



United Way  
Blackhawk Region



[LiveUnitedBR.org/FreeBooks](http://LiveUnitedBR.org/FreeBooks)

## OVERVIEW

### What is 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 age 5. The program is designed to open a child's mind to faraway places, exciting adventures, and sets them on the pathway to early literacy and lifelong learning.

After launching in 1995, the program grew quickly. First books were only distributed to children living in Sevier County, Tennessee where Dolly grew up. It became such a success that in 2000 a national replication effort was underway. By 2003, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library had mailed one million books. It would prove to be the first of many millions of books sent to children around the world.

Dolly wanted to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families. She wanted children to be excited about books and to feel the magic that books can create. Moreover, she wanted to ensure that every child would have books in their home, regardless of their family's income.

### How does it work?

Children in participating communities can enroll in the program from the day they are born. Once they're signed up, they receive a new, age-appropriate book through the mail each month until their fifth birthday. In order for a child to be eligible, his/her community must have a local sponsor committed to covering the cost of the books and mailing, in addition to managing and promoting the program at the local level. In our service area, children who live in Beloit, Edgerton and Janesville are currently eligible to register for the program. However, the number of children who may enroll is limited by the amount of funding available.

### Who can receive books?

Any child, birth to age 5 who lives in Beloit, Edgerton or Janesville is eligible to receive books. However, funding is limited. A waiting list will be instituted when enrollment reaches capacity.

### Could lack of education and low income levels have an unfortunate impact on child literacy?

Unfortunately, yes. But, the mere presence of books is powerful enough to overcome that impact. Children who grow up in homes with at least 20 books attain on average 3 more years of schooling than students from bookless homes – regardless of parental income, education or class.

### Who chooses the books?

Each year, the esteemed [Blue Ribbon Book Selection Committee](#), a specially selected panel of early childhood literacy experts, is responsible for reviewing hundreds of potential titles for inclusion in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Recent studies suggest participation in the Imagination Library is positively and significantly associated with higher measures of early language and math development. The Blue Ribbon Book Selection Committee takes great care in choosing books that meet the different needs of children as they progress from birth to age 5.

### **Are parents encouraged to read to their children upon enrollment in Imagination Library?**

Yes, of course! It's never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer ideas to help foster a love of reading. Try a new tip each week, and see what works best for your child:

- Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.
- Incorporate humor and expression. Use different voices. Be interactive. Ham it up!
- Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.
- Discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.
- Read it again and again, and have fun!

"The single most significant factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school." -National Commission on Reading

Parents may access additional resources from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library [here](#).

### **Is there research supporting the values of the program?**

Absolutely! Educators and researchers the world over have identified that reading with your preschool child(ren) is the single most important activity to prepare a child for school. You can view the Imagination Library's logic model and research database [here](#).

### **How much do the books cost and who pays for the books?**

There is no cost to the families who receive books. Books are paid for by the Dolly Parton Foundation and as the proud local sponsor, United Way Blackhawk Region pays for postage and handling to mail books to children's homes. Funds are donated by our generous community, through businesses and individual donations. Anyone can donate!

### **How can I donate to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library?**

It only costs \$30 to support a child's participation in the program for a year or \$90 to support a child from birth to age 3. Donations can be made payable to United Way Blackhawk Region's Imagination Library by check or you may donate online via [PayPal](#).

### **As a community partner, may I help promote Imagination Library?**

Sure! We appreciate your assistance as we work to promote the program in locations that support underserved families (such as public libraries, HeadStart, food pantries, etc.). Funding is limited and as responsible stewards of donor dollars, we aspire to place books in the homes and hands of families who need them most. Contact United Way Blackhawk Region's Marketing Manager [Katie Crist](#) at 608.314.8426 to discuss further.

### **The Imagination Library isn't currently supported in my community. What do I need to consider to get started?**

Intended as a three year and incremental roll-out, United Way hopes to expand the Imagination Library to additional communities in the Blackhawk Region in the future. Other considerations include:

1. Funding: You will need to identify financial support to sustainably cover the wholesale cost of the books and mailing.

2. Partnering with a Non-profit (501c3): Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails books at special non-profit mailing rates, and a non-profit partner needs to be involved to qualify for these rates. Find additional info [here](#) at Dolly Parton's Imagination Library website.

## **NEW ENROLLMENT**

### **Who can enroll children in Imagination Library?**

Only parents, legal guardians or legal custodians may enroll a child.

### **Our family can afford books, may we still enroll?**

While enrollment in Imagination Library is open to everyone in stated communities, funding for the program is limited.

### **How can I enroll my child?**

The easiest way to enroll your child is to do so online at [LiveUnitedBr.org/freebooks](https://LiveUnitedBr.org/freebooks). There is a brief survey to be completed first before proceeding to the enrollment form.

### **Why am I being asked to complete a survey when I register?**

We use the survey to gather information to share with our donors so they can see the program impact and the importance of the Imagination Library to early literacy and our community.

