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Variety The Children’s Charity Southern California Donates Wheelchair Accessible “Sunshine Coach” to AbilityFirst for Children and Youth with Disabilities

Pasadena, CA – June 19, 2015 – Variety The Children’s Charity Southern California has donated a 10-passenger wheelchair accessible van to AbilityFirst, to benefit children and youth with physical and developmental disabilities. Elizabeth O’Neil, Executive Director of Variety Southern California, will officially deliver the new “Sunshine Coach” to Nicole Weaver-Goller, Senior Director of Development, and Barbara Schlosser, Long Beach Center Director, on Friday, June 26, at 3:00 pm. The AbilityFirst Long Beach Center is located at 3770 East Willow Street in Long Beach.

“We are extremely grateful to Variety for this very generous gift, which will be used by more than 350 children who attend our programs in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Field trips and community-based instruction are an important part of our program, and provide opportunities for children with disabilities to interact with their neighbors and peers. We are delighted to receive this 10-passenger van from Variety, which shares our commitment to community inclusion and participation,” said Lori Gangemi, CEO of AbilityFirst. “The van will be used to transport children to the beach, local stores, movie theaters and amusement parks, among many other things. Many children in our programs have limited opportunities to have these experiences, and we are thankful for the community support that makes them possible.”

AbilityFirst, formerly known as the Crippled Children’s Society of Southern California, provides community-based programs for individuals with lifelong physical and developmental disabilities, including autism, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy and Down syndrome. Its children’s programs emphasize social, communication, daily living and healthy living skills, and provide valuable respite and support for working parents.

The Southern California Chapter of Variety was founded in 1941 and has raised over \$60 million for children in Southern California. Variety International was originally established in 1928 by eleven Vaudeville showmen and still exists today for one reason: to help children in need.

According to Variety’s President of the Board, Branden Miller, “No child should miss out on simple joys of childhood because they lack necessary adaptive equipment. Our unique Mobility Program provides children with the freedom, confidence, and exercise they need to get out into the California sunshine and have fun with their families and community. Our “Sunshine Coaches” take kids to field trips, camps, and therapy all over Southern California. We are proud to support AbilityFirst and the children with disabilities who depend on its programs.”

About Ability First

Established in 1926 [AbilityFirst](http://AbilityFirst.org), formerly Crippled Children’s Society of Southern California, provides programs and services to help children and adults with disabilities reach their full potential. Through 25 [locations](#) across Southern California, AbilityFirst offers a broad range of

employment, recreational and socialization [programs](#) as well as accessible housing and a camp, [Camp Paivika](#), which provides year-round programs for children and adults.

About Variety

Long considered “The Heart of Show Business,” Variety found its roots in the entertainment industry on Christmas Eve 1928, when a baby girl was found abandoned on the seat of a movie theatre. The show business community rallied to support the child’s upbringing and education and the group grew into Variety the Children’s Charity – now with 43 chapters in 11 countries, raising \$1.8 billion for children with special needs. Variety the Children’s Charity of Southern California was founded in 1941 and is dedicated to inspiring hope, enriching lives and building a better future for the children of Southern California. The money raised in this community stays in this community allowing Variety to award over \$700,000 annually to organizations which serve children in the areas of Health Care, Education and Mobility. Variety is also a major supporter of the Variety Boys and Girls Club of Boyle Heights.

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