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Variety awarded RAC Grant for Children's Theatre

St. Louis (June 14) Regional Arts Commission (RAC) announced that Variety the Children's Charity is awarded a Program Support grant. Variety the Children's Charity is recommended for a \$12,000 grant to support Variety Children's Theatre's production of *Wizard of Oz*. This award is in recognition and support of Variety's commitment to the cultural development of our region. We have been proud recipients of this award in years past.

Variety Children's Theater (VCT) is an inclusive theater program for children with and without disabilities, age 7 through 21, to learn on-stage and backstage theater craft from experienced performing arts professionals. Directors, designers and actors teach children all aspects of theater arts while preparing for a classic musical theater performance (the 2016 production was *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*). The objective of VCT is to help children with disabilities achieve their full potential, opening up to them what is possible with the nurturing encouragement of others who share their passion for creative expression and the arts. VCT does not exclude children from trying out because of their appearance or stereotypes about people with disabilities. This special effort to bring together children of all abilities, under the direction and tutelage of seasoned performing arts professionals, created an amazing show and special appreciation for the community that was created as a result of this project. Bringing together children of all abilities with professional adults in one of the city's top performance venues to create an unforgettable experience for theatergoers cast and crew alike.

Jan Albus, Variety CEO stated, " We are thrilled to one of the organizations receiving a grant from the RAC this spring. It will assist us in producing the best theatre with our Variety kids."

This year's production, the ninth from Variety Children's Theatre, and coming to the Touhill in October- 19-22, is L. Frank Baum's wondrous *The Wizard of Oz*.

As always, professional actors and a full orchestra are joined by an inclusive children's ensemble featuring talented kids with special needs. Together with directors, designers, and other backstage professionals, Variety Children's Theatre will bring to life this classic story about Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion. A story that resonates with the powerful message that everyone has a yellow brick road of their own, and, within them, the "I Can" attitude to follow it.

Variety is St. Louis' best resource for kids with disabilities and their families. Variety focuses on four core areas to help kids reach their full potential: providing **medical equipment**, the **therapy** to use it, and developing unique **educational** and **recreational programs**. We change kid's lives by improving **skills, socialization, self-esteem** and **independence**. For more information, visit www.varietystl.org.