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**variety**  
the children's charity™

## U.S. Variety News: Summer 2006

The  
**Heart**  
of  
Show  
Business

Our New *Eragon*  
Gold Heart Pin!



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[www.ragonmovie.com](http://www.ragonmovie.com)  
[www.usvariety.org/goldheart.html](http://www.usvariety.org/goldheart.html)

As those of you who attended the International Convention know, the Gold Heart pin design this year is **Eragon**. It is based on the upcoming Fox film adaptation of the New York Times best-selling book by Christopher Paolini. Eragon is about a young boy who finds and raises a rare dragon until the start of a war changes his life and he must join the fight against an evil king to save his home. The film, which stars John Malkovich and Oscar winner Jeremy Irons, promises to be a great adventure for all.

This year 20th Century Fox decided to go with the traditional rounded pin design with some blue enamel and a beautiful brushed finish. Since the film is opening worldwide in December, we are working with all theater circuits to launch the Gold Heart pin campaign at the beginning of November to take advantage of their huge marketing push for the film.

*Since Eragon is based on such a popular book, we hope all our chapters contact their local bookstores and libraries to create promotional tie-ins and possibly even sell the pins through them.*

*There will be four different collectable pin cards, just as we had during our Spider-Man campaign in 2004. We hope you are all as excited as we are!*

*top: Variety's new Eragon Gold Heart Pin;  
below: complete set of four new Pin Cards*

## Summer Letter from the National Executive Director:

Well, it is summer time and as we get ready in the office for our third annual National Leadership Conference, we are taking a minute to look back at how far we've come in such a short time.

Over the past three years we've come together to create a cohesive group with representation from the different parts of the continent. We have reached out and welcomed the Canadian chapters to attend our yearly conference. The professionalism of our organization has grown by leaps and bounds as we have flown around the country and met with local boards and memberships and held board retreats. One of the strongest ways that we have grown and joined together as a group has been in embracing the mobility program at the local level. This idea came at our first national conference in Philadelphia and has developed a ground swell of support.

This newsletter is testament to that growth and support. You will read story after story about how Variety is impacting disabled children's lives by helping them gain added independence, confidence and dignity through our mobility efforts.

Take a minute and read what's happening across America on Variety boards. It is an exciting time to be a part of this organization as we grow and strengthen. You may want to share this newsletter with friends, family and business associates and invite them to join Variety. We are looking at expanding into some new areas and would love to hear from them.

Ana LaDou  
National Executive Director  
ana@usvariety.org

## Variety Comings and Goings

**Lance Hood:** Lawrence "Lance" W. Hood, Jr., joined North Texas, Tent 17, in March, and brings more than 13 years of volunteer leadership experience and more than eight years as a non-profit professional to the position. Lance has spent much of his career at the national and international level of organizations including various board and committee positions, consulting, authoring articles and public speaking/training. Lance is thrilled to join the Variety family and says, "With Tent 17, not only do I get to see the lives I'm helping to impact, but it is happening in the communities that I grew up in, live in and drive by every day." For more information on Lance, or what Tent 17 is doing, visit [www.varietynorthtexas.org](http://www.varietynorthtexas.org).

USV would like to thank **Joe Natoli** for 11 years of dedication as Variety of Wisconsin's executive director. He says, "I am proud and



honored to have been involved with Variety since 1982, and I leave behind a record of success and accomplishments for which I'm grateful to have been a part. I will continue to be a member and support Variety in any way possible." Although we are sad to say good-bye to Joe, our best wishes go out to him as

he begins his new position as executive director of Cystic Fibrosis of Wisconsin.

## *New Opportunities*

Variety of the Desert and Variety of Wisconsin are looking for new executive directors. If you or anyone you know is interested in applying please e-mail your cover letter, resume and references to [info@usvariety.org](mailto:info@usvariety.org).



