

Free Books for Davie County Children! Smart Start Receives Funding to Expand Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Across NC



The love of reading begins in a parent's arms. Snuggling together with a good book creates connections that help build young children's brains and conditions their minds and memories.

For the past 10 years, Smart Start of Davie County has been raising funds to provide free books to the county's youngest readers through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Soon even more Davie County children will be able to benefit from this program thanks to additional funding provided by the North Carolina General Assembly.

"Approximately 700 children in Davie County, aged birth to five, receive free Imagination Library books each month," said Gena Taylor, Executive Director, Smart Start of Davie County. "With the state expansion funds, we can enroll more children. Parents can call, email, or stop by Smart Start of Davie to register their child for free books!! Please email info@daviesmartstart.org or call 336-751-2113."

During the 2017 legislative session, North Carolina state lawmakers included \$3.5 million in the first year of the budget and \$7 million in the second year for the Smart Start network to offer free books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to children across the state. Imagination Library was created to foster a love of reading in preschool children and to ensure that every child born has books, regardless of their family's income. Children aged birth to five receive the gift of a specially selected book delivered right to their home each month.

"I'm thrilled that my Imagination Library is going to be offered to so many children in North Carolina" stated Dolly Parton, the founder of Imagination Library. "Working together we can help children dream more, learn more, care more, and be more."

"Our state leaders clearly understand how important an early love of reading is for each child's success in school and later in life," stated Cindy Watkins, the President of the North Carolina Partnership for Children that oversees the Smart Start network, "Smart Start works in every community to ensure young children have a strong foundation for starting kindergarten – now we can offer this important literacy program to that critical work."

History of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

In 1995, Dolly Parton launched an exciting new effort, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, to benefit the children of her home county in East Tennessee, USA. Dolly's vision was to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month. By mailing high quality, age-appropriate books directly to their homes, she wanted children to be excited about books and to feel the magic that books can create. Moreover, she could ensure that every child would have books, regardless of their family's income.



Dolly's Imagination Library became so popular that in the year 2000 she announced that she would make the program available for replication to any community that was willing to partner with her to support it locally. Since the initial program launch in the United States, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has gone from just a few dozen books to over 80,000,000 books mailed to children in the United States, into Canada and across the proverbial pond into the United Kingdom! Currently over 1600 local communities provide the Imagination Library to over 1,000,000 children each and every month. Already statistics and independent reports have shown Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

drastically improves early childhood literacy for children enrolled in the program. Further studies have shown improved scores during early literacy testing.