

A Note from Executive Director, Vicki Hickman

The Variety Sale: A Tradition That Tells Our Story

If you've ever stepped into the Variety Sale, you know it's much more than a place to shop. It's a place of discovery, connection, and—if we're being honest—a little bit of delightful unpredictability. But what many may not realize is just how deeply rooted this small-but-mighty operation is in the history and heart of Twin Towers.

The Variety Sale has been part of our community for more than 35 years, evolving alongside the campus itself. What began as a modest setup—two small rooms tucked near what is now the Parkview area—has grown into the vibrant, well-loved space we know today. Along the way, it has moved locations, expanded its footprint, and adapted to meet the needs of our residents and community. Yet through every change, one thing has remained constant: the spirit of service that powers it.

From the beginning, the Variety Sale has been entirely volunteer-driven. Residents and community members alike have stepped forward to sort, clean, repair, research, price, and display donated items. They've served as cashiers, organizers, and even “heavy-lifter movers,” transforming what might otherwise be discarded into something meaningful and useful for someone else.

And that's part of what makes the Variety Sale so special—it gives new life to items while also strengthening our sense of purpose. Every donation represents generosity. Every hour volunteered reflects commitment. And every purchase—no matter how small—plays an essential role in sustaining this entire effort. The Variety Sale thrives because of this continuous cycle of giving, preparing, and purchasing. It is a shared effort that depends on all of us—and one that stays strong when we continue to participate in it together.

Of course, like any long-standing tradition, the Variety Sale comes with its share of memorable moments. There were the days when shoppers lined the halls, eagerly waiting for the doors to open—creating what could only be described as joyful chaos. There were themed events like the beloved Christmas sales, complete with music, cookies, and a festive spirit that brought the entire community together. And then there are the stories—like the time a mysterious “loafers” box turned out to contain something entirely unexpected (bread shaped like shoes), or when a simple donated item ended up generating hundreds of dollars through a carefully researched online auction.

These moments remind us that the Variety Sale is not just about transactions—it's about experiences, laughter, and shared memories.

But beyond the fun, the impact of the Variety Sale is both real and far-reaching. Proceeds directly support the Independent Living Residents' Council, helping fund everything from library subscriptions and resident birthday celebrations to resident-led projects and publications like *Inside the Towers*. The impact extends even further: a portion of every dollar earned supports the LEC Benevolent Care Fund, ensuring that residents who have outlived their financial resources can continue to call Twin Towers home. There is also a significant contribution made each year to the Walter Greiss Memorial Holiday Gift Fund, where funds are added to resident donations and gifted to associates at Christmas. This meaningful gesture—amounting to several thousand dollars each year—represents a special and tangible way residents can express their appreciation for the associates who serve them so faithfully. (Continued on next page)

In recent years alone, tens of thousands of dollars have been generated through the Variety Sale—supporting multiple initiatives that enrich community life and extend care and appreciation in meaningful ways. It is an extraordinary example of how everyday participation can make a lasting difference.

The Variety Sale also reflects something essential about who we are as a community. It is resourceful. It is generous. It is resilient. Through renovations, flooding challenges, and even the disruptions of COVID, the Variety Sale adapted—finding new ways to operate, including creative approaches like showcase sales and smaller, more personalized shopping experiences. That resilience mirrors the people of Twin Towers.

Today, when you walk through the doors of the Variety Sale, you're not just entering a thrift shop. You're stepping into a living story—one shaped by decades of volunteers, donors, shoppers, and leaders who believed in the power of community.

And that story continues—because of you.

So, the next time you stop by, take a moment to look beyond the shelves. See the history. See the generosity. And consider how you might be part of what keeps it going. Whether through a donation, a purchase, or your time, your participation helps sustain this shared effort—one that reflects our commitment to serving one another and strengthening our community.

Because at Twin Towers, even the smallest things can make a meaningful difference—and the Variety Sale is proof of that every single day.

- Vicki