Register online: [www.usvariety.org/natcon.html](http://www.usvariety.org/natcon.html)

## National Conference 2006!

U.S. Variety's National Conference is a fabulous learning and sharing opportunity. Since so much of Variety's work is done on the local level in a grassroots way, it is important that we gather together once a year to share ideas and learn what is happening in the marketplace.

Many ideas for fundraising and programs have come out of these meetings, as well as lifelong friendships and partnerships. The National Conference is the perfect place to share the "Variety Spirit" with a newly hired Executive Director or a newly elected President or other board members.

The conference takes place in Buffalo this year and will have both breakfast and lunch served every day as well as dinners nightly as part of off-site events. Mark the dates on your calendars (September 27-29) and look for updates from the US office!

# meet & greet

## Meet our Sponsors:

### *Deliveries from the Heart*

by Robert Mintz, DHL

For nearly 15 years, DHL has been delivering films to thousands of screens nationwide (about half of all films in circulation to movie theaters across the U.S.) on behalf of its distribution customer Technicolor. And for almost as long, DHL has leveraged this Hollywood partnership to deliver for Variety's Gold Heart Program, a critical funding source that has helped more than 55 million children since its inception.

DHL supports a variety of corporate citizenship initiatives - from disaster relief efforts to children's health needs and special programs such as local baseball field refurbishments and sponsorship of the US Paralympic Team.

"Variety is a charity that is close to our heart, and we are pleased to be able to leverage our shipping and logistics expertise to help provide medical treatment and special equipment for physically challenged children," said Joe Illig, National Entertainment Accounts Manager for DHL, and U.S. board member of Variety.

DHL works closely with its distribution partner Technicolor, and together they have built a world-class film distribution network that is at the heart of this important charity drive for Variety. DHL leverages its air network, hubs, service centers and committed workforce - some 40,000 strong - to deliver Variety's Gold Heart pins that are sold by almost every theater chain in the country to raise money for Variety's children.

DHL's Illig is currently working closely with Variety to find other ways DHL can support the charity and its daily operations through DHL's full portfolio of shipping services.



## Meet the U.S. Board

*Drew McLellan* Variety of Iowa, Tent 15 and USV

*Drew is the chairman of the Marketing Committee on the USV Board of Directors and has been leading board retreats with Executive Director Ana LaDou across the country. His marketing acumen has been invaluable to the development of new marketing materials as well as branding our new national mobility program.*



*We are thrilled that Drew has*

*decided to run for office on the executive committee of USV this fall and welcome his increased participation in the leadership of our organization.*

**Why Variety?** Honestly, for purely selfish reasons. I admit it. I serve as an Iowa and US Variety board member for myself. After all, isn't this the what's-in-it-for-me era? So what do I get out of it? Joy. Pride. Laughter. Opportunity.

**Joy?** I am literally immersed in joy overflowing every time I participate in a Bikes for Kids rally or see a child's face when they realize that the technicolor wheelchair really is for them. The kids and their uncensored awe creates an energy that you can't help but get caught up in - and I get to carry that with me for days.

**Pride?** How lucky am I that I get to use my god given talents and skills to change my little part of the world? I am so proud to be associated with the amazing staff and volunteers who give their all to raise the money that allows a young boy to go to Diabetes camp or provides new school supplies so a little girl won't get teased by her classmates and can actually look forward to her first day of school.

**Laughter?** Whether it's a board meeting, fundraiser or just because, the incredible people Variety attracts have enriched my life with their friendship, warmth and laughter. There is an aura of determined giddiness that seems to flow from these good people who make the time in their busy lives to help kids who will probably never meet their kind-hearted benefactors.

**Opportunity?** Variety is my chance to say thank you. Thank you for a healthy daughter. And a blessed life. It's my way of trying to tip the scales and share some of what I've been given because truth be told, in a blink of an eye -- it could just as easily be me who's pacing outside a peds ICU room or trying to understand why my child will never walk.

I'm sure most people give their time to Variety for the kids. But in my case, it's all about me.

