



Variety Children's Charity of the Desert Receives Desert Healthcare District Grant Aimed at Reducing Isolation & Loneliness

(Palm Desert, CA) | Variety Children's Charity of the Desert is pleased to announce that the organization has received an impactful grant from Desert Healthcare District as part of the District's "Building Connected Communities Initiative," which was established to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Variety Children's Charity plans to apply the \$102,949 grant award towards expanding efforts in its Outreach Program – focusing on case management and referrals/support for the family unit. The program is available now and will be fully operational by October.

"We welcome families to contact us in navigating their journey to access physical, occupational and behavioral therapy to receive mental health services and much more in the areas of intervention and supportive services," said Heidi Maldoon, Executive Director of Variety Children's Charity of the Desert. "This includes culturally competent assistance for all members of the family including the child, their siblings and parents/caregivers, which means we are able to provide support in their language while being mindful of cultural factors that affect mental health and well-being."

Community outreach is a cornerstone of Variety Children's Charity in order to inform Coachella Valley families – specifically those who are underserved – to educate them about services that are available to local families which promote health, mobility, independence, and social inclusion.

The Desert Healthcare District grant is one of eight that has been provided to diverse segments of the Coachella Valley community. The grant awards focusing on expanded resources for mental health, which total \$1,074,113, are in response to U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy's report on loneliness and isolation.

"Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling -- it harms both individual and societal health," Dr. Murthy says in the May 2023 report. "It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death." He goes on to describe loneliness and isolation as an epidemic that requires "all of us" working together to reduce its impact and mend the nation.

"The District is proud to support our community partners and stakeholders in addressing this important issue across the Coachella Valley," said Chris Christensen, interim CEO of the Desert Healthcare District and Foundation.

Those looking to learn more about Variety's Outreach Program can contact Outreach Coordinator, Annika Renteria, (760) 773-9800 ext. 102 or by emailing Annika@varietyofthedesert.org.

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