

ALICE'S STORY – BEATING THE ODDS

When our daughter Alice was born in March, 2017, my husband Alexander and I were thrilled. Our beautiful baby girl was perfect ... 10 little fingers, 10 little toes and she seemed to be a very happy and healthy baby. When Alice was 6 months old, we still thought everything was normal as she was a cheerful and responsive little girl though perhaps a little slower to progress than other children her age.

It wasn't until Alice was a year old that the dark cloud drifted in and we realized something was terribly wrong. She had thus far displayed absolutely no vocal sounds. She had never crawled, she couldn't sit up and she wasn't able to eat any solid food.

The specialist told us that our beautiful little girl had a progressive disorder and to make her as comfortable as possible because she didn't have long to live. I told the doctor NO! I knew in my heart that they were wrong and we were not going to lose our dear little girl so soon.

The doctors performed genetic testing and found that Alice was afflicted with an extremely rare



genetic disorder that affects her brain development and related motor function. This condition will result in Alice experiencing life-long symptoms and

complications - both physical

and mental however the good news is that research has proven that the condition is treatable with intensive therapy.

The bad news was we didn't have the money to afford the expensive treatments Alice needed so desperately and they weren't covered by provincial health care. We knew she had so much potential we just had to do something.

We applied for funding from Variety and they - thanks to the generosity of their donors - were able to push away the dark cloud and provided Alice with the intensive physiotherapy sessions necessary so that she could achieve her motor milestones. And achieve them she has!

The doctors said Alice would never walk. Alice has proven them wrong and she can now take a few steps with minimal assistance. She also crawls on her own while exploring her expanding world with delight. Her motor skills have improved dramatically and that has made life much easier for the entire family. The additional exercise she gets with her new mobility has also improved her appetite and enabled her to sleep through the night. One of the effects of her condition is the inability to sleep as the brain just doesn't shut down. Thankfully we are now all able to enjoy a good night's sleep.

Alice is very proud of her

achievements but can see she is different. Now three years old, she attends playschool and wants to take part in group activities and be just like all the other kids. We always let Alice know that her condition is a part of who she is however it does not define her.



Alice loves her therapy and happily goes to every session singing and smiling. When at the park, she always looks with interest and glee at other kids on their bikes so when Variety gave Alice her very own adaptive bike last February during the *Variety Show of Hearts Telethon*, she was thrilled beyond words. The bike will not only enable Alice to ride with the other kids in the park, it will aid her greatly in developing her balance which is something that is crucial to her future mobility progress.

Alice has come so far since beginning the therapy funded by Variety. We are so proud of our little girl. Alexander and I cannot possibly ever thank Variety and their donors enough for what they have done for our little Alice. Our entire family has been treated with love, respect and dignity and Alice now feels like a big girl with a bright future!

- Roxanne, Alice's Mom

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Chris Gailus and Sophie Lui

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VARIETY MOBILITY DAY

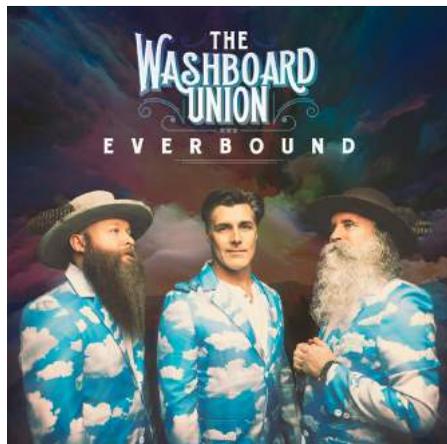
Variety Mobility Day will return for its second year on Wednesday, June 24. A day set aside to celebrate accessibility and inclusiveness, last year's inaugural celebration included a Block Party and a Sunshine Family Van presentation. The day also saw British Columbians come together to fund ten Adaptive Trikes in our five health regions.

