



MEDIA CONTACT:

Jean Larson Steck
C:314-489-6211
W:314-720-7706
jean@varietystl.org

EIGHTH ANNUAL PRODUCTION BY VARIETY CHILDREN'S THEATRE TO FEATURE "BEAUTY & THE BEAST" AT TOUHILL IN OCTOBER

St. Louis (September 8) – Perhaps no show yet presented by Variety Children's Theatre offers messages of hope to kids with special needs quite like this year's show, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. It reminds these kids, and all of us, that it's okay to be different, that inner beauty is what really matters, and that fear should never prevent the quest for new experiences.

Most importantly, through the heroic character of Chip the teacup, everyone's reminded that perfection isn't everything, and that what you accomplish in life has nothing to do with how "chipped" you are.

Boasting a cast of St. Louis' top theatrical talents and a children's ensemble featuring kids of all ability levels, *Beauty and the Beast* runs Oct. 21-23 at the Touhill Performing Arts Center.

For Variety, this is an incredibly touching narrative that supports our mission of helping kids with disabilities, who often see the world in different ways. Instead of dismissing them, we all learn and grow more by meeting these children on their terms.

Yet again under the direction of Tony Award nominee, Lara Teeter, Variety's production of *Beauty and the Beast* will feature Variety children with disabilities in the children's ensemble, along with St Louis' most talented children, as well as Adult Actor Equity Association and non-Equity performers.

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. 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 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.

This year's performance of *Beauty and the Beast* will have a cast of 29 children with a disability, including Cerebral Palsy, Spina bifida, Polio, Down's syndrome, autism, Brittle Bone Disease, Muscular Dystrophy, hearing impairment, dwarfism, blindness and mitochondrial disease. Keira Cromwell (age 10) will play Chip. Behind scene, serving as production assistants, included 9 children with disabilities including Cerebral Palsy, Down's syndrome, hearing loss and neuro-muscular disorders.

About Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis

Since 1932, **Variety the Children's Charity** serves children with physical and developmental disabilities in the St. Louis region, from infancy to age 21. Variety focuses on five core areas to help kids become independent and productive: gifting **medical equipment** for mobility and independence; developing unique **education** and **recreational programs**; funding **therapy** and **Sunshine Coach Vans**. For more information, visit www.varietystl.org.