Imagination Library of Will County
302 N. Chicago St
Joliet, IL 60432
willcounty.gov

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Imagination Library Coming to Will County

Kick-Off Fundraising Event Set for January 30 at the Rialto Square Theatre

WILL COUNTY – Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant and the Will County Center for Economic Development have announced a partnership with The Dollywood Foundation to bring **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** to Will County. The partnership kicks off a county-wide fundraising campaign to fully launch the book-gifting program in Will County, which mails free, high-quality and age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five.

"The power of books is undeniable," said County Executive Bertino-Tarrant. "The earlier we get them into our children's hands the more opportunities we provide for our earliest learners. We have a unique opportunity, with the help of the State of Illinois, to develop emergent readers and create a foundation for the love of books."

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book-gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has gifted over 250 million free books in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and The Republic of Ireland.

The Imagination Library of Will County is supported by the statewide expansion of the program launched by Governor JB Pritzker in December 2023. The state program matches every dollar raised locally, improving the ability of county-wide programs to raise funds and register children. With the state match, every $16 raised locally will sponsor one child to receive a full year of high-quality, age-appropriate books.

"Today's young readers are the innovators and business leaders of the future," said Doug Pryor, President and CEO of the Will County Center for Economic Development. "Investing in early childhood education builds a better foundation for students when they enter school and encourages a cycle of success that benefits both the students and their community."

CED WILL COUNTY CENTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
JENNIFER BERTINO-TARRANT WILL COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Research has shown that the first five years of life are critical for young children, with around 90% of brain development occurring during those years. Daily readings by parents or caregivers provide the greatest opportunity to prepare their child for school, and literacy is a long-term major social determinant of health and economic impact. Children receiving books through the Imagination Library see increased readiness for kindergarten and higher academic achievement.

To fully launch the program and begin registering local children, a fundraising goal of $150,000 has been established to sustain operations for the first two years. On December 10, members of the Lockport Woman's Club presented the first donation of $5,000 to the Imagination Library of Will County. Founded in 1902, the organization has signed on as the first sponsor and partner of the program.

"Having founded the Lockport Library in 1922, the Lockport Woman's Club recognizes the Dolly Parton Imagination Library as an excellent opportunity to continue supporting reading and literacy within the community," said Janine Wheeler, President of the Lockport Woman's Club. "We are honored to be part of this meaningful project that will benefit so many children."

In partnership with the Rialto Square Theatre, a kick-off fundraising event will be held on January 30 in celebration of Imagination Library and Dolly Parton's January birthday. The "**Imagination Celebration – A Dolly Parton Birthday Book Bash**" will feature a celebratory reception and a showing of the 1980 classic *9 to 5*, starring Dolly Parton.

All proceeds from the event will support the Imagination Library of Will County. The reception will begin at 5:30 p.m. on January 30 at the Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet, with the movie starting at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are $20 and available for purchase starting on Dec. 26 at the Rialto Box Office (102 N. Chicago Street, Joliet, IL - Mon.-Fri. – 12 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.). The Rialto Box Office will be closed between Dec. 30 and Jan. 2 due to the holidays.

Tickets can also be purchased by check or cash (exact change) at various locations:

- Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce - 116 N. Chicago St. Suite 110, Joliet, IL 60432 – Mon.-Fri. - 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Plainfield Shorewood Chamber of Commerce - 24109 W. Lockport St., Plainfield, IL 60544 - Mon.-Fri. – 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

- Lockport Chamber of Commerce - 222 E. 9th St., 3rd Floor, Lockport, IL 60441- Mon.-Thurs. – 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

For more information about the Imagination Celebration event, email maureen@thedunloegroup.com. To donate directly to the Imagination Library of Will County, including sponsoring a child to receive one year of books for $16, visit www.WillCountyImaginationLibrary.org.

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CUTLINE: Members of the Lockport Woman's Club present a $5,000 donation to the Imagination Library of Will County. The program, which mails free, high-quality, and age-appropriate books to children from birth to five, is the result of a partnership between Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, the Will County Center for Economic Development, and The Dollywood Foundation.

About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book-gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has gifted over 250 million free books in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and The Republic of Ireland. This is achieved through funding shared by The Dollywood Foundation and Local Community Partners. The Imagination Library mails more than 3 million high-quality, age-appropriate books directly to children's homes each month. Each child enrolled in the program receives one book per month from birth to age five - at no cost to families. Dolly envisioned creating a lifelong love of reading and inspiring children to Dream More, Learn More, Care More and Be More.

The program's impact has been widely researched, and results demonstrate its positive impact on early childhood development and literacy skills. Penguin Random House is the exclusive publisher of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. For more information, please visit imaginationlibrary.com.

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