



# Fact Sheet: Variety – The Children’s Charity

## Mission Statement

We will be the leading charity for children with special needs and their families. We will remain committed to improving their quality of life and integration into society.

## Variety Facts

- Variety’s charitable work had its beginning on Christmas Eve in 1928 in Pittsburgh when a theatre manager and ten other show businessmen found a baby girl left abandoned in the Sheridan Theatre. They took her in and named her Catherine “Variety” Sheridan.
- “The Variety Club” continued to raise money for children in need long after finding an adoptive home for Catherine.
- Today, Variety – The Children’s Charity, known as the “Heart of Show Business,” has grown into a multi-million dollar philanthropic organization that spans the globe in 14 countries with 52 chapters (known in the Variety ranks as “Tents”).
- In 1945, John J. Fitzgibbons, president of Famous Players Theatres, founded the Variety Club of Ontario, Tent 28.
- Variety in Ontario supports projects and programs that focus on integration and inclusion and make a real impact on the everyday lives of children with special needs.
- Variety Village, the charity’s flagship project, was established in 1947 by the Variety Club of Ontario as a vocational training school for boys with physical disabilities. In the late 1970’s, when the Government of Ontario initiated special education programs for youngsters with disabilities, the vocational school was discontinued.
- In January 1981, the Variety Club reopened Variety Village as a sport training and fitness centre. The facility, as it remains today, contains a 76,000-square-foot Fieldhouse equipped with a special indoor track and conditioning area, as well as conference rooms and a cafeteria.
- In 1989, an aquatics wing was added, further enhancing Variety Village’s reputation as a model of accessibility. The 40-metre pool and separate wading pool are used for recreational and competitive swimming, aquatic exercise, and training. There are electronically controlled “hands-off” operating showers, special lifts and ramps, and viewing windows for biomechanical assessment of athletes.
- Today, with six acres of accessible indoor facilities, Variety Village remains the largest sports training and fitness complex for children with special needs in North America.

– more –

## Variety – The Children’s Charity (Ontario)

3701 Danforth Avenue, Scarborough, ON M1N 2G2  
tel 416-367-2828 tty 416-699-8147  
toll free 1-800-387-7686 fax 416-367-0028

[www.varietyonario.ca](http://www.varietyonario.ca) Charitable Registration No. 11895 5137 RR0001

- 50 full-time and 70 part-time staff at the Village serve more than 3,000 children and their families per week.
- It’s the Village’s mandate that programs are integrated and open to everyone of all abilities. It’s understood that integration is vital to create the right and supportive environment young children need to develop confidence and leadership skills.
- An Adapted Physical Education program was created to support and encourage children with special needs to participate in sports and recreational activities. Hundreds of children with varied abilities now participate each week from Boards of Education in the Greater Toronto Area and the Metro Toronto community at large and get a chance to be physically active.
- To ensure that Variety’s message is heard outside the Village, a successful Outreach program is in place. Variety Village staff goes to the communities and demonstrates to children and their parents, care-givers and teachers the importance of integration in sport and recreational activities.
- Each year over 6,000 people and 250 groups participate in one of our 2-hour Outreach workshops, either at Variety Village or at their school, university campus, or place of work.
- Every summer, Summer Camps cater to 400 to 500 children. They give children and youth of all abilities, with an interest in recreational sports, the opportunity to become involved in physical activity. All camps promote integration and encourage inclusive activities.
- Children and their families are brought together for many special events hosted by the Village annually, such as the Lieutenant Governor’s Games, the Metro Toronto Police Children’s Games, and the very popular Sunshine Games.
- Sporting events are hosted throughout the year to provide ongoing competitive experiences for athletes who train at the Village.
- Student on exchange programs and groups from all over the country and overseas come to participate in sporting events, camps, the Village’s unique programs, and other specialized activities.

**Reasons to support Variety:**

- Variety is changing lives. Variety Village allows children to see that they have the ability to do things they thought they could never do. By seeking solutions, rather than focusing on problems, Variety sends children a strong message: there is always a way - it simply takes imagination and determination.
- Variety Village is a place where the challenges that set the disabled apart in an able-bodied world can be forgotten. Variety has created an environment that is supportive, positive and welcoming, an environment that is inclusive and celebrates diversity.
- Variety Village is the only facility in Ontario, and one of only a handful worldwide, where all ability levels are integrated.
- It’s the Village’s mandate that all programs and services are integrated and open to all abilities. All members, both with special needs and able-bodied, fully support this and wouldn’t want it any other way. They understand that integration is vital to create the right and supportive environment young children need to develop confidence and leadership skills.

For more information on Variety – The Children’s Charity and Variety Village and to set up interviews, please contact Lynda Elmy, Director, Communications, at 416-367-2828 ext. 249 or by email at [lElmy@varietyontario.ca](mailto:lElmy@varietyontario.ca).