

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Reaches Statewide Milestone in Oregon

Salem, OR – 05/06/2025 – The Imagination Library of Oregon has welcomed our 57th Local Program Partner, the Lower Umpqua Library and the Reedsport Rotary Foundation in Douglas County, making it possible for families in Reedsport and Gardiner to register their children under 5 to receive free books by mail each month. **This marks a significant milestone for the Imagination Library of Oregon, which is now available in every county and zip code in our state!**

Lower Umpqua Library Director, Alex Kuestner, says “we’re excited to make Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library available in our area, this will be a wonderful resource for local families!”

“We are thrilled to be partnering with the Lower Umpqua Library to bring Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to Reedsport and Gardiner. Since its inception, the Reedsport Rotary Foundation has been committed to supporting the education of the children and youth of our area,” says Kristen Zetsche of the Reedsport Rotary Foundation.

A generous grant from the Betsy Priddy Fund of Oregon Community Foundation made this coverage possible. “We are deeply proud to support Dolly Parton’s efforts to help all Oregon children learn to read,” says Lisa Mensah, President and CEO of Oregon Community Foundation. “Partnerships like this one create high quality learning opportunities for our youngest Oregonians in every corner of our state.”

“Seeing people come together to help the Imagination Library of Oregon reach this milestone is inspiring!” says Laurie McNichols, Imagination Library of Oregon State Director. “DPIL is a global program, but at our core we have always been, and will always be, grassroots. We are so excited to welcome the Lower Umpqua Library, with support from the Reedsport Rotary Foundation and funding from Oregon Community Foundation.”

In May of 2024, the State of Oregon, via the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC), partnered with The Dollywood Foundation to launch the expansion of the Imagination Library of Oregon, providing a 50% funding match to help cover the cost of books and mailing. With this new partnership in place, the State of Oregon committed to making the Imagination Library accessible across the state as well as growing enrollment so more children could receive books and learn to love reading.

“This is an incredible milestone. The goal of the statewide expansion was to ensure

that children ages 0-5 in every zip code in Oregon have access to books. With the addition of Reedsport, that goal has been achieved,” said DELC Director Alyssa Chatterjee. “By expanding the Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, we’re helping more young children across the state build early literacy skills and develop a lifelong love of reading – no matter where they live or what their background may be.”

"Every child deserves the opportunity to fall in love with reading, no matter their zip code or family income," says Majority Leader Ben Bowman, Chief Sponsor of the bill that made the state match a reality. "The Imagination Library is one of the most effective tools we have to close early literacy gaps and invest in Oregon’s future."

Currently, 65,000 Oregon children are enrolled in the Imagination Library, which is approximately 30% of all children under the age of five in our state. The program is free for all families. Children can be registered as early as birth to receive new, high-quality, age-appropriate books addressed to them in the mail each month until their fifth birthday.

“Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library isn’t just about books – it’s about fostering relationships between caring adults and children that spark the joy of reading at an early age,” Governor Tina Kotek emphasizes. “This program is essential to improve our literacy outcomes and helps make sure every Oregon student, regardless of where they live, has the opportunity to develop a love of reading before they ever step into a classroom.”

A love of books and reading offers the foundation for literacy skills that prepare children for success in school and life. The Imagination Library levels the playing field for all children by helping them build their own home libraries and encouraging increased interactions with family members around books and reading. “It’s a wonderful way for families to build routines and cherished memories together,” says Kaylee Chrystal, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Imagination Library of Oregon.

To learn more as Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library expands across Oregon, or to enroll your child, visit www.imaginationlibrary.com/oregon.

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 and State 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.

About the Lower Umpqua Library District - Reedsport, Oregon

The Lower Umpqua Library serves a rural district on the Oregon Coast, which traces its roots back to 1920 when the first library was established in Reedsport. In 1982, the community raised funds to build our current library building in the heart of downtown Reedsport. In 2017, the Douglas County Library System, of which we were a part, closed. Our dedicated volunteers and board worked hard to rescue materials from the old county system and keep the Reedsport library open. They rallied the community to pass a special tax district for northwestern Douglas County (including Reedsport, Gardiner, Winchester Bay, Scottsburg, and the rural hinterland), providing an independent financial basis to resume normal operations. Currently, our library has five employees and numerous dedicated volunteers. Recent projects to expand the library's collection and reach include specialty sections (such as Classics, Pacific Northwest, and World Languages) and five neighborhood library bookcases, which we have installed throughout our district.

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