### **Is the information provided on the registration form private?**

The information will not be used without your permission for any purpose other than those related to the Imagination Library.

### **How long does it take to receive my child's first book once I have received the email that my child has been enrolled?**

It can take up to 8 weeks after being enrolled to receive your child's first book. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library processes the books about 6 weeks before mailing them because Penguin Books USA prints books specifically for this program every month. Because the national organization is so large, it takes a little while to get new addresses into their system. But once you get the first book, a new book will come regularly every month until your child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **I'm pregnant. Can I add my unborn child to the waiting list?**

Yes! Just register with your due date and then contact us when the baby is born with their actual birth date.

### **I have twins. Will they receive the same book every month?**

Yes. Instead of receiving two identical books every month, most families with twins opt to enroll both children as one participant. We can put both children's names on the mailing label, so they will receive the gift together each month. This allows United Way Blackhawk Region to enroll an additional child (or one from the waiting list) to receive the second book.

### **I don't live in Beloit, Edgerton or Janesville. Can I sign my child up to receive books?**

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library registrations are handled by local affiliates who serve specified areas. [Click here](#) and enter your zip code to find out if there is a local affiliate serving your county/community. In the future, United Way hopes to expand Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to additional communities in the Blackhawk Region. Stay tuned for more information.

## **OUR FAMILY IS ALREADY ENROLLED**

### **I enrolled my child approximately 2 months ago, how long before the books arrive?**

The first book typically arrives 8 weeks after a child's enrollment form has been activated. The books are ordered on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month for delivery by the last week of the following month. For example, if your enrollment was activated before 5 p.m. on June 1<sup>st</sup>, you will receive your first book by the last week of July. However if your enrollment was activated after 5 p.m. on June 1<sup>st</sup>, you would rollover to the July 1<sup>st</sup> order for delivery of your first book by the last week of August. In other words, it may take up to 10 weeks before you receive your first book. After that time, a book will arrive each month.

### **Why do my child's books come at different times every month?**

Penguin Random House specially prints Dolly Parton's Imagination Library books every month, keeping program costs affordable. The different age groups' books are mailed as they are ready, which varies from month to month. Your child(ren)'s books can arrive at any point in the month. Please contact us if you have not received a book in 8 weeks.

### **My older child already receives books. If I enroll my younger child, will they receive the same books that my older child did?**

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Book Selection Committee rotates approximately 25% of titles for each age group each year. Families who enroll multiple children and therefore receive some "repeat" books often choose to donate the duplicates back to United Way Blackhawk Region to give to children on the waiting list. Please remember to peel the mailing label from the back of the books before donating to protect your privacy.

### **One of my children received their monthly book but my other child did not.**

Books may come at different times of the month. Once each of your children has received a first book, each month's books should arrive by the last day of the month – but not necessarily on the same day.

### **What should I do if my child didn't receive their book?**

If it is this month's book, sometimes the book doesn't come until the very last day of the month. If it doesn't come by the beginning of next month, please call United Way Blackhawk Region at (608) 314-8423, so we can help.

### **My family is moving to a new address. Will my child continue to receive books from the Imagination Library?**

As long as you and your family will still reside in Beloit, Edgerton or Janesville, your child can continue to receive books from the Imagination Library program. You must change your mailing address in the Parent Section of the national website for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. If you don't remember your log-in information, the website provides information about how to have it sent to you. Also, please visit the [United States Post Office](#) and notify them of your new address.

### **What if I'm moving outside of the service area?**

If you're moving out of Beloit, Edgerton or Janesville, you may still continue to receive books if your new zip code is part of a currently operating area. If you move into an area where there is not a community partner sponsoring Imagination Library, your child will no longer receive books.

## **WAITING LIST**

### **I've received notification that my child is on a waiting list. Why?**

Once we've reached maximum capacity based on available funding, we add children to a waiting list. To keep the waiting list as equitable as possible, we add children based on enrollment date.

### **How can the community help prevent or reduce the number of children on the waiting list?**

As with any program, funding and resources are limited. First, we ask for your generous financial support. It only costs \$30 to support a child's participation in Imagination Library for a year or \$90 to support a child from birth to age 3. Donations can be made payable to United Way Blackhawk Region's Imagination Library by check or you may donate online via [PayPal](#).

Also, we plan to work strategically with community partners to promote the program in locations that support to underserved families (such as public libraries, HeadStart, food pantries, etc.). Funding is limited and as responsible stewards of donor dollars, we aspire to place books in the homes and hands of families who need them most.

### **What happens if my child turns five while on the waiting list?**

This happens occasionally when a child is almost five years old when added to the waiting list. We will contact you to find out your child's special interests (characters, themes, subjects, etc.) and select 3-5 books from our library of donated new and lightly used children's books for them. With your permission, we can even hand-deliver these books to your home!