Variety Village

Light Your Heart

Eric and Fei are best friends, and an unlikely match. Eric has autism, while Fei has down syndrome. Eric is shy and Fei is very social.

It's been hard for Eric and Fei to find friends at school because of the stigma they often face being labeled 'disabled.' **Sometimes the taunts are difficult to take. They hurt.**

As it turns out, they were in the same class at school in Scarborough, but feeling isolated. They didn't know each other. Not well, at any rate. Then a caring teacher mentioned Variety Village to Eric and Fei's moms, Annie and Lilly and suggested that they visit. That was a few years ago and they've never looked back.

This year, both Eric and Fei were chosen to be the ambassadors of Variety Village at the Lieutenant Governor Games. It was an honor for the boys and their moms, who as it turns out, come from the same small town in China. On their big day, they took to the stage at the Games, and in front of 500 spectators they recited the Athlete's Oath.

"I promise to try my best, encourage others, play fair and have fun."

Eric and Fei belong to the tae kwon do team, one of nine grassroots teams that run out of the Village. With the patience of their coach, Chris Murdoch, they have each earned a green belt. Here, despite their disabilities they participate alongside their able-bodied peers and they are treated like everyone else; Annie and Lilly wouldn't have it any other way.

Eric and Fei are just two of the over 5,500 members who visit Variety Village regularly for fitness, recreation and friendship. It's difficult to believe, but for many people with disabilities access to regular fitness is rare. A lack of accessible facilities, combined with financial constraints are just two of the obstacles faced by persons with disabilities. Being at Variety – where everyone is welcome and where the staff is knowledgeable and supportive – means the world to them. **They feel like they belong.**

In Canada, currently only 3% of children with disabilities participate in regular fitness activity. Our goal, over the next five years, is to increase this to 6%. Variety Village has always championed sport as a means of encouraging participation and personal growth.

☑ **Yes! I choose to support Variety Village! Enclosed is my one-time donation of:**

❑ ❑ ❑ or ❑ I prefer to give $ _____

❑ I have enclosed a cheque made payable to Variety Village, or ❑ I authorize Variety to charge my gift to my credit card.

Credit Card Number | Expiry Date

❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ American Express

Name on Credit Card: _____

eMail: _____ Signature: _____

❑ Or I prefer to give monthly (see over)

Tax receipts issued for donations of $20 or more unless requested.

Fei and Eric

Save time and resources by making a secure donation online at varietyvillage.ca

3701 Danforth Avenue, Scarborough Ontario, M1N 2G2 / Tel. 416-699-7167 / Fax. 416-367-0028
Charitable Registration No. 12362 5618 RR 0001

Before you put this letter aside as just another heart-warming story, please consider what Variety Village and friendship means to you. I've seen first-hand the difference Variety makes and my guess is that it has made a difference in your life too.

I've enclosed a heart with this letter and I invite you to share your story with us and return it, together with your donation, today. What has Variety meant to you? We'll post your story, along with the others we receive, in our front lobby and on our website as a symbol of your support.

Working with others to overcome the barriers and discrimination faced by people with disabilities is what Variety Village has been doing for more than 60 years. To make this a reality we are committed to expanding participation of our grass-roots sports in order to serve a growing need for adapted and able-bodied sport programming, but we are also so much more. We also coach athletes from their first contact with sport, from grassroots to competitive teams and eventually, to elite performance levels.

When you speak to Annie and Lilly they talk about what Variety Village means to them and their sons and they comment on having a safe place to go where they can fit in.

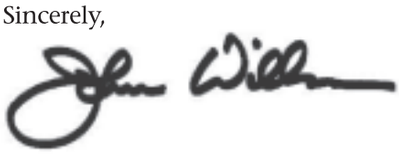
Now their biggest concern is that other children, like their boys, have the same chance they have.

With your support, we can reach many more children (and adults) like Eric and Fei. We have to. With your help, Variety Village can expand our programming, upgrade our equipment and meet our commitment to subsidize special needs membership fees and team costs.

It's not going to be easy. But, by working together with you, Variety Village can empower people with disabilities. Our goal for our 2012 Annual Giving Appeal is $200,000. If everyone donates $30, we can reach our goal.

By renewing your support today, you will ensure that Eric and Fei, and many others, can continue to receive the life-changing programming to transform their world. Please make your gift today.

Sincerely,



John Willson, CA
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. – Please make your life-changing gift today and send in your personal story in the business-reply envelope provided. What *does* Variety mean to you?

P.P.S. – By donating securely online at *www.varietyvillage.ca*, you can receive your charitable tax receipt immediately and assist us in reducing our processing costs. We still want to hear your personal story however, so please email it to *rparashyniak@varietyontario.ca*

Everybody Belongs • Everyone Believes • Every Donation Counts

☑ **Yes! I wish to donate monthly by joining the Dream Circle. Enclosed is my monthly donation of:**

❑ $ 10 ❑ $ 15 ❑ $ 20 or ❑ I prefer to give $ _____

❑ I have enclosed a cheque marked "void". ❑ Please charge my gift to my credit card.

Name on Credit Card:

_____

Signature:

_____

Credit Card Number | Expiry Date

❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ AMERICAN EXPRESS

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Info

For information about our programs and services visit us online at varietyvillage.ca
416-699-7167
info@varietyvillage.on.ca