"Many children with disabilities and their families have been staying inside these days making mobility more important than ever," said Marco Pasqua, Public Speaker, Entrepreneur & Variety Mobility Day Honourary Chair. "That's why supporting Variety Mobility Day enables these amazing children in our community to have the opportunity to stay active with our special trikes ... keeping them fit and encouraging them to get outside as much as possible. I'm so excited that I'm able to participate in Mobility Day again this year especially to encourage Canadians to stay positive and fit as we head into summer."



This year, the day will include a virtual concert with country music band The Washboard Union on Variety's Facebook Live while stand-up comedian Graham Clark will masterfully create a new painting which he will then auction off with proceeds going to Variety Mobility Day. Additionally there will be an Adaptive Bike presentation to Ethan, a 6-year old boy from the Sunshine Coast who was diagnosed with Nemaline Myopathy, a congenital, hereditary neuromuscular disorder and who Variety has helped with wheelchair accessories, orthotics and a ceiling track.

To help us reach our goal of \$10,000 to fund essential mobility equipment, you can donate at variety.bc.ca or by texting "KIDS" to 45678 to make an automatic \$20 contribution.



CALLY'S COLUMN

I hope you and your family are keeping well and safe. As summer approaches, I am sure we can all agree that we are living in a unique time. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of our charity with the demand for our support nearly doubling and our fundraising being compromised.



In response to this global health crisis, we launched the COVID-19 Heart of Variety Fund to ensure we are able to help special needs kids in a new way: virtually. I am happy to share that this has been transformational for children who continue to grow and learn despite social distancing and changes to their school routine.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this campaign. We are close to reaching our goal of \$200,000 but aren't quite there yet.

I spoke with one Mom who told me that what has helped their family get through this challenging time is looking forward to her daughter's weekly virtual therapy sessions. She expressed that these virtual sessions both help her daughter maintain the progress that she's worked so hard to gain and helps her feel supported as a single Mom.

I also would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of our members, volunteers and supporters who will be coming together over the summer to raise funds to help BC's kids. While this summer will look quite different, we have created a new and exciting opportunity for us all to be involved with ... our Variety 50/50.

Every one of you receiving our Summer Edition of *INSPIRE - Variety's Newsletter* has impacted our charity in some way. I want you all to know while things are challenging this year, you are all appreciated. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being part of our Variety family.

– Cally Wesson
CEO, Variety BC



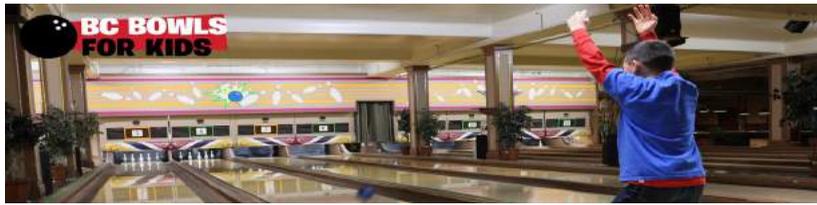
**COVID-19
HEART OF VARIETY
FUND**

Call **310-KIDS** or donate online
at variety.bc.ca



For more information, visit variety.bc.ca

VARIETY VOLUNTEERS



Since 1987, BC Bowls for Kids has raised \$3.1 million for kids with special needs. This annual event involves over 100 Volunteers and this year alone, they raised over \$50,000. While COVID-19 has temporarily sidelined this popular activity, Ken and his incredible team are excited to announce that bowling is back with all the necessary safeguards in place to protect staff and customers. Commodore Lanes in Vancouver along with other bowling centres across BC have reopened so lace up those shoes and support your local bowling establishment. Huge thanks to Ken Hayden along with Norm Grohmann and all the Volunteers for their commitment & dedication these past 34 years. Truly amazing!

Top 6 Contributors

Commodore Lanes, Vancouver

Port Coquitlam Bowl, Port Coquitlam

Grandview Lanes, Vancouver

Lincoln Lanes, Vernon

Scottsdale Lanes, Surrey

Castle Bowl, Castlegar

RECYCLE & FUNDRAISE

Looking for an easy way to help BC's kids? Variety is now partnered with Return-It Express to make donating funds quicker and more convenient. So when it's time to take back your beverage containers, just follow these four simple steps:



1. Collect your empty bottles and cans in a clear or clear blue recycling bag.

2. Find your nearest Return-It Express Depot by following this link:

<https://www.return-it.ca/locations/express/>

3. Type in 604-310-KIDS (5437) at the Express Kiosk which will print your label.

4. Stick the label to your bag of bottles & cans and just put your bag in the designated bin.

Your generous donation will then automatically go to Variety BC.

