

# Be The Best I Can Be

The following is from a Variety Club of British Columbia spring 2001 direct mail campaign entitled "Help me be the best I can be."

"Dear Friend of Variety Club,

"We've all heard the expression 'Be the best you can be' – perhaps we first heard these encouraging and inspirational words from our parents, or from our favourite teacher. Regardless of where we first heard this expression, it likely had a positive impact on how we perceived our world and our role in it. It changed our attitude, gave us enthusiasm and determination, and focused our attention on that at which we wanted to excel.

"Being the best you can be is a challenge at the best of times. Now imagine how much more of a challenge it is when you have a condition or a disease that affects how you interact with other people, how you communicate, how you move, or how you see the world. Now imagine yourself as a child faced with one of these medical challenges – a child who also has the ambition to be the best he or she can be.

"I would like to share with you two stories about two remarkable children who are meeting the challenge of being the best they can be.

"Anyone who saw the 35th annual Variety Club of British Columbia Show of Hearts telethon this past February saw the story of six-year-old Taylor Shewchuk. Taylor has cerebral palsy, but she also has a dream of becoming a ballerina. The Variety Club of British Columbia is helping to empower her to achieve that dream. We provided Taylor with a StarWalker that improves her stability, control and gives her the freedom to move about. The StarWalker is helping Taylor learn how to walk, but walking and dancing are two very different things.

"Yet, Taylor dreams of being the best ballerina she can be ... and for a few short moments on the telethon, thousands of BCTV viewers saw the possibilities. We were moved as we watched a beaming and adorable Taylor Schewchuk give her first recital with the Goh Ballet Academy.

"You may also be familiar with the story of 11-year-old Vanisha Dayal, who was born with a life-threatening cancerous tumour on the left side of her face, leaving her blind in one eye. Variety Club, along with other organizations, helped with expenses for the surgery that could only be done in Washington, D.C. Brave Vanisha has had to endure a series of operations, and she will require more in her lifetime, as she grows.

"But the challenge of having just one eye – plus all the emotional and physical upheaval of requiring recurring surgeries has not stopped Vanisha.

"There is one other youngster I would like to tell you about. This nine-year-old boy was playing around with a slingshot one day (as boys will do) when an accident cost him his left eye.



Taylor could have danced all night.

"Suddenly this child could not be as active as he was before the accident; he became reclusive and overly dependent upon his mother, and he slipped into a depression. Then, it was suggested to his mother that the child be encouraged to follow in her footsteps and take up music. So he took up the clarinet.

"I was that child. What was a tragic accident for me was transformed into a career, through the love, direction and support of my mother and a family friend – and my focus on a goal – and as I like to say, seventy years later, the rest is history!

"Triumph over adversity – that's what this letter is all about. Perhaps one day all children will be able to live carefree, healthy lives, enthused, empowered and driven by the knowledge that a whole world of beautiful possibilities lie before them. You can help move us toward making that world a reality.

"Please help Variety Club help kids with a donation – so that we can help children be the best they can be. Thank you."

Yours truly,

Dal [Dal Richards]

*Chris Byrnes - Tent 47: British Columbia  
Public Relations Coordinator*