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RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2021

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Jan Albus Departing as Variety CEO

ST. LOUIS, Dec. 1, 2021 – Variety the Children’s Charity of St. Louis announced today that Jan Albus, the organization’s CEO for the past 25 years, is leaving the organization. Her last day will be Dec. 31.

“Variety would not be the incredible source of hope and joy for children with special needs and their families without Jan Albus. She makes sure we at Variety are inclusive and diverse, reaching out to children and families from all social and economic situations,” said Larry Otto, Chairman of Variety’s board of directors.

“Jan is making this change at a time when the organization is as strong as it’s ever been, especially with a loyal, diverse and growing base of donors,” Otto said. “On behalf of the board, I thank Jan for her amazing service and dedication to Variety families. I hope that she will remain connected to the organization as a consultant.”

David Steward, Chairman Emeritus, said, “Whenever there is an unmet need for a child with limited abilities, Variety invents a solution. Jan Albus’ leadership has been key to that success since the day she started here. She has created a team that makes Variety unique in our ability to deliver holistic medical resources and therapy and well-rounded enrichment opportunities for the children, especially with the performing arts.”

Brian Roy, the Executive Director and who has been handling day-to-day operations since 2017, will continue to lead the organization.

“In the past 25 years, I have watched Variety grow and serve thousands of children with disabilities across 15 counties in eastern Missouri and 15 in southwestern Illinois,” Albus said. “I am especially pleased with the success of our inclusive and diverse Performing Arts program, Variety Theatre, and its professional Broadway-quality theater production each year. It is a perfect example of how the Variety team redefines ability and reimagines possibilities. I am so proud of how our team has stepped forward time after time to serve special needs children and their families and will miss these wonderful people who have given so much to our mission.”

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Under Albus' leadership, Variety Theatre produced 10 Broadway musicals at the Touhill Performing Arts Center. In 2020, challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, Albus and Variety moved to a virtual setting with a professional, original musical theatre production called *Light the Lights* on YouTube, which aired worldwide.

Albus has been recognized on many levels for her philanthropic and theatrical accomplishments during her career with Variety, including being honored with the 2018 St. Louis Theater Circle Award for outstanding live theater and receiving the Women in Leadership award in 2011 for outstanding community service.

Albus also created Variety Week, a way to re-energize donor interest when telethons began to lose their appeal.

"We had a weeklong campaign, said Albus, "including the Runway Lights Fashion Show with top designers, a parade, the chorus singing at a Cardinals game. We capped the week with Dinner with the Stars, a show that attracted Ray Charles, Gladys Knight, the Righteous Brothers, Sutton Foster, Lionel Ritchie, Diana Ross, Kenny Rogers, Wynonna Judd, Bernadette Peters, Harry Connick Jr., James Taylor, John Legend, Sting, and others. Memories were made when the children joined the stars on stage to sing with them."

In 2005, Albus led Variety's first capital campaign. It created the first inclusive, accessible playground in St. Louis, the Dennis and Judith Jones Variety Wonderland Playground in Forest Park. Major improvements were made to the playground this year. The specially designed surface supports wheelchairs and walkers and other equipment unique to children with limited abilities. The activities, including a newly added merry-go-round, are welcoming for children with all levels of ability.

During Albus' tenure, Variety also established the Family Council so that parents and caregivers can have a voice in how the organization supports their children. She also brought Bikes for Kids to Variety.

"Because of Variety and Jan's energy and leadership, kids can expect more, dream bigger, and know Variety will always be here for them," said Roy.

"Rock climbing. Swimming. Ice Skating. Any experience that a child with special needs wanted to do, Jan found ways to make it happen," Roy said. "The crown jewel of her boundless energy and incredible connections in the theater community helped create Variety Theatre, a Broadway quality production. The annual show provides our children with lifelong lessons of confidence, teamwork, and independence while showcasing what's possible when given the chance to be a star."

Albus joined Variety in 1995 and was named CEO in 2014. This transition has been in the works since 2017 when she stepped back from day-to-day CEO responsibilities to focus on the capital campaign, Performing Arts programs, and strategic planning.

About Variety St. Louis: Variety envisions a world where abilities are redefined and opportunities are reimagined for kids with special needs. To make this a reality, Variety empowers children with physical and developmental disabilities by giving access to critical medical equipment and therapies, along with innovative Camp and Performing Arts programs, which provide opportunities for recreation, socialization, and artistic expression. Children gain or maintain independence, boost socialization among their friends and family, demonstrate belief in themselves, and increase skills they need to engage their world as fully as possible. www.varietystl.org

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