

Press Release:

22nd November 2018

The Bingo Association presents charity cheque for £1.3 million to Variety ambassador Joe McFadden in the Houses of Parliament

Variety ambassador and Strictly Come Dancing Winner, Joe McFadden joined Miles Baron, Chief Executive of The Bingo Association, at a parliamentary reception to receive a charity cheque for the £1.3 million donation from GB bingo operators raised through their customers and staff.

The event was attended by MPs, bingo operators, bingo players and charity beneficiaries from up and down the country.

As Variety enters its 70th year in operation, The Bingo Association has chosen to extend their original four-year partnership for an extra fifth year, having been impressed by the charity's tireless efforts to help improve the lives of sick, disabled and disadvantaged children.

Over the past four years, Variety has used Bingo Association funds to provide schools and other organisations with 23 Sunshine Coaches. These coaches are specially adapted to be accessible to children with a diverse range of mobility needs, allowing beneficiaries to plan activities without worrying about the cost, timing, and expense of public transport. Many organisations who had received a coach were in attendance at the event in recognition of the incredible work they do. The Bingo Association were delighted that funds raised by its customers were being reinvested within the very communities from which they are raised.

In addition to the buses, The Bingo Association has also supplied Variety with funds for wheelchairs and other accessibility equipment, as well as numerous grants and Variety Great Days Out.

Joe McFadden said:

"I'm delighted to be able to lend my voice to a cause as vital as Variety's – vulnerable children are one of the most at risk groups in our society, and I'm honoured be able to champion their work."

"The Bingo Association's generous donation means Variety can continue to help disadvantaged young people from across the UK reach their full potential."

Joe McFadden has been a familiar friendly face in British soaps for over ten years, having starred in Heartbeat, Casualty, and Holby City, before stepping into his dancing shoes and winning Strictly Come Dancing in 2017. Joe is one of Variety's greatest ambassadors—regularly attending the charity's events and helping to raise funds for children across the UK.

In addition to the cheque handover, there were speeches by Anna Turley, the Chair of the APPG on Bingo, Miles Baron, the CEO of The Bingo Association, and Frances Lang, the CEO of Variety. The evening also included a charity bingo game, which saw an additional £250 being donated to Variety, alongside £250 to a charity of the winner's choice.

Miles Baron, CEO of the Bingo Association, said:

"I'm incredibly excited to announce over the past four years, bingo clubs have raised over £1.3 million for Variety, the Children's Charity, smashing our target of £1 million.

"Variety's work has a substantial impact on every community it touches, making it the perfect charitable partner for bingo, a social form of gambling rooted in the heart of local communities. It's a delight to see the money raised by our customers go back into the communities it's raised in, and I'm delighted to be extending our partnership with Variety by another year until the end of 2019."

Frances Lang, CEO of Variety, said:

"We are delighted that the Bingo Association has agreed to work with us for a hugely important extra year, in which Variety will celebrate its 70th anniversary as a charity in the UK. The generosity of the Association, and the clubs across the country, has been absolutely outstanding. Their support has directly touched the lives of many disadvantaged and disabled children around the country. We are truly grateful for the Bingo Association's continued support."

Anna Turley, MP for Redcar, adds:

"I have been delighted to represent the interests of the bingo industry in parliament as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Bingo. The parliamentary reception is all about celebrating the role that bingo players and clubs play in our local communities. The funds raised for Variety are just a small example of their great work and one which truly helps a wonderful cause."

The Bingo Association and its members have not just been raising funds for its official charity partner Variety, the children's charity since 2015. Bingo clubs across the country have raised at least an equivalent amount for Carers Trust, Chips and Alzheimer's, in addition to countless smaller local charitable events.

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors

The Bingo Association and Variety

Variety, the children's charity, became The Bingo Association's charity partner in 2015. Bingo clubs up and down the country have supported with fundraising schemes including football tournaments, Sunshine Day parties, cake sales, special £1 Bingo games and prize draws.

Funding from the bingo industry has enabled Variety to provide 23 Sunshine Coaches, as well as numerous wheelchairs and specialist equipment to improve the lives of hundreds of disadvantaged and disabled children all over the UK, including:

- 23 Sunshine Coaches for special educational needs schools
- A range of grants for individuals across the UK including in Buckinghamshire, Yorkshire and Hants
- A range of school grants including in Devon, Clwyd, Lincolnshire, East Sussex, Middlesex, Hampshire, West Glamorgan, Maidstone, Norwich, Dorking, Rochester, Maidstone, Gravesend, St Neots, Epping, Blackpool and Greater London
- A range of days out for up to 50 children and up to 100 families including in Milton Keynes, Silverstone and London
- Funding youth clubs in Norwich, Dorking, Rochester, Maidstone, Gravesend and London

About The Bingo Association

The Bingo Association is the trade association of the licensed bingo industry in Great Britain, representing the proprietors licensed under The Gambling Act 2005. www.bingoassociation.co.uk.

There are 51 proprietors in membership. Membership profile ranges from the large operators, including Buzz (124 clubs) and Mecca (97 clubs), to smaller regional operators like Carlton Leisure (14 clubs) and many single unit businesses.

The bingo sector directly employs over 13,000 people in the UK. Over 3 million customers made over 48m visits to bingo clubs last year.

About Variety, the Children's Charity:

Variety, the Children's Charity, believes that neither disability nor disadvantage should prevent a child from realising their full potential. Since setting up its UK division in 1949, the charity has supported nearly 1 million children affected by ill health, disadvantage and disability. In 2019, Variety GB will celebrate its 70th anniversary.

With a focus on helping children make the most of their childhood, Variety the Children's Charity, provides support through four core programmes:

Mobility - providing specialist equipment including customised electric wheelchairs and bespoke Sunshine Coaches for schools ensuring children develop a greater sense of freedom and adventure

Health - equipping children's hospitals with the latest medical technology and life changing aids

Education - equipping Youth Clubs and young people's organisations – facilitating new skills and developing greater self-worth

Great Days Out - providing new experiences through educational programmes and exciting outings

Variety, the Children's Charity, launched in the United States in 1928 and is the oldest international children's charity. It has divisions across 13 countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Jersey, Republic of Ireland, France, Israel, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Barbados and Eastern Caribbean) helping children at the local community level.