

# The Standard-Journal

Matt Stulberg

## Children's charity partners with CSIU to gift adaptive bikes

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*Josh Martz and Phylcia Martz watch as their daughter, Winter Martz, 7, takes her first ride on her new adaptive bike outside the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit on Tuesday. Matt Stulberg/The Standard-Journal*

MILTON — Custom adaptive bikes will give seven local children with disabilities a chance to ride the streets in style this summer, for free, thanks to the My Bike Program through Variety the Children’s Charity.

At the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) on Tuesday, Deanna David, Variety program manager, welcomed children and families to a presentation of the free adaptive bikes and a celebratory first ride for recipients.

“We’re here thanks to the CSIU, we’ve been able to connect to these families through their therapists, through their schools, through the IU to get connected with them to give free equipment through the My Bike Program,” David said.

Variety, a Wexford-based charity, started the My Bike Program in 2012 to provide children with physical and developmental disabilities an easy route to obtaining the normally pricey adaptive cycles. Out of that program also came the My Stroller and My Voice programs, aimed at providing free adaptive strollers and communication devices.



*William Jones, 10, tests out his new adaptive bike, provided by Variety the Children's Charity, with Lori Kratzer after a presentation on Tuesday at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. Matt Stulberg/The Standard-Journal*

Since started, the programs have given more than 5,400 bikes, strollers, and devices to children throughout Variety's service area, which spans 71 counties across Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Jessica Harry, CSIU special education supervisor, said the intermediate unit began to work more closely with Variety in recent years to identify eligible children and aid families in the process of applying for and receiving the free, custom-made adaptive bikes.

"We had worked with some districts on an individual student level basis to reach out for need. Then my former director and I thought it was too good of an opportunity, so we really started working directly with individual districts to get kids through the application process, to get them set up with fittings and everything else like that," said Harry. "We really expanded the capacity to reach more students doing that and Variety has just been wonderful in assisting with that."

Any child who meets the program's eligibility guidelines is able to apply for such a bike. Children enrolled in CSIU programs as well as surrounding school districts were among the bike recipients on Tuesday.

"I do a lot of things in my job and I have to say, by far, this is the coolest part of my job, it's this. It's just a very good opportunity to get kids something they wouldn't normally have," Harry added.

Each adaptive bike, ordered through medical equipment supplier Blackburn's, is customized according to therapists' recommendations on the needs of its child rider. Representatives from Blackburn's also led a safety presentation that outlined the functioning of different features on each of the bikes and walked parents through helping their children operate them.

"There are accessories for anyone to be able to ride, no matter what their ability or disability there's something for them so that they can ride," said David.



*Tim Dersham helps his daughter Hayleigh Dersham, 11, get strapped into her new, custom-made adaptive bike, gifted by Variety the Children's Charity as part of its My Bike Program. Matt Stulberg/The Standard-Journal*

David also highlighted the positive impact that equipment like the adaptive bikes provides for children growing up with a disability.

"It really gives the ability for any child to be able to ride a bike, to have the freedom to be out with other kids, with their siblings in the neighborhood, just like every other kid."

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