# Feature Stories

## A Home Run for Philly Campers!

In July, Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Ryan Howard visited the Variety Camp and Developmental Center, which services children with disabilities, in Worcester, PA. The Home Run Derby winner and Phillies' 2006 spokesman for Variety received a warm welcome from the campers and Variety staff. The children had an unforgettable day learning about baseball straight from one of Philadelphia's most talented athletes, and were even able to work on their skills with him during a fun game of wiffle ball! Special thanks to Ryan Howard, the Philadelphia Phillies and Variety of Philadelphia for leaving the young campers with photos, memories and inspiration that will last them a lifetime.



## Liberty Swing Brings Smiles to America's Children

America's first Liberty Swing was unveiled and dedicated to Swann Special Care Center, which cares for children and adults with profound mental and physical disabilities, in Champaign, IL on June 30. The simple act of swinging through the air, something most children take for granted, overjoyed young residents of the Swann Center during a memorable dedication ceremony as they tested the new swing made especially for the disabled.

Designed in Australia by Wayne Devine, the Liberty Swing accommodates children in wheelchairs or those unable to use a conventional swing. Variety of Illinois purchased the Swing three years ago when it hosted the international convention in Chicago and they chose the Swann Center as the first site in the western



hemisphere to get one! The original Liberty Swing opened in Australia in 2001 and now there are 130 Swings throughout Australia and New Zealand and one in the United Kingdom. In keeping with Variety's international reach, parents of Swann Center's residents will be given keys that allow them to use any Liberty Swing around the world.

As he waited for his turn, Swann Center's own Randy Cockrell could barely contain his excitement. "Yay!" he shouted, laughing, as he rolled up to the Swing. After being buckled in, Randy grabbed one of the bars, threw his head back and shouted "Whee!" Thereafter, all of Randy's friends were equally as thrilled once they too had their first ride!



Tent 26 president Nick Liberati exalts, "Nothing makes our children smile more than swinging through the air!" For more information on the Liberty Swing, go to [www.varietyclub26.org](http://www.varietyclub26.org).

## Chapter News

### Special Bikes for Special Kids

Variety of Georgia, Tent 21, officially launched its Mobility Program with the presentation of a specially outfitted bike to a little girl named Molly Wheeler on May 16th. Tent 21's goal is to give at least one of these bikes to a child each quarter in its first year and as such will be presenting another one on August 24th. If the program is as popular with supporters as it is with Molly and her family, the hope is to continue its expansion in the following year. Here are some comments from Molly's mother, Andrea Wheeler:

"It is hard to put into words what Molly's new bike means to her. First of all, it is great for her physically. Molly has cerebral palsy and it is helping her with her strength as well as stretching her tight heel chords. Secondly, the bike is helping Molly socially. She is more aware of her environment when on the bike (rather than a stroller or wheelchair). Other people also come up to her to talk about her cool new bike. Most importantly, the bike is helping Molly be a part of her family. Molly is a triplet and now she can ride her bike just like her brother and sister. In fact, they are jealous and love to have a turn on her bike! Thank you so much for making a difference in all our lives!" For future updates, please go to [www.varietyofofgeorgia.org](http://www.varietyofofgeorgia.org).



### Big Hearts, Rich Minds

3,000 copies of *Charlotte's Web* will be purchased for elementary school students in Knox County, thanks to Variety of Eastern Tennessee. The tent raised \$8,000 in June at a sold-out event to benefit its Read It and See It Program, which offers students in targeted low-income Knox County schools the unique opportunity to read a book and then watch a free showing of the film version.

The event, a screening of country duo Big & Rich's "The 8th of November: A True Story of Love and Pain," drew 400 local residents to Regal Cinemas' Pinnacle 18. A stage was built in the large auditorium for an acoustic performance following the movie.

One week before Variety's Radiothon with 107.7 WIVK, Big &



Rich approached station manager Mike Hammond and suggested that people who pledged a certain amount should get tickets to a screening of their documentary. The idea manifested into its own fundraising event, with tickets selling out in two hours and even more money raised by raffling tickets to the highest bidders on air.

