

Hello, I am Nora Briggs, Executive director of The Dollywood Foundation, Dolly Parton's nonprofit.

The research & science is very clear. We cannot wait to kindergarten for children to have access & exposure to books and reading. We need to reach children early - reading at this age, happens primarily at home. Reading at home requires books. Not all families have access, nor can provide books. We can help here!

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a home book gifting program for children birth to 5. Parents can register - as early as birth and children graduate out on their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Can receive up to 60 books. Registered children receive an age appropriate, high-quality book with their name on it, monthly, at home, at no cost to the family. We have Braille Books, Audio and Bilingual / Spanish books. Reading Tips help parents increase engagement and connection!

Books in the home lead to increased kindergarten readiness, changes in the home literacy environment with families connected around books and all family members reading, Significantly stronger reading, math and science, academic achievements in 3rd grade and beyond. Children who participate in DPIL do better academically throughout school year over non participants.

This program is special. Dolly calls this her heart program. It's about connecting hearts in the families. Connecting them to each other, snuggling and cuddling together, connecting hearts to books and reading. Children will continue to do what they love to do - so let's help them love reading!

Statewide programs have more impact and benefits than a collection of local programs scattered throughout the state.

- County - level program partners ensure statewide coverage for all zip codes
- Access for all families to early learning resources
- Children start kindergarten with shared experience and helps level the playing field
- Creates a shared bond among children from across neighborhoods, race, and economic differences, helps break division
- Partner with state agencies to find the most vulnerable children: Foster Care, Babies born in parents in correctional facilities, WIC Families
- Partner with state birthing hospitals
- Partner with the State Department of Education to flag participants and track program effectiveness
- Ties to Adult Literacy and Dual Language Programs places a multi-generational focus on literacy.

A shared funding model creates a robust partnership between private and public dollars. Engagement and ownership at multiple levels.

We know that simply getting books into the home changes the trajectory of kids, families and communities. Education is a equalizer and sets the stage for life success.

Thank you for your consideration. Dolly wants to help create a love for books and reading and make sure that every Pennsylvania child has access to books and learning, provide the start they need in education and in life. Thank you!