Support Imagination Library

No family pays to enroll in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. The cost of books and postage are borne by The Library Foundation, the Friends of the Library and United Way of Greater Topeka, and are offset with corporate and individual donations. The Library Foundation manages donations for the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. The Foundation and the United Way of Greater Topeka are continuing fundraising to achieve sustainable funding for the program. All donations and grants received are used only for direct program expenses of purchasing and mailing books to children.

About the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library
The library’s mission is sparking curiosity and connecting our community through literacy and learning. Our core values are excellence, curiosity, literacy, freedom, teamwork and accountability. We help transform the lives of citizens through five Community Impact Goals: every child will be ready for kindergarten • everyone will discover their passion for learning • everyone will continue learning new ways to live their best life • Topeka and Shawnee County will be ready for kindergarten • everyone will become financially stable and get stable jobs, help families financial stability and health, we help more children graduate and get stable jobs, help families become financially stable and improve the overall health of our community.

About United Way of Greater Topeka
United Way of Greater Topeka brings together people, companies and nonprofits to create positive sustainable change in our community. We work to solve issues no single donor, charity, or government agency can handle alone. By focusing on education, financial stability and health, we help more children graduate and get stable jobs, help families become financially stable and improve the overall health of our community.

About Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library
Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until their 5th birthday, no matter their family’s income. Dolly Parton created Imagination Library to guarantee access to books and to inspire parents to read to their children as much as possible. She developed the program in 1995 for her native Sevier County, Tennessee. Dolly’s vision was to foster a love of reading among her county’s preschool children and their families. Imagination Library has expanded across the U.S. and globally. In 2018 a total of more than 15.2 million free books were sent to children in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and the U.S.

Overview
Imagine every child in Topeka and Shawnee County reading and sharing the same classic stories,” said Gina Millsap, CEO, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. “When they enter kindergarten, they have a powerful shared experience, regardless of their differences.”

Enriching the lives of children by inspiring a love of reading and learning is what Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library strives to achieve. The Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high quality books to children birth to age five, to their homes for free.

At the end of its second year, the Imagination Library has a total enrollment of 4,866 or nearly 40 percent of the 12,519 children under 5 years old living in Shawnee County. We had 2,086 new children receive their first book, The Little Engine That Could, and 843 children graduated, which means they turned five and received their last book, Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!

Enjoy the highlights of our second year (April 2018–March 2019) and learn more about how your support makes it possible for the Imagination Library to succeed.
Books at Home

Research shows that having books in the home increases school success and is especially important for children living in poverty. It is estimated that one child living in a middle-upper income household has an average of 13 books; in low income communities, there is one book for every 300 children. With the Imagination Library ALL children who are enrolled at birth will own 60 books by the time they reach their fifth birthday.

Imagination Library books are selected by a blue-ribbon panel with representatives from education, child development, academia and early childhood literacy expertise. The books incorporate specific themes targeting age-appropriate developmental milestones. New titles are introduced each year to avoid duplication of books older siblings may have received.

Reading is an essential life skill and the Imagination Library is an effective strategy to reach children on a scale that isn’t possible with other literacy programs. Our goals are to prepare children for kindergarten and to create programs. Our goals are to prepare children for kindergarten and to create a more literate community for whom reading is an essential part of life.

“It makes you a better person,” Millsap said. “It increases intelligence, makes you feel happier and expands your view of the world. To be successful in life, children must be skilled and engaged readers.”

Imagination Library’s Goals

**GOAL #1**
Increase the number of books in children’s homes

**GOAL #2**
Increase literacy activities in the homes of participating children

**GOAL #3**
Increase parent-child interaction

**GOAL #4**
Increase children’s interest in reading

**GOAL #5**
Increase parent awareness of child’s reading level

Year 2 Results

**Total Enrolled** = 4,866 (April 2018-March 2019), 39% of Shawnee County children under 5 years old

Do you know any child in your zip code who should enroll?

Percent of Children Signed Up by Zip Code

For someone who is a new parent, it is helpful to me. Inside the books it offers suggestions and tips on how to interact with your child while reading the book. Some suggest to point out shapes and make fun sounds to relate the book with words and everyday things in life. It is something to look forward to each month. We don’t have to leave the house. They are free and good quality books. Even if you buy books or not, this helps build our home library. It is not just one book per family, each child gets their very own book each month to keep. It helps them become a lifelong reader.

—JACLYN HALE

Reading Tips

- Talk about the cover of the book. What colors are in the picture?
- Act out parts of the story. Make sounds like the animals in the book.
- Ask questions at the end. What was your favorite part? What did [insert name of main character] learn, see or feel?