Now, thousands of children

in Knox County will have the opportunity to experience E.B. White's timeless tale of friendship.

### *Re-building Lives in Houston*

When Sandra Lee and her daughter Allesha left the flood waters of New Orleans, they barely had time to pack a few things, including Allesha's wheelchair, into the van. They finally made it to Houston, and set about finding a place to live. It was a most difficult time for Sandra as she contemplated a new life in a strange city. Allesha is severely handicapped with scoliosis, hydrocephalus and some muscular dystrophy. Sandra has severe back problems, and is not supposed to lift more than 15 pounds. Allesha weighs 70. And here they were, stuck in a city where transportation can be a nightmare for the healthiest of people.

Early this year, they were referred to Variety of Houston. Variety of the U.S. had just initiated the new Mobility Program, nationally sponsored by Fred Astaire Dance Studios. After comparing prices, Executive Director Marty Ambrose contracted with Lift Aids of Houston, and on May 16th, Sandra picked up her van, which had been specially outfitted with a new Multi-Lift that could be used both outside and inside their apartment.

Today, Sandra and Allesha are seeing the answer to their prayers—a way to get Allesha in and out of the van without compromising Sandra's back. Thanks to Variety and Fred Astaire Dance Studios, their lives are both a bit easier.



**FRED ASTAIRE**  
FRANCHISED DANCE STUDIOS

### St. Louis's First Public All-Inclusive Playground

At the grand opening of the Dennis and Judith Jones Variety Wonderland playground, Variety St. Louis poster child Libby buried a time capsule with the lead donors. While preserving history in the ground beneath her feet, the 10-year-old was also making history as she helped unveil the city's first public play area to accommodate both able-bodied youngsters and children with disabilities.

The idea to build a public all-inclusive playground came from members of the Variety Family Council, a committee of Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis. Children with disabilities were unable to play with their friends and siblings at the local playgrounds. Rather than experiencing the joy of swinging, sliding and running freely like other children, they could only watch. Some even opted to just stay home.



The Variety Family Council suggested building a public playground where all children could play together regardless of physical ability, creating a safe environment for the children of the greater St. Louis region to enjoy the sunshine, increase their strength and coordination and hone their social skills.

The \$2 million state-of-the-art play area includes 29 pieces of equipment on a 10,100 square-foot soft, porous surface. The playground is divided into several sections designed according to age, physical strength and abilities. Equipment includes a metal slide for children with cochlear implants, Braille and clock panels for the blind, talk phones, surface fountains and 8' high ramping so children can experience a tree house affect.

Variety of St. Louis hopes that the next generation will open the time capsule that was buried during the grand opening. No matter what may have changed by then, when they see the contents of the capsule, they'll understand that it was love and dedication that created this wonderland of learning some of life's greatest lessons through playtime.

### The Freedom to Open Doors in Orlando

Abigail and Emily Cushman are just two of Seminole County's physically impaired children who now have the ability to go through the front door of Winter Springs Elementary School on their own. Thanks to funds raised by Fred Astaire Dance Studios, Variety of Orlando has been able to purchase a handicap door for the school's front entrance.

Winter Springs is the only public elementary school endorsed by Seminole County for the instruction of physically and mentally impaired children. Even with this great responsibility placed on their shoulders, the school's administration was unable to get grants or county funds to install a handicap door at the entrance of their building, thus limiting the mobility of their physically impaired students. These otherwise capable children could not run errands for their teachers or move freely through the school like other children because they could not maneuver their wheelchairs as



needed or pull open a forty-pound door on their own.

Abigail and Emily either had to have their parents open the door, wait for a teacher to come and let them in, or hope that another child would be around to assist them. Now, they can say goodbye to their parents at the curb, volunteer

to deliver papers to the front office for their teachers and go about their day the same as the other children who attend Winter Springs Elementary.