MONTHLY DONORS

Joshua was born in October, 1998 with Down Syndrome. From an early age Josh became interested in Global TV News and the awareness of Variety stemmed from there. We would make it a yearly event to watch the *Variety Show of Hearts Telethon* together as a family. Initially my three boys and I would add our ages together to determine our donation amount. Fast forward 21 years and I realized the need to reconfigure the donation equation. Becoming a monthly donor was a perfect option for us as it was simple and affordable. It was a way for us to help children with special needs all year long.



In 2016, Josh's teeth were fitted with braces. His speech became more difficult with the extra hardware in his mouth and his communicative confidence declined. Josh has always been driven to communicate and be understood. It was at this time that we reached out to Variety for funding for Speech Therapy and were soon provided with a Speech Pathologist on the Sunshine Coast. Josh adapted to his braces and worked hard to make his speech understandable once again.

We have benefitted from a close family and a tight community. We try to give back to the people and organizations that have supported us. We give what we can when we can. Our journey has been challenging, frustrating and difficult but also extremely rewarding. Community connection and knowing that there are people who understand is by far the most valuable support that a family with a special needs child can hope for. That is what Variety has been giving to families for over 50 years ... hope!

- Joanne Stanley, Joshua's Mom

To become a monthly donor, visit variety.bc.ca/donate-now/ or phone us at **1.800.381.2040** and we'll sign you up!

For more information, visit variety.bc.ca

VARIETY 50/50



This summer, we are excited to be launching a virtual 50/50 fundraising raffle. The bigger the jackpot, the more kids we can help. Tickets will go on sale on Monday, June 29 with the lucky winner being drawn on Tuesday, September 8. The big winner will win half the pot while the other half will go to fund medical supplies & mobility equipment along with essential therapies & education programs. Don't miss out on your chance to be our first-ever Variety 50/50 winner. Go to <https://5050.variety.bc.ca> for contest rules and details!

And if you would like to sign up to be a Volunteer Ticket Seller, contact Aly Karim at aly.karim@variety.bc.ca.



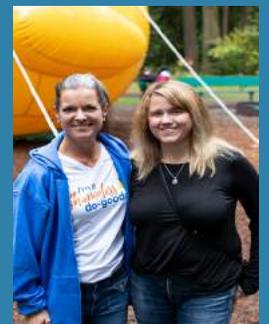
OUR CORPORATE HEROES

Accent Inns has been supporting Variety - the Children's Charity since 2011. In that time, they have provided over \$15,000 in room nights each year in addition to a \$30,000 donation last year. This partnership allows Variety to ensure no one is left without a place to stay when their child is receiving medical treatment.

Accent Inns' fundraising initiatives for Variety have been creative to say the least. In 2018, their team of 'Shameless Do-Gooders' invited Variety families to WildPlay Elements Park in Maple Ridge for a day of adventure, prizes and more. As a sponsor of *Variety Week* in 2019 and the presenter of the *Variety Week Wrap Party*, Accent Inns returned with their large inflatable ducks, bubble wands and glitter tattoos to ensure the celebration was a success.

Accent Inns is stepping up to help BC's kids with special needs again this summer with their recently launched 'No Ducks Left Behind' campaign. This initiative offers guests at each of their five BC locations the choice to save 25% off their stay or to donate that 25% back to Variety BC to help families during their time of need. In addition to partnering to generate more donations to Variety, Accent Inns is also working to facilitate volunteer opportunities so they can further support the needs of Variety families during the COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you to Accent Inns for all they do for Variety - the Children's Charity and BC's kids with special needs!



Variety - the Children's Charity

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