



**News Release
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For Immediate Release**

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One Millionth Book to be Delivered

Sioux Falls, SD – Sioux Empire United Way will deliver its one millionth book to a local child on Saturday, November 19 at 1:30pm. The book is a part of United Way's partner program, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The program provides a free book each month to children ages birth to five.

Dolly Parton founded the Imagination Library in 1996 in her home state of Tennessee. About Sioux Empire United Way's milestone, she said, "It's hard to believe that United Way has now given away 1 million books! Congratulations! Sioux Falls was one of the first "believers" in the Imagination Library, so in many ways you have paved the road for so much of our success. From the bottom of my country heart, thank you so much for all you have done for children and I can't wait to hear about the 2 millionth book!"

Sioux Empire United Way brought the Imagination Library program to the Sioux Empire ten years ago. As the program launched, just over 6,000 children began receiving a free book in the mail each month. With the November mailing, that number has now reached 9,855.

"Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a dream come true. Kids learn to love books. They spend time bonding with their parents while reading. This has been and continues to be, a stellar investment of the gifts Sioux Empire United Way receives from our contributors," said Jay Powell, Sioux Empire United Way President.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is available to all children ages birth to five whose parents/guardians live or work in Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, and Turner Counties. The program is free for all participants, thanks to the generous contributions of Sioux Empire United Way givers. You can learn more about the program or register to receive the books by visiting United Way's website, www.seuw.org or calling 605-336-2095.

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The Millionth Book Delivery:

Media are invited to join us for the delivery of the millionth book.

Saturday, November 19

1:00pm to 1:45pm

NEED ADDRESS

Available that day for comment include:

- Family and recipient of millionth book
- Jay Powell, Sioux Empire United Way President
- Scott Lawrence, Sioux Empire United Way Board Chair
- Rich Garry, Sioux Empire United Way 2002 Campaign Chair (first year of program)
- Bill Baker, Sioux Empire United Way 2003 Campaign Chair (year program went statewide)

Facts and Information:

- Sioux Empire United Way is delivering the millionth book to a local child through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- Imagination Library began in the Sioux Empire ten years ago.
- The program currently serves 9,855 children.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails children from ages birth to five a new book each month for free.
- Child development professionals select age-appropriate books to be used in the Imagination Library program. For example books delivered to children ages birth to one focus on touch, rhyme, and rhythm. Books for children ages four to five focus on riddles, non-fiction, and school preparation.
- All children receive "The Little Engine That Could" as their first book and all children's last book as they turn five is "Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come."
- The approximate cost to Sioux Empire United Way for the program is \$29/child for one year.
- Sioux Empire United Way was the first United Way outside of Tennessee to provide the program to children.
- In 2002, South Dakota became the first state outside of Tennessee to offer the program across the state, with United Ways in Madison, Mitchell, Watertown, Aberdeen, Huron, Pierre, and the Black Hills offering the program in their community.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is now available in more than 1,300 communities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has distributed 38 million books since its inception.



Quotes from Local Recipients:

Michelle Hawk (mother of Nora) from Harrisburg:

"My daughter, Nora loves getting her Imagination Library books. On the days they come in the mail, we can hardly get in the door fast enough to open the new book. Even though she is not even two yet, she enjoys every new book that comes in the mail. The Imagination Library allows her to learn and bond with us at the same time, through the books. The Imagination Library is a great program. I love that the United Way helps me give her the ability to learn and grow with books. I know she will use and cherish these books for many years"

Shalene Toupal (mother of Sammy) from Tea:

My son Sammy loves the program. Even at such a young age he gets excited when I bring his new book in from the mail! When he's ready for story time, he'll come right up to my husband or I and sit on our lap with one of his books. We cherish having the bonding time with him and watching him learn and grow.

Jon Burns (father of Jackson) of Brandon:

"Our son loves books and many of his favorites have come from the Imagination Library. Every time he receives a new book in the mail reading it is the first thing he wants to do. We are blessed that the Imagination Library is a program that the SEUW supports every year!"

Ellie McDonald (age four) of Viborg:

"I like to get new books in the mail. Then we get to read them and see what they are about. I really like them."

The Importance of Early Childhood Literacy:

Research shows us that children begin to develop their language skills in infancy. In fact, children develop much of their capacity to learn in the first three years of life, when their brains grow to 85% of their eventual adult weight.

According to the National Research Council, to prepare children for reading instruction in the early grades, it is best that they be exposed to high-quality language and literacy environments—in their homes, childcares, and preschools. The more words a child hears, the larger the child's vocabulary, and the more likely the child will be a proficient reader.

- A 1998 study showed a startling 88% of children who have difficulty reading at the end of first grade display similar difficulties at the end of fourth grade.
- A similar study at Yale University study indicated that 75% of students who are poor readers in third grade remain poor readers in high school.
- The size of a child's vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading. One study reported that children read to at least one hour per day during their preschool years come to school with a 10,000 to 14,000-word vocabulary. In comparison, children read to only 30 hours during their first five years come to school with a vocabulary fewer than 4,000 words.
- Children whose parents read to them become better readers and do better in school.
- Children who are given books by pediatricians are 4 times more likely to be read to by their parents and this is 8 times more likely for at-risk children.