The Care Program partners with agencies delivering specific supportive services to children with physical or developmental special needs and their families. Working together, we improve the health, wellness and quality of life for children.

**LifeStriders**

"As a home-schooled family, we receive no school services. Everything we do either has to go through insurance or is private pay. The cost of my daughter’s therapeutic riding was a concern but we were elated to learn that Variety would cover the cost. Natalie loves riding more than anything in the world and she never feels like she is doing any “work”! She is the cool kid that rides horses. She shines! I am so thankful to Variety for making it possible for Natalie to ride and learn."

-Amy, mother of 14-year-old Natalie

**HEAR Wisconsin**

Variety partnered with HEAR Wisconsin to provide 50 Language Learning Play Kits for families to use in therapy sessions. During COVID-19, families were still able to continue receiving therapy through online services. The play kits allowed the therapists and families to have the same set of toys so the therapists could demonstrate how to use the toys and the parents could practice effective strategies to engage and help their children learn and grow.

**Independence First**

Seria was told that “video games are not for girls” and that gaming with a significant disability was impossible. Through a grant from Variety to Independence First’s e-gaming program, Seria was able to find the right combination of switches and positioning aids and was able to meaningfully play video games for the first time in her life!

**Go Baby Go**

Variety partners with Children’s WI and Marquette University’s Biomedical Engineering Department to deliver Go Baby Go, a unique service that provides modified ride-on electric toy cars that can be utilized by children with limited mobility and motor control. Wheelchairs for this young population are often not covered by insurance. The modified cars provide a safe, cost-effective, age-appropriate alternative to a power wheelchair.

“Research has shown that having active control over one’s own exploration is linked to increased cognitive, motor, and language development in young children. Go Baby Go Milwaukee customizes each car to match the child’s needs at no cost to the families. Our unique partnership between the engineers and therapists allows us to create unique cars for each child to fit their exact therapy needs.”

Molly Erickson, Marquette University

**Freedom Program**

The Freedom Program helps children with physical disabilities gain mobility, confidence, independence and access by funding mobility and other enabling equipment.

This past year Variety granted more than $42,000 worth of mobility equipment to children throughout the state of Wisconsin. Since the Freedom Program’s inception in 2005 more than $1,000,000 has been granted.

**2020 Impact Report**

At Variety, we are proud of what we have accomplished this past year, and extremely grateful to our donors and partners. Together, we are enriching lives - one smile at a time!

**Joellyn and Ray DeMara love kids!**

Their family includes 14 children, 8 of whom are adopted and have special needs. Two of the DeMara children, 14-year-old Kayden and 16-year-old Kyler, brought this group into the Variety Family. Kayden has Spina Bifida and cannot walk for long periods of time. He enjoys swimming and playing wheelchair basketball. Kyler has Cerebral Palsy and requires a wheelchair for his mobility. He is non-verbal, but his expressive face and smile light up a room!

Kayden received his sports wheelchair with help from Variety earlier this year and Kyler received his new adaptive stroller! This stroller is much lighter than his power wheelchair and will allow for “off-roading” with his brothers and sisters at the farm.
Eighty-five years of history can bring a lot of ups and downs. At Variety – the Children’s Charity of Wisconsin, we have seen war and peace, good and bad economies, and many other changes that impacted us in various ways. Through it all, we kept our eye on the prize – the smiles and laughter of the children who have been helped by our Variety supporters.

On behalf of the Variety Team, we are pleased to share this 2020 Impact Report with you. This year has thrown us a few curveballs, but our focus remains on those we served – children with physical or developmental special needs and their families.

We share this report with you, because you are an integral part of our successes. Your support is the reason we can provide the equipment and experiences to help our Variety kids thrive!

Community support has sustained Variety’s mission for 85 years. We are inspired daily by our Variety kids and it makes us want to do more – but we can’t do it alone.

Allow yourself to be inspired by one of these smiling faces. Be proud of what your past gifts have helped us provide for our Variety families. Finally, please consider a year-end gift to help us serve even more children throughout Wisconsin.

We value your partnership and support and continue to hold you in our thoughts as we move forward toward a new year.

Cheers to 85 Years!

Nancy Seidl Nelson
Executive Director

History
In 1935, a group of businessmen, most of them with ties to show business, formed a chapter of Variety in Milwaukee. Since its founding, hundreds of thousands of lives have been transformed. Where there has been a great need, Variety has responded.

1935
Variety Comes to Wisconsin

1940’s
Variety Milk Bank

1950’s
Variety Heart Clinic

1960’s
Variety Club Epilepsy and Neurological Center

1970’s
Variety Limb Bank

1980’s
Variety Child Abuse Clinic

1990’s
Variety-sponsored Outings for Kids

2000’s
Variety Club Home Hospice

2010’s
Variety Freedom Program

Today
Variety continues to serve children with physical or developmental special needs and their families, offering enhanced mobility and life-enriching opportunities – one child at a time.

Discovery Program
The Discover Program focuses on education, experiences and play by providing fun, free family outings. Supported through ticket donations and generous sponsors, Variety families enjoy trying new experiences and making new friends. It’s part of our vision that Variety children can actively participate and experience the joys of childhood.

Gathering became more difficult this past Spring. With kids schooling at home and several activities cancelled, our team at Variety got creative to keep our connections with families.

“One of the many reasons I cherish and support Variety is because they always have a plan for the donations they receive and they put those plans into action to benefit children and families. No matter the activity or outing, all I ever see is happy faces, laughter, joy, and appreciation. Seeing those emotions on everyone’s faces confirms to me that Variety not only does it right, but does it well.”

Paul Kozak/Bell Bank Mortgage
Discover Events Sponsor

Connections During COVID
Virtual Art Class – World-renowned artist Walfrido Garcia partnered with Variety to create an all-abilities art class on YouTube! Variety families received free art supplies and the video link to watch, learn and participate at their convenience! The link was shared with other Variety tents throughout the U.S. to spread the love!

230 participants
Generously sponsored by: Ziegler Capital Management/Scott Roberts

Marcus Outdoor Movies – Our good friends and longtime partner Marcus Theatres helped break up the boredom by bringing back the outdoor movie! A gift card helped Variety families enjoy a movie by the “carload”, with a little left over for concessions!

109 participants
Generously sponsored by: Nancy Larson, John Leew & Paula Verboom, Slackner Family Foundation

Family Picnic Baskets – We were sad to have to cancel our annual family picnic in August, but were able to create personal baskets for Variety families to enjoy a picnic of their own.

224 participants
Generously sponsored by: Bell Bank Mortgage/Paul Kozak, Culver’s

“Sidney likes Variety because they helped her get a new adaptive bike and she loves to go on bike rides with the family. As her parents we love Variety because they have helped build her confidence and helped her feel connected to a community.”

Lindsay, Telg & Sidney Whaksynsmith

“Thank you donors!! This bike has changed all of our lives!”
Lisa & Scott Lewitzke

“I am an independent person who has never made an excuse for not being able to do something...I just find a way. I know I owe that to my parents who push and support me in every aspect of my life: but I also owe that to Variety, a program that created opportunities to make up my own mind about how I would physically navigate my world.”
Leslie (Dietz) Horn
Former Variety Kid

“All of us at the Marcus Corporation are looking forward to celebrating 85 years of our involvement with Variety. During its many years, Variety has set an important example of how dedicated volunteers and professionals can make a huge difference in the quality of the lives of kids and their families.”
Steve Marcus
Chairman, The Marcus Corporation

This past year, Variety – the Children’s Charity of Wisconsin was able to host $374 people through its Discover Program.

“Thank you donors!! This bike has changed all of our lives!”
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