Variety of Orlando extends its gratitude to all the hard-working people at Fred Astaire Dance Studios for supplying the funds to make this happen for Abigail, Emily and other physically impaired children in Seminole County.

# The Garth Approach

## *Garth Brooks: A "Teammate" for Kids*

In early May, Variety the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh, Tent 1, was advised that it would be receiving a grant from the Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids Foundation in Littleton, CO in response to a recent proposal submitted at the recommendation of Board Member Mike Schneck.

Teammates for Kids Foundation is a non-profit corporation co-founded by Garth Brooks and Bo Mitchell. The purpose of the Foundation is to contribute financial resources to selected non-profit organizations that effectively serve and benefit children with emphasis on health, education, and inner-city services. As stated by Garth Brooks, "100% of the money goes to the kids. That's not a goal ... it's a rule!"

Teammates for Kids invited Variety Pittsburgh to attend its annual Teammates for Kids Summer Appreciation Party in Las Vegas on July 13 & 14 and to bring along a family

helped through Variety's Kids on the Go! Program as guests of the foundation. Selected was 11 year-old Zach, who has spina bifida and who recently received an adaptive handcycle through our Kids on the Go! Program. Joining Zach were his parents, Ray and Tammy, and sister Holly, age 3. Zach was a natural fit for Teammates for Kids as he plays adaptive sled hockey and has won many championships and trophies.

Four children from selected charities were invited to participate in the festivities of the Teammates for Kids summer appreciation party and our very own Pittsburgh "superstar,"

Zach, was one of the children chosen. During the dinner presentation Friday evening, each child was escorted on stage by professional athletes and family members while their stories and the charities missions were showcased on video.

During the "Meet and Greet," the four families mingled with special invited guests and celebrities and viewed the numerous items available for both the silent and live auctions. The item of most interest to Zach's parents and Tent 1 Executive Director

Celia Hindes were the Pittsburgh Steelers helmet personally autographed by 1970's Steelers Terry Bradshaw, Rocky Bleier, John Stallworth, Lynn Swann, Joe Greene and Mel Blount and the matching autographed Steelers jerseys.

During the live auction, as the bids for these Steelers items reached \$35,000, Garth Brooks approached the highest bidder and then

announced to the audience that he (Garth) really wanted the Steelers helmet. The winning bidder advised Garth Brooks that he would give him the Steelers helmet if he (Garth) would match his bid of \$35,000. Garth Brooks agreed and to everyone's amazement the Steelers items were sold for \$70,000!

Even more surprising was that later in the evening Garth Brooks walked over and presented that same Steelers helmet to Zach!

This fabulous evening ended with a 90-minute concert by Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood.



*Pictured above: Garth Brooks, Zach and Trisha Yearwood*

## Variety Story: Summer 2006

### *Logan Coffey, Knoxville*

Logan Coffey, who was born three months premature, has cerebral palsy. The four-year-old from Tennessee cannot communicate, nor can he walk, sit up, or crawl. At an age when most children chase one another around the preschool yard, he can only roll over. His mother, Kristy, struggled to take him places because his wheelchair was too heavy for her to lift into their vehicle.

Logan's therapist recommended that Kristy get a lightweight wheelchair for her son and directed her to the East Tennessee Technological Access Center (ETTAC), a regional nonprofit agency that helps people with disabilities gain knowledge about and access to assistive technology devices. ETTAC, in turn, told her about Variety of Eastern Tennessee.

Executive Director Dena Pinsker met with Kristy to discuss Logan's condition and needs. After Kristy completed the necessary

paperwork, Dena took the Coffeys' case to the Board of Directors. Within one week, Kristy received a call that her request had been approved. Logan became Variety of Eastern Tennessee's first mobility recipient.

Now, Logan can go anywhere at any time. Weighing just 10 pounds, his new chair is easy to lift into their van and simple to fold for storage.

"I never hesitate to go anywhere now," Kristy says.

Congratulations to Variety of Eastern Tennessee for launching its mobility program and helping the Coffey family!



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