

Variety the Children's Charity of WI Summary Report

Information about the Applicant

Variety - the Children's Charity of Wisconsin has served children in need since 1935. The first "Variety Club" was a social club founded within the entertainment industry. A club member found an abandoned infant in a local theater and the "Variety Club" committed time and resources to successfully raise Catherine "Variety" Sheridan to adulthood. News of this benevolent act helped to launch a national movement to sponsor at-risk, underprivileged, disadvantaged, and special needs children. Today, Variety -the Children's Charity is a global partnership of more than 40 Variety chapters in 11 countries worldwide.

Today, Variety - the Children's Charity of Wisconsin is a multi-faceted organization with one simple mission: to enrich the lives of children with physical or developmental special needs and their families. Our vision is that all children, regardless of ability or income, can actively participate and experience the joys of childhood. Our programs include:

Freedom Program: Provides funding for adaptive and enabling equipment to help increase mobility, and support services to enrich a child's life

Discover Program: Offers free, inclusive, family-friendly events to build community through education, experiences and play

Chatter Matters Communication Camp: Provides an educational communication learning camp for families with children who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices

Care Program: Partners with other agencies offering specific support services that improve the health, wellness, and quality of life for our children and families

Statement of Need

The Freedom Program provides funding for mobility and other enabling equipment, including adaptive bicycles, walkers, wheelchairs, medical strollers, lifts, ramps and vehicle modifications.

It also provides funding for life-enriching services such as adaptive driving lessons, adaptive dance lessons, adaptive swim lessons, specialty camps, horse-assisted therapy, and more.

The majority of families that receive grant funding for equipment and services from Variety make less than 200% above the Federal Poverty Guideline. Specialized equipment is often too expensive for many families raising children with special needs, especially those with many other expenses related to their child's care. Many equipment items are not covered by Medicaid and private insurance because they are not considered "medically necessary." Variety looks beyond what is medically necessary to see how the equipment will benefit all aspects of the child. For example, although not considered medically necessary, a stander provides health benefits by strengthening muscles and building bone density in the legs of a child who cannot stand on his own. The stander puts the child at eye level with peers and allows them to participate in activities they cannot do sitting down, which is important for socialization and confidence building.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

#1: Provide Wisconsin youth with physical or developmental special needs the opportunity to live life without limits by providing necessary mobility equipment and life-enriching services.

#2: Improve the quality of life and overall physical, emotional, social and mental wellness in Wisconsin youth with physical or development special needs.

Project Implementation Plan

Variety works with physical and occupational therapists, pediatric rehabilitation specialists, physicians, social workers, school personnel, and other professionals to identify children with special needs who would greatly benefit from the Freedom Program. The process for securing funding for equipment begins with a consultation with a physician or other professional who works closely with the child. Families then complete the Variety application with support from their medical team.

Variety's Associate Executive Director, Dua Vang-Ramirez, is responsible for Programs and oversees all funding requests. Dua is uniquely qualified as she is a parent of a child with a physical disability. Her personal experience provides invaluable insight on the needs of children with disabilities and how to best serve families.

A Program Review Committee (PRC) helps guide Variety's decisions for programs and funding requests. The PRC includes a Pediatric Medicine & Rehabilitation Physician, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Hospital Social Worker, Certified Orthotist, and Community Member.

The PRC uses their combined expertise to provide direction to our Board of Directors to best support the needs of the children we serve.

Evaluation Plan

Expected Outcome: Provide 10 Freedom Program grants in FY 2022/2023

Expected Outcome(s): 100% of applicants will be surveyed to determine their personal goals or desired outcomes anticipated as part of the approval process

85% of Freedom Grant recipients will report improve quality of life and enhanced feelings of physical, emotional, social or mental well-being in a follow-up survey

Budget

The overall budget for Variety's Programs for Fiscal Year 2022 is \$193,475. Within that budget, \$60,000 is allocated for the Freedom Program. The organization's Fiscal Year begins on October 1". The budget for next fiscal year is not yet finalized, nor board approved, but it would reflect a 30% growth in number of children served.

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| Program Expenses | |
| Freedom Program: Mobility and other Enabling Equipment & Life-Enriching Services | \$60,000 |
| CARE Program - Agency Partnerships & Chatter Matters Communication Camp | \$62,500 |
| Program Co-Pay | (\$1,000) |
| Salaries and Wages | \$67,000 |
| Supplies | \$1,500 |
| Printing/Postage/Mileage/Meals/Facility Fees/Other | \$2,975 |
| Program Expenses - Other | \$500 |
| Total Program Budget | \$193,475 |

Staff Recommendation

The grant application can be recommended for approval. The amount of \$10,000.00 requested will be included in the overall amount of \$60,000.00 that will be allocated to acquire mobility and other enabling equipment that will directly benefit the persons with disabilities served by the organization. This aligns with the initiatives of the foundation.