

## Chatter Matters

We were proud to partner again with the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater to host our 9th Chatter Matters Communication Camp this summer. The camp hosted 26 children who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices and their families – nearly double the number from the previous year. Campers work to increase their device skills through activities such as adaptive painting and sports, cooking, dancing, a talent show, support groups and educational workshops.

An essential purpose of camp is also to provide students and future service professionals with a hands-on educational experience. Under the supervision of certified speech language pathologists, student clinicians worked directly with children who use AAC devices.

### New this year!

- Alumni campers – 6 Chatter Matters families returned to serve as mentors to the new camper families. Meeting families who are in a different place in their AAC journey is encouraging!
- Alumni clinicians - former student clinicians, who are now practicing speech language pathologists, served as mentors to this year's student clinicians
- Two support groups – one for parents and one for siblings
- Volunteer opportunities for undergraduate students to explore a career in speech pathology



Scan this QR code to watch the **2022 Chatter Matters** Short video

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*"We attended Chatter Matters as a family of four and each of us took something different away from it. We loved that our son could see other kids like him using talkers since he is the only kid in his school on a device. We also loved the educational and networking opportunities to meet other families on a similar journey. After camp, we have noticed he needs less prompts to use his talker. He seems more empowered and excited to use his voice now and for that we are forever thankful."*

-Angie, Hugo's mom

*"As a future professional, I was able to gain experience interacting with parents/families, try new communication strategies with AAC users, and use problem-solving techniques as situations arose during camp. The diverse range of needs and communication skills among campers afforded me many opportunities to learn new strategies and gain new perspectives."*

- Kelsey, student clinician

*"My adult son and I love volunteering for Chatter Matters. Mike has used AAC since he was 3 years old and he is now 27 and an expert AAC communicator. Remembering back to those years when we first started our AAC journey, we felt so isolated and alone. Our family had no idea of what Mike could achieve. The sense of family and meeting others who are farther along in their journey is valuable beyond words. Camp gives them hope and a vision for their child's futures."*

- Sue and Mike Hipple, expert AAC users and camp volunteers



## 2022 Impact Report

**At Variety, we are proud of what we have accomplished this past year, and extremely grateful to our donors and partners. Together, we are enriching lives - one smile at a time!**

## Discover Program

### Making Memories that Last a Lifetime

Diagnosed with epilepsy as a young boy, Christopher Napierala became a Variety Kid in the 1960's. His family received support to fund his seizure control medications and also participated in free family events offered by the "Variety Club" in the Milwaukee area.

As an adult, Christopher served as an Industrial Arts teacher for Milwaukee Public Schools for over thirty years. Outside of the classroom, his passion for nature inspired his summer work at Milwaukee County Parks. Christopher passed away in 2021, leaving behind a beautiful legacy, and living on in the memories of the many lives he touched.

Part of his legacy found its way to Variety in early 2022, through his sister Claire. She shared fond memories of her brother and the Variety events she remembered attending in her childhood. Claire expressed how the events and activities made all five of the Napierala children feel special and wanted to help other children have similar memories.

A generous gift from the Christopher Napierala Trust, allowed us to bring back an old favorite – a Discover event at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Over 260 Variety Kids and family members joined us for games, face painting, photos, and refreshments while exploring the Zoo. Claire even joined the fun in her role as a Zoo Volunteer.

**Variety Discover events are offered throughout the year. In 2022, more than 2,600 kids and family members participated in 40 Discover events.**



We are grateful to the Napierala family for remembering Variety and choosing to honor Christopher by creating a joyful memory for a new generation of Variety kids.



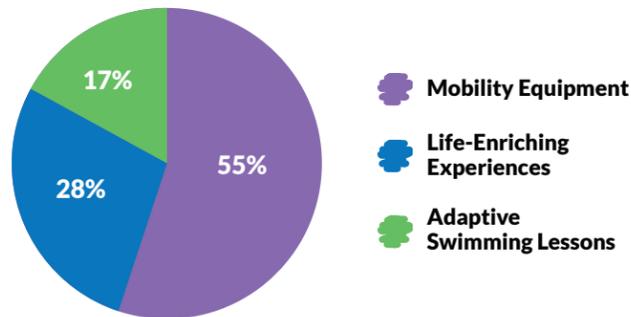
## Adaptive Swimming Lessons

Swimming lessons is the best drowning prevention strategy; however, traditional group swimming lessons are not always appropriate for children with special needs. Individualized lessons are often the best solution, but cost prohibitive for many families.

