

Variety Children's Charity of Northern California

The State of the Children:

Educating a new generation living with harsh realities

Today's children are growing up in a tough world. With 18% of California's children living in poverty, obtaining the basic necessities of food, education and security become everyday battles. More than 1 in 3 of California's kids are a year or more behind in school, 1 in 7 will never graduate high school and half will never complete a single year of college. In the Bay Area alone schools are closing at an alarming rate. The challenges of meeting the standards of "No Child Left Behind," the state budget problems of California schools, and the necessity of providing healthy lunches for an increasingly obese child population, means that California schools are in dire need of relief.

No Child Left Behind - Beginning in 2005, students in grades 3 thru 8 must be tested every year in math and English to ensure they're meeting state standards. Students in grades 10 thru 12 will be tested at least once. Each year, schools must increase the number of students who achieve state standards. At the end of 12 years, all students should be able to pass the tests. Schools that fail to achieve this progress will be targeted for improvements. By 2007, states will begin testing students in science as well. With schools grossly underfunded at the state level, NCLB does not give sufficient funds to help schools realize these goals, and in effect holds low-income schools to unrealistic standards.

Child Obesity - Fitness test scores in the public schools showed that about 28 of every 100 schoolchildren in California were overweight in 2004, up 6% from 2001 when a similar study was

done. The state's childhood weight profile seems to be bulging in all directions, researchers said, pointing to an increasing trend towards obesity for girls and boys of all ages and all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Although childhood obesity rates looked markedly worse in Los Angeles than in the Bay Area, no region of the state has been spared. "It's increasing everywhere across the board; this epidemic is not going to go away on its own. It's a personal and medical disaster, and not enough is being done." *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 25, 2005.

It's assumed that school lunches are providing children with nutrition, but in California in 2005 about half of the school menus analyzed failed to meet the federal standard that lunches have no more than 30% of calories coming from fat. But it is hard to know what school lunches currently contain as the Dept. of Education tests lunches at a statistically insignificant rate. The last time a school lunch in San Francisco was tested was in 2001 and that school's lunch failed with too many calories from fat. In 2002, data showed that 15% of children and teens are considered overweight, the percentage has tripled since 1980. An additional 15% of kids and teens are considered at risk for becoming overweight. It is estimated that about half of overweight school-age children and 70% of overweight teens will remain obese into adulthood. Whatever the root cause, researchers said, the latest numbers document a growing threat to public health, noting that the children who are overweight are expected to be overweight as adults. That translates into more cases of diabetes, asthma and other chronic diseases.

Variety's mission is to serve children where the need is the greatest. Variety's vision is to expand into after-school programming and work with dedicated organizations and individuals to transform the way children are participating in life.

Variety@Work

The Insect Insider

There was a stir of whispers among the children as we passed through the "Staff Only" doors at the Academy of Sciences. It wasn't just the exclusive access that had their attention, but the specimens of spiders, scorpions, and beetles. Entomologist Vince Lee took Variety kids from La Casa de las Madres, a safe house in San Francisco, through the usually off limits collection of insects, and up-close and personal with live scorpions and tarantulas. The penguins and sea turtles were a highlight and the chocolate exhibit had something for everyone's palate.

Preview Room Used for Kids Events: In another Variety@Work outing, children watched the classic *The Last Unicorn*, based on the novel by author Peter S. Beagle. 60 children attended this occasion from various shelters and family centers.

Spreadsheets = Sense = Kids

Help!! Variety Desperately Needs a Board Treasure. With a devoted board, a dedicated staff, and children to serve, the only thing Variety is missing is YOU! Variety needs a numbers person who loves and works easily with Excel, Quick Books, bank recs, budgets, and spreadsheets. Four hours a month is all that is required. The position is flexible and you can work remotely. Please contact Ellen if you want to know more about this important position in the most dynamic children's charity in Northern California. Ellen@varietyinc.org

Upcoming Events

Charity Golf Tournament Everyone Welcomed!!

Kickoff reception at Jessup Cellars
BBQ Tribute Dinner Chardonnay Golf Course
Call Variety for special member discount.
415.781.3894



**Variety
Member
Profile:
Jennifer
Toney**

Originally from Spokane WA, Board Member Jennifer Toney began working with Variety in 2003. She works as an economic and financial consultant specializing in commercial litigation with ERS Group. Before finding Variety, she had been searching for a way to make a strong contribution to the community while balancing being a mom and having a demanding career. She enjoys movies with less-than-predictable endings, such as *Runaway Jury* and *The Sixth Sense*.