



Michele Berendsen  
Account and Communications Manager  
Center for Public Partnerships and Research  
University of Kansas  
[mberendsen@ku.edu](mailto:mberendsen@ku.edu) or 785-864-9775

## For Immediate Release

### **Kansas Kicks Off Statewide Expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

Governor Laura Kelly, Representative Troy Waymaster and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund joined American icon Dolly Parton to announce the statewide expansion of her namesake Imagination Library book gifting program. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books to children (0-5 yrs old), free of charge through funding shared by local community partners.

"I'm so excited to be working with Governor Laura Kelly and the Kansas Children's Cabinet to bring my Imagination Library to more children and families across Kansas! Together we can gift a love of reading that will last a lifetime," says Dolly Parton.

The goal of the statewide expansion is to make books available to children ages 0-5 in every zip code in Kansas. Currently Kansas has 82 programs covering portions of 77 of Kansas' 105 counties. 21 percent of eligible children in the state are receiving books through these existing programs.

"We know that the most important factor in a child's success in school and in life is an early introduction to books and being read to at home," Governor Kelly said. "In Kansas, we are proud to connect our kids with the resources they need to succeed through the statewide expansion of the Imagination Library program. I want to thank those partners who have worked tirelessly to bring this program to their communities for building a strong foundation for this expansion."

#### **In year one of the expansion Kansas will:**

- **Form partnerships with community partners.** These local partners are the heart of the program. They promote the program online and at in-person events, fundraise, and enroll children who live within their geographical area. A local program partner must be a 501c3 to obtain non-profit

mailing rates, though several organizations may form a coalition of support and leadership. Examples include businesses, school districts, local foundations, etc. To learn more about becoming a community partner contact Pam Hunsaker at [phunsaker@imaginationlibrary.com](mailto:phunsaker@imaginationlibrary.com).

- **Provide start-up funding.** Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal (PDG) will provide start-up funding to enroll new children into new programs and work will continue to secure funding to sustain the program in the years ahead.

"As a father of a young child, I know the act of reading to our children is instrumental to their development. Shortly after our son was born, we enrolled him in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. All children in the state of Kansas should have the ability to participate in this program, as well. I applaud the bipartisan effort to ensure that all children in the state of Kansas, from ages zero to five, will have the opportunity to enhance and enrich their lives with books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library," Representative Waymaster said.

See if there is a program in your area at [allinforkansaskids.org/ImaginationLibrary](http://allinforkansaskids.org/ImaginationLibrary). Continue to check as we expand programs across the state!

### **About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation has gifted well over 167 million free books in Australia, Canada, The Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom and the United States. The Imagination Library mails more than 1.8 million high-quality, age-appropriate books each month to registered children from birth to age five. Dolly envisioned creating a lifelong love of reading, inspiring them to dream. The impact of the program has been widely researched and results suggest positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics. Penguin Random House is the exclusive publisher for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. For more information, please visit [imaginationlibrary.com](http://imaginationlibrary.com).

Funds for All In For Kansas Kids activities are partially provided through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The **Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal** 90TP0078-01-00 (\$8,943,000) was awarded to the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. The Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment are leading this work with the Children's Cabinet. This information or content and conclusions should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by, HHS, ACF, or the U.S. Government. Any food or refreshments are not paid for by federal funds.