*"Adaptive swimming lessons have helped my daughter be more confident around water. She used to not have any basic water safety skills which was dangerous for her. She now understands what to do around water and I no longer fear that she will drown. When swimming, she feels a sense of relaxation and true happiness."*

-Jessica, Samantha's mom

### Variety Freedom Grants by dollars spent



*"We work hard with community partners to strengthen families by providing services and supports so children can thrive. Variety is a top-performing non-profit and helps children heal and grow, which results in stronger families and communities."*

-Penny Nevicosi, Waukesha County Health and Human Services

*"According to the CDC, drowning is a leading cause of death for children. The risk is even higher for children with disabilities."*

Through a special partnership with Waukesha County Health & Human Services, Variety provided 20 grants to individuals for adaptive swimming lessons in 2022 and 29 grants in 2021, totaling more than \$20,000.

In addition to learning crucial water safety skills, swimming has many physical, mental, emotional, and social benefits which increase children's overall wellness.

- It is a fun, low-impact activity that exercises the entire body.
- It improves coordination, functional strength, balance, and development of motor skills.
- The stress that gravity places on muscles is eliminated and people with mobility challenges can learn to swim with ease.
- Water buoyancy provides a restriction-free environment that allows for freedom of movement.
- Swimming also helps improve confidence, self-esteem, and develops social skills, helping children deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life.

Variety stepped in to fill a funding gap when government funds were exhausted, improving the health and safety for children with varying needs.



## Freedom Program

Grants from Variety's Freedom Program provide mobility equipment and life-enriching services to provide independence, build confidence and create opportunities to grow and flourish!



### Meet Hailey

17-year-old Hailey was born with Spina Bifida and lives with her grandmother as her primary care giver. Unfortunately, Hailey's ability to leave her home became uncertain due to her yard being unable to safely accommodate a ramp. With winter approaching, Hailey's grandmother feared that the harsh conditions would prevent her from being able to take Hailey to school and vital doctor appointments, leaving her completely home bound.

Through a grant from our Freedom Program, Hailey was able to have a vertical platform lift installed, allowing her grandmother to safely transfer her outside. Hailey and her grandmother could not be more thankful for the freedom the lift provides, ensuring Hailey can stay healthy and active in her community.



### Meet Ebony

Ebony is a high achieving teen juggling class work, an after-school job, and extracurricular activities. She has Arthrogryposis and uses her feet to do everything most people do with her hands.

With her busy schedule, Ebony clearly doesn't let her Arthrogryposis diagnosis prevent her from living life to the fullest. Ebony longed for a driver's license that would allow her to keep up with her busy schedule independently, but the high cost of adaptive driving lessons kept her at square one. With the help of friends like you, Variety was able to fund adaptive driving lessons to support Ebony's goal to get behind the wheel. Ebony excelled in her lessons with high praise from her instructor, who was impressed with how quickly her confidence grew. Ebony earned her driver's license this past summer and is off to college to continue achieving great things.

## Care Program

The Care Program partners with agencies that deliver specific supportive services to children with physical or developmental special needs and their families. As partners, we improve the health, wellness and quality of life for children.

**Through these partnerships, Variety reaches an additional 500 children each year.**

### 2022 Care Program Partners

**Miracle League of Dane County** – Providing the opportunity for kids with disabilities to play baseball.

**HEAR Wisconsin** – Providing communication development for toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**SOAR Fox Cities** – Providing social, educational, and recreational opportunities to youth with developmental disabilities.

**WisconSibs** (Appleton) – Providing monthly workshops for siblings of children with disabilities.

**Exceptional Equestrians** (DePere) – Providing an accessible ramp for a state-of-the-art Sensory Trail, the first of its kind in Wisconsin.

**Never Say Never Playland** (Lake Geneva) – Providing inclusive playground equipment.

**Parents and Children in Action** (Madison) – Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate stress management activities for Latino families.

**Go Baby Go** (South Eastern WI) - Providing modified ride-on electric toy cars for children with limited mobility.