

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM AND VARIETY TEAM UP TO HOST MARCH 27 EVENT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Holly Robinson Peete to read from new children's book, "My Brother Charlie"

Please Touch Museum, the Children's Museum of Philadelphia, is teaming up with Variety, the Children's Charity of Greater Philadelphia, for its first evening event for families of children with autism. The evening of hands-on, interactive, sensory-filled activities will take place at Please Touch on Saturday, March 27 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Children of all ages are welcome.

The event is a partnership between Variety's Autism Initiative, which provides support for families and caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and Please Touch Museum's Autism Access Program, which aims to provide families of children with ASD with innovative tools to make a museum visit more comfortable and enjoyable. Families can connect with caregivers and other professionals while exploring and playing in the museum's exhibits, where accommodations have been made to provide a sensory-friendly experience for all.

A highlight of the event will be a reading in the Museum's Story Castle by actress Holly Robinson Peete and her twelve-year-old daughter, Ryan Elizabeth Peete. Their new Scholastic picture book, *"My Brother Charlie,"* will be published on March 16 to coincide with Autism Awareness Month in April. A heartwarming fictional story of patience, love and acceptance, *"My Brother Charlie"* is based on the Peete family's own experiences living with Ryan's twin brother RJ, who has autism. The story is told from the twin sister's point of view. The Peetes will donate a percentage of the proceeds for *"My Brother Charlie"* to the HollyRod4Kids Initiative of the HollyRod Foundation to help children with autism gain access to affordable treatments and therapies.

Tickets are required to attend the event and are available at a cost of a \$20 donation per family. One hundred percent of the \$20 donation will go towards the growth of Variety's Autism Initiative. Families must register for the event at www.varietypghila.org. Organizations interested in sponsoring a resource table at the event may contact Marissa Tabak, Variety's Autism Resource Center Director, at marissatabak@varietypghila.org.

"Variety's Autism Initiative is all about providing children with autism and their families opportunities to connect with each other in an uplifting and accepting environment. We are so excited to be partnering with the Please Touch Museum to bring this one-of-a-kind event to our families," said Marissa Tabak. "As a sibling of a person with autism, I understand how isolated families can feel when they have a child on the spectrum. When your child isn't able to do the same things as the neighbor's kids or when they act a little differently than their peers, it is hard to cope. At Variety, we celebrate those differences by bringing families together and letting them know they are not alone. This event at Please Touch Museum will be a great opportunity to do just that."

"We strive for Please Touch Museum to be a welcoming learning environment for all children, but we recognize that a busy weekend can be overwhelming to families of children with autism," said Laura Foster, President & CEO of Please Touch Museum. "We are thrilled to partner with Variety to plan an event that helps to meet the needs of children on the spectrum while also helping parents connect with other parents of children with autism. It is our long-range goal to host these types of events on a regular basis."

Please Touch Museum's Autism Access Program provides families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) with innovative tools to make a museum visit more comfortable and enjoyable. The program creates a comprehensive welcoming structure for families of children with ASD through accessibility tools for families of children with ASD;

specialized training focusing on children with ASD and their behavioral patterns; mobile programming enabling children who would otherwise not be able to visit the museum to interact with PTM-themed games and toys; special Autism Access evening events for families of children with ASD; and games and toys designed for children with ASD in the Kids Store.

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About Please Touch Museum

Please Touch Museum® at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing learning opportunities through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children’s museums, Please Touch is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.

Variety-the Children’s Charity of Greater Philadelphia has been serving children with disabilities since 1935. Our programs and services are designed to best address the children’s physical, social, medical, educational, and recreational needs without regards to economic status, race, creed, gender, or type of disability. Variety provides numerous programs at our Camp & Development Center in Montgomery County, after-school programs in Philadelphia and Delaware, and several special events throughout the Delaware Valley through our Variety at Play program. For more information please call 215-735-0803, or visit www.varietyphila.org.