

Contact: Lisa Dunleavy  
Tel. 610-238-0415  
Cell Phone 610-246-4812

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Email: [lisadunleavy@comcast.net](mailto:lisadunleavy@comcast.net)

## **STUDENTS' SMALL CHANGE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR AUTISM**

### **Ridge Park Elementary School Students Have Partnered With Firsttrust Bank to Raise Money for the Variety Club's Autism Initiative**

**Conshohocken, PA - April 13, 2009** – Can those few spare coins taking up space in your wallet really make a difference? The students at Ridge Park Elementary School will tell you they do.

For four weeks, April 13-May 8, 2009, over 350 students are collecting coins to raise money for the Variety's Autism Initiative during Autism Awareness Month.

To support students' efforts, Firsttrust Bank in Conshohocken, PA has partnered with the school to match funds raised up to \$1,000. "Firsttrust Bank's philosophy of community outreach in the areas of education, children and family services, and healthcare initiatives dove-tail nicely with this event. We have a special relationship with Variety – The Children's Charity, as employees of Firsttrust serve on its Board and we hold a month-long fundraising campaign each June. More importantly, through our Where's Trusty? financial literacy outreach, we encourage students to understand the value of saving, and how – over time – their good savings habits can make a big difference in their lives and the lives of families in their local community," said Kim Gunning, Regional Vice President of Firsttrust in Conshohocken.

Each week students in grades K-3 will bring in their coins and place them in their classroom jar. Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will have the chance to dress up in a detective costume to become the "Secret Snooper" – a character who will randomly pop into each classroom to inspect the progress of the coin jars. Students will also create excitement by promoting the event on their student news video broadcast, *Ridge Park Today*. Mr. Jason Bacani, Principal of Ridge Park Elementary School, will make weekly announcements to keep the momentum going. "Through our autistic support classrooms and services, Ridge Park Elementary School has a special connection with many families in our district whose children are on the autism spectrum. Our PTO has been instrumental in organizing this event," said Bacani. "The coin race will be a great way for all students to support autism awareness."

Gail Stein, Director of Variety's Autism Resource Center says the goal of Variety's Autism Initiative is to support families who are living with Autism. "Here at Variety, we offer continuous support to children, parents and caregivers through a wide array of programs focused solely on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Through programs like Variety's Family Weekend Retreats, Next Steps Workshops and our Speaker's Series, which introduces caregivers to some of the most prominent experts in the ASD field, we are able to answer families' questions, supply them with information and keep them connected," said Stein. She went on to add, "Variety's Autism Resource Center also provides therapeutic programs for children with an Autism diagnosis, and we are thrilled about our new Autism Call-In Center, which provides immediate support to families after that first sign of Autism."

The coin race will conclude on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> with a final opportunity for people to contribute coins at the school's Spring Carnival. Firsttrust will be present at the carnival, as will Trusty, the bank's lovable mascot. All coins will be counted at the bank on Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. A check presentation is planned for Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at Ridge Park Elementary School where Principal Bacani and a sampling of students will present their contribution to Variety and Firsttrust Bank will present their matching check.

If you would like more information about this event or to schedule an interview or photo opportunity, please contact Lisa Dunleavy at 610.238.0415 or [lisadunleavy@comcast.net](mailto:lisadunleavy@comcast.net) Ridge Park Elementary School is located at 200 Karrs Lane Conshohocken, PA 19428.

*Ridge Park Elementary  
Parent Teacher Organization*

**Kelly Jowett & Jackie Givnish**  
*Co-Presidents*

*Together...Working, Learning, and Succeeding*

---

200 Kars Lane, Conshohocken, PA 19428 · Phone: (610) 825-1083 Fax: (610) 825-7983 · [www.colonialsd.org](http://www.colonialsd.org)

###

If you would like more information about this event or to schedule an interview or photo opportunity, please contact Lisa Dunleavy at 610.238.0415 or [lisdunleavy@comcast.net](mailto:lisdunleavy@comcast.net) Ridge Park Elementary School is located at 200 Kars Lane Conshohocken, PA 19428.

### **About Firsttrust Bank**

Founded in 1934 and celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary under its third generation of family ownership, Firsttrust is a privately-held bank with assets of \$2.6 billion. Firsttrust is a Small Business Administration (SBA) preferred lender, and provides both retail and commercial services through its 24 banking offices located in Bucks, Burlington, Chester, Lehigh, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. Continuing to meet the needs of its customers, Firsttrust offers a wide variety of deposit products, consumer and business loan options, commercial real estate mortgages and cash-management products. For more information, visit [firsttrust.com](http://firsttrust.com), or call 800-220-BANK. To learn more about saving, children are encouraged to visit the Where's Trusty? financial literacy website at [www.WheresTrusty.com](http://www.WheresTrusty.com)

### **About Variety Club**

Since its inception in 1935, Variety - The Children's Charity of Greater Philadelphia (formerly Variety Club) has remained committed to providing programs and services that are best designed to address children's physical, social, medical, educational, and recreational needs without regards to economic status, race, creed, gender, or type of disability. To this date, Variety – The Children's Charity is committed to providing opportunities for children and youth with disabilities with 91 cents of every dollar raised going directly to programs supporting children with special needs.

Variety- The Children's Charity provides a myriad of programs and services to children with disabilities within the Delaware Valley. Variety's Autism Initiative provides immediate assistance to families with a child diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. For more information about Variety's Autism Resource Center, go to [www.varietyautism.org](http://www.varietyautism.org) or contact our AUTISM Call Center: Questions, information and resources: 215-735-0803.