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**THIRD ANNUAL PRODUCTION BY VARIETY CHILDREN'S THEATRE TO FEATURE
'WIZARD OF OZ' AT TOUHILL IN OCTOBER**

***Both Children and Adults Needed to Bring Dorothy's Story to Life, with All Proceeds from
Show Benefiting Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis***

Child and Adult Auditions on Saturday, May 14th; Callbacks on Sunday, May 15th

ST. LOUIS (March 21, 2011) – Tornados aside, Variety Children's Theatre will put a new twist on *THE WIZARD OF OZ* this fall, welcoming children of all abilities into the cast and to assist the production staff for its third annual Broadway musical production. Once again under the direction of Tony Award nominee Lara Teeter, Variety's production of *THE WIZARD OF OZ* will feature Variety children with physical and mental disabilities in the children's ensemble, along with St. Louis' most talented children, as well as Adult Actors Equity Association and non-Equity performers.

Auditions for *THE WIZARD OF OZ* will take place Saturday, May 14, with adult and child principal callbacks Sunday, May 15, at the Community Music School of Webster University at 23 Old Orchard.

Children must be 7-16 years old to audition and come prepared with sheet music to sing eight bars of a song of his or her choice – or simply "Happy Birthday" – and dance basic steps provided by Choreographer Mark Krupinski. Adults should schedule their auditions for Saturday afternoon by contacting the audition coordinator, Laura Boyle at 314-453-0453 x120.

Variety Children's Theatre 2011 Audition Schedule

Saturday, May 14	9 a.m.	Child auditions
	1 p.m.	Adult auditions (by appointment)
Sunday, May 15	1:30 p.m.	Adult and child principal callbacks

THE WIZARD OF OZ will take the stage of the Touhill Performing Arts Center, University of Missouri – St. Louis, later this fall, with performances slated for Friday, Oct. 21, at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Saturday,

Oct. 22, at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Oct. 23 at 1:30 p.m., with an additional show at 7 p.m. on Sunday evening, to be based on ticket demand.

Last year, Variety Children's Theatre presented *OLIVER! the Broadway Musical* to an audience of more than 6,200 people, including nearly 1,900 children whose families receive help from Variety through medical equipment, in-house programs, and/or partner agencies. The 80-person cast of *OLIVER!* featured 13 Variety children whose disabilities range from cerebral palsy and autism to muscular dystrophy and down syndrome. In addition to the onstage talent, each major role in the *OLIVER!* production boasted a Variety "shadow," allowing the children to learn life-long skills alongside the show's production director, musical director, choreographer, stage manager, sound technician, costume designer and more.

Accolades for Variety's production of *OLIVER!* in the fall of 2010 were high, and included the following comments:

"The production of *OLIVER!* by Variety Children's Theatre reminded me a lot of the shows we see at The Muny. The adults were played by an excellent group of professional actors and the young people in the leading roles of the chorus lived up to the high standards set by their elders. Right from the start, the people on the stage moved with purpose and precision under the direction of Lara Teeter and choreography of Mark Krupinski."

- Gerry Kowarski, KDHX *Two on the Aisle*

"For many of these kids, being onstage at all was once a distant dream. But through the Variety Children's Theater they are accomplishing more than most kids their age. And as you watch them sing and dance you can't help but grin, and perhaps, wipe a tear or two from your eyes. The look on these kids' faces as they perform can only be described as pure, unadulterated joy and you walk away feeling deeply blessed and humbled realizing that you were witness to a fulfillment of hope."

- Kelli Stuart, Tonic.com

Variety Children's Theatre debuted in 2009 with its presentation of *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*, attracting 4,093 attendees to the Touhill Performing Arts Center over the course of four performances. For more information, visit www.varietystl.org.

About Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis

For nearly 80 years, **Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis** has helped thousands of children with disabilities say "I can" by providing them with vital medical equipment, as well as educational, therapeutic and recreational programs such as the annual Adventure Camp and Variety Children's Theatre. An international leader in fundraising, Variety the Children's Charity and supports select programs of more than 80 qualified partner agencies throughout the St. Louis area to provide services that directly impact the lives of children with physical and mental disabilities. David Steward, chairman and founder of World Wide Technology, Inc., is the organization's president. For more information on Variety, including upcoming events and volunteer opportunities, visit www.varietystl.org.

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