchair
- Adaptive see-saws, accessible gliders, and more inclusive features

"Our partnership with Variety - the Children's Charity makes an immeasurable difference in our community every day. Working with them has allowed us to add two accessible playgrounds into our park system, allowing children of all ages and abilities to just have fun!"

– Ben Page, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Des Moines



GET INVOLVED

Lend a hand, share your heart.

VOLUNTEER

To improve the lives of children across the state of Iowa, it takes a team - a BIG team! Variety depends on the generosity and goodwill of people who devote their time and energy to helping children. There are many ways to get involved, no special talent required! Check out our volunteer opportunities at varietyiowa.com/volunteer to get involved.

BECOME A VIP

Very Interested Persons (Variety VIPs) are volunteers who work miracles in conjunction with our Telethon Campaign. VIPs are truly the backbone of our fundraising efforts.

Variety VIPs advocate on behalf of Variety in the community, have access to a network of caring people who are changing lives, reach out and gain financial commitments from family, friends, and coworkers. Visit varietyiowa.com/vip for more details.

YOUNG VARIETY

Young Variety is the young professionals arm of Variety. Through Young Variety, young professionals in the Des Moines area have the opportunity to give back to the community, improve the lives of local children, and meet new people.

Young Variety hosts fundraising events throughout the year and develops strategic partnerships to further Variety's mission. Learn more at varietyiowa.com/yv.

COMPANY BIKE BUILDS

Hosting a bike build is a great way for employees to interact as a team outside the workplace while making a difference in the community. Participants will work together to build the easy-to-assemble bikes, and then professionals will complete a safety check on all bikes before they are given to children in need: varietyiowa.com/volunteer.



GIVING

Your gift makes an impact.

MOBILITY EQUIPMENT SPONSORSHIPS

Did you know that you can sponsor a piece of mobility equipment for a child in need? Adaptive mobility equipment such as specialized bikes, car seats, gait trainers, mobile standers, and more are extremely beneficial for children in their development.

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

Variety's events are crucial to raising funds to help children through our programming efforts. By sponsoring Variety events, you'll not only make a positive impact on children, but you will also create positive awareness for your company and generate goodwill in the community.

WORKPLACE GIVING

Payroll deduction is a simple way to support Variety. Ask your human resources department if they will automatically deduct funds from your paycheck on a recurring or one-time basis. You can also ask your employer if they would be willing to match your gift to Variety.

Please email stateoffice@varietyiowa.com or call 515.243.4660 to make a gift or learn more about giving.

CHAMPIONS

The smiles are invaluable, and your support makes it possible.



"Fareway believes in giving back to the communities we serve, and for more than 35 years we have partnered with Variety - the Children's Charity to help make a difference in the lives of Iowa's children. We proudly engage our generous customers, dedicated employees, and provide corporate contributions to impact kids who are underprivileged, at-risk, critically ill, and living with special needs." - Reynolds W. Cramer, CEO



"Helping people is the very core of what our Companies, employees, and agents do every day. I am honored to serve on the board and lead fundraising efforts at Farm Bureau Financial Services. From sharing impactful stories about how Variety helps children and their families to organizing fundraising activities to volunteering at past telethons, we proudly support Variety. Our employees had a chance to watch first-hand the pure joy a child and their family feel as a recipient of a specialized bike. It was a moment to remember." - Dan Koster, Vice President Marketing & Agency Services



"At Graham Construction, we believe in investing in the future and are dedicated to making a lasting impact in the lives of children in need in our communities. Graham Construction is proud to play a small role in bringing a smile to the faces of children and families who are impacted by Variety. We have supported Variety for more than two decades because we know an investment in Variety is one of the BEST ways to support Iowa's children in need." - Steve Hauschilt, CEO



"The Principal Charity Classic is proud to call Variety - the Children's Charity of Iowa one of its official Tournament Charity Partners. Our mission is to help Iowa kids live their best lives, and Variety embodies the spirit of that goal. We are grateful each and every year to see the tremendous, positive impact that Variety has on the well-being of Iowa's children and their families." - Alex McCarty, Tournament Director



"At MidAmerican we look for partners that truly make a difference in the community. The impact and lives touched by Variety on an annual basis is extraordinary. We also enjoy the opportunity to have our employees engaged with their time and talent through building and delivering bikes to underserved populations. This sets the partnership apart and creates an invaluable experience for everyone. It means so much to be a part of the work that is being done and seeing the joy it brings ... Variety makes that happen." - Kathryn Kunert, Vice President, Economic Connections and Integration

Rosalie Gallagher

"Variety - the Children's Charity plays a vital role in our community and our state on so many levels. I have seen the positive results and happiness our Variety gifts bring to so many of our youth. I'm a true and passionate believer in Variety and proud to be involved and associated with this significant charity. I am extremely proud of our Variety staff and our volunteers for their steadfast dedication and remarkable work in providing a better life for so many of Iowa's children. As Marian Wright Edelman quoted (the founder of The Children's Defense fund) 'If we don't stand up for children then we don't stand for much, investing in children is not a national luxury or a national choice - it's a national necessity.'" - Rosalie Gallagher



"Variety is one of Hy-Vee's longest-standing charitable partners. Since 1983, Hy-Vee has raised nearly \$20 million for Variety to improve the lives of children across Iowa. Hy-Vee has demonstrated its commitment to Variety by volunteering at annual Variety telethon events, leading local and companywide fundraisers, donating food and supplies to children and families, sponsoring events - and more. At Hy-Vee, we believe in giving back to our communities and being leaders in corporate citizenship. For nearly 40 years, Hy-Vee has taken comfort knowing that every dollar raised for Variety will help create brighter futures for children across the state and uplift families in our communities." - Kevin Sherlock, Chief Operating Officer

Stan W. Reynolds

"The impact Variety makes on children is remarkable - seeing a child's face light up with joy when they receive a specialized bike for the first time and knowing that their life, and their family's lives, will forever be changed because of this piece of equipment is amazing. Our family has supported Variety for generations because we know that every dollar raised will help create brighter futures for children across Iowa." - Stan W. Reynolds



LEGACY GIVING

Leave your lasting mark on Iowa's children.



Variety's planned giving program enables individuals to continue Variety's mission of improving the lives of children across the state.

Generosity comes in many forms - this may be done through a charitable bequest through your will, gifts through retirement plans, or charitable gift annuities.

Visit varietyiowa.com/legacy to learn more.



Photo Credit: Finley Health Foundation

OUR IMPACT

"Charlie experienced hypothermia when he was seven days old and has had many hospitalizations, developmental delays, and did not have the strength in his legs to walk independently. In November 2019, Charlie received a bright blue Gait Trainer from Variety. It was a piece of equipment we desperately wanted but was well beyond our financial means. Upon being placed in the gait trainer he began to walk around and flash his smile at anyone who would look his way. With this new piece of mobility equipment came a new found hope.

By the time spring 2020 arrived he had gained enough strength that he walked around the block for the first time. His gait trainer was his "gym on wheels" allowing us to take walks as a family and become a part of our community. Everywhere we went people would ask questions about the amazing piece of equipment, especially if Charlie was flashing one of his famous smiles.

Today Charlie is able to walk independently with minimal support. He is able to climb up on the couch, walk around the block, and explore the play equipment in our backyard. None of these major developmental milestones would have been possible if it weren't for the support of Variety. Our family feels as though our wishes and dreams are coming true as a result of our partnership with Variety - the Children's Charity of Iowa and for that we are eternally grateful." - Nancy, Charlie's mom.





varietyiowa.com

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