

## Imagination Library Receives State Support Kris Wiley and Marcy Tassano for The News Review

Oregon's youngest learners are the big winners with this month's statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

The Imagination Library is a book-gifting program that mails one FREE, high-quality, age-appropriate book to registered children from birth to age five every month.

The program increases book access for young children and their families; equips and supports parents to create learning-rich environments at home; supports brain and language development; increases opportunities for parent-child bonding; and fosters a love of reading at an early age.

Local Program Partners around the state previously were tasked with raising all of the funds to support the program. In the 2023 legislative session, our state lawmakers passed legislation directing \$1.7 million for the program over the next biennium.

Based on that appropriation, the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care will partner with the Dollywood Foundation to support Local Program Partners with a 50 percent funding match.

Beyond the financial support, statewide expansion goals include providing coverage to all counties and surpassing 65 percent registration of eligible children.

Our Local Program Partner, the Friends of the Roseburg Public Library, launched in fall 2019 and covers the Glide, Idleld Park, Roseburg, Wilbur and Winchester zip codes.

The Friends group was required to fundraise \$26 per registered child per year, and our community has been incredibly supportive from the beginning. A number of foundations, businesses and individuals have ensured every child who registers is approved immediately to receive books. For a list of major donors, visit the Friends website at [roseburglibraryfriends.org/imagination-library](http://roseburglibraryfriends.org/imagination-library).

Currently, 1,517 local children are registered for The Imagination Library, which is 51 percent of eligible youth in our service area. Registration is open at [www.imaginationlibrary.com](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com); click "Check Availability."

The state funding alleviates some of the anxiety of ensuring our participation is sustainable. We will continue to rely on our generous local funders to support the other half of our financial obligation.

We also look forward to support from the newly created Imagination Library of Oregon team, which is recruiting an Executive Director and Community Engagement Coordinator to help all of the Local Program Partners work toward the statewide expansion goals.

We ask community members to share information about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, encourage families and caregivers to register their children for the program, and advocate for early literacy. Together, we can make a difference.

#### This Week's Library Events

Tuesday, May 14, 3-5 p.m. – Maker Space Time

Thursday, May 16, 3-5 p.m. – Teen Volunteer Hours

Marcy Tassano is Vice President of the Friends of the Roseburg Public Library.