

## **Open Books Partners With Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

*New program will deliver free, age-appropriate books to kids in Chicago*

**Chicago, November 30, 2018** – Open Books is honored to announce an exclusive partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to deliver free, new books to every child between 0-5 in Chicago.

Starting in December 2018, parents in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood can register children ages 0-5 to receive one new, age-appropriate, high-quality book every month in the mail. The program will steadily expand to cover the entire city's nearly 200,000 pre-kindergarten children. Registration for North Lawndale residents is available at <https://www.open-books.org/dollyparton/>.

"We're inspired by Dolly Parton's vision," said Eric Johnson, Open Books' Executive Director. "Like Open Books, she understands the power of books to transform lives. We're thrilled to partner with the Imagination Library to bring that power to more Chicago families than ever before."

Dolly Parton launched Imagination Library in Sevier County, Tenn., where she grew up, in 1995. Her idea was powerful, but simple: to ship one specially selected, age-appropriate book per month to any child of pre-kindergarten age. After growing to serve the entire state of Tennessee, the program quickly spread to other states and eventually to Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

In every community where it's available, Imagination Library partners with a local nonprofit, which administers the program and raises awareness among parents. Working with those partners, Imagination Library has delivered more than 110 million books to more than 1.3 million children. Every book is delivered by mail and addressed to the child – often the first mail a child receives.

Children in Chicagoland have not had access to the program – until now. In serving as Imagination Library's exclusive Chicago affiliate, Open Books hopes to make Chicago the highest-participating city in the United States.

The Dollywood Foundation is excited to partner with Open Books to bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Chicago," said Pam Hunsaker, Regional Director. "Open Books has brought thousands of books to children in the Chicago area and we look forward to bringing thousands more."

Partnering with Imagination Library will empower Open Books to not only expand its existing efforts, but also to transform the lives of the thousands of Chicago children with little or no access to books – and bring a powerful new tool to the struggle against some of the city's most critical challenges. Research has drawn a conclusive connection between early childhood

literacy and positive outcomes later in life. Children who are exposed to books before age 5, for example, have been shown to be three times more likely to graduate from high school and 70 percent less likely to be involved in violent crime.

“We know that books change lives, and that owning a book is an irreplaceable magic,” Johnson said. “With the power of Imagination Library, we’ll bring that magic to kids citywide.”

We are inviting all families in the North Lawndale neighborhood out on Saturday, December 22 to The Skyline Conference Room at 3750 W. Ogden Ave for an official kick-off event from 11 am - 1 pm. We will be signing up families in the community for the Imagination Library, giving away free books and toys for the holidays, as well as hosting a very special Storytime readings featuring former Chicago Bears player, Israel Itonije, Corey D. Williams, Veronica Appleton, and more!

We would like to thank our partners in this effort to create a larger access to books in Chicago: Steans Family Foundation, Illinois Action for Children, Lawndale Christian Health Center, and the Chicago Public Library.

For more information or to register an eligible child, visit:

<https://www.open-books.org/dollyparton/>

### **Contact**

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### **About Open Books**

A nonprofit social venture, Open Books provides literacy experiences for tens of thousands of Chicago readers each year through inspiring programs and the creative capitalization of books. Its literacy programs and book grants are largely funded through the sale of donated used books at its award-winning bookstores in the West Loop and Pilsen, as well as online and at special events. Last year, Open Books donated over 150,000 engaging, appropriate, and high-quality books to schools and nonprofits across Chicagoland.

### **About Imagination Library**

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library has become the premier early childhood book gifting program in the world by mailing more than 110 million free books in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and the United States. Currently, the program mails over one million specially selected, age-appropriate books monthly to registered children from birth to age five. Dolly’s vision was to create a lifelong love of reading, prepare children for school and inspire them to dream. Recent studies suggest participation in the Imagination Library program is positively and significantly associated with higher measures of early language and math

development. Penguin Random House is the exclusive publisher for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.