



# IMAGINATION LIBRARY OF WASHINGTON

## *LEGISLATIVE REPORT*

*NOVEMBER 1, 2022*

### **Prepared by**

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In partnership with The Dollywood Foundation

Program State Agency Champions:  
Department of Children Youth and Families and  
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction



# BUILDING A STATE & NATIONAL PRESENCE

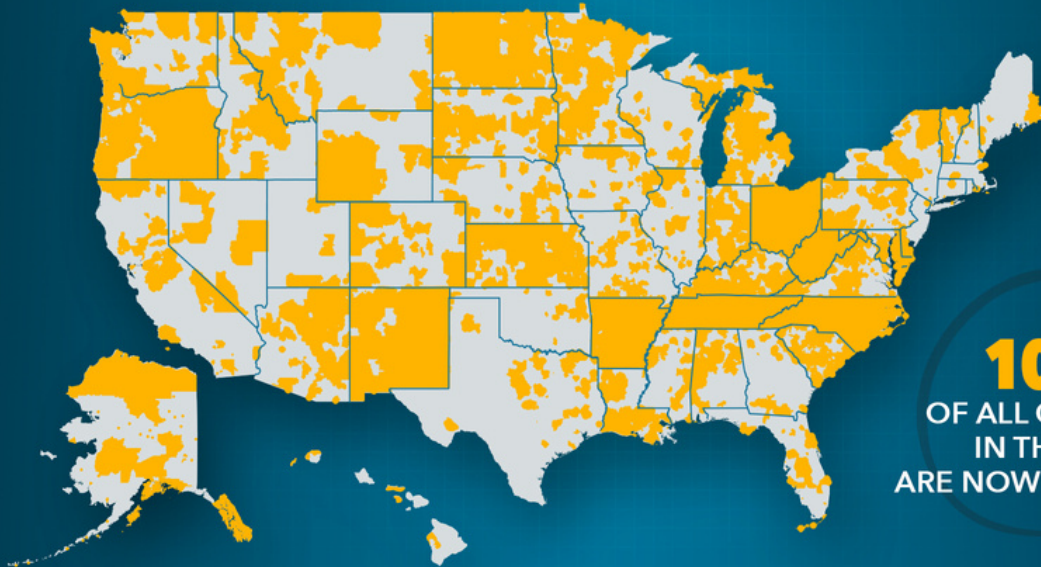
After Washington House Bill 2068 became law on June 9, 2022, creating the Imagination Library of Washington, the state made history becoming the first on the west coast to become a statewide program, and the twelfth in the nation.



Currently, there are fifteen legislatively passed statewide programs with the most recent being California, which is the largest population victory for The Dollywood Foundation and will be a game changer in terms of adding additional infrastructure such as a new book distribution warehouse for additional shipping support.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has had rapid success in expanding nationwide, helping early learners access free age-appropriate books mailed to their home from age birth to their fifth birthday. It is currently the number one early literacy program in the United States with 10% of the total early learning population enrolled.

## DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY NATIONAL GROWTH ACROSS THE USA



**10%**  
OF ALL CHILDREN  
IN THE USA  
ARE NOW ENROLLED!



# RECOGNIZED & RESEARCH PROVEN

## Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Recognition

Dolly Parton and the Imagination Library have been continuously recognized for the program's reach, quality, and effectiveness, having received awards such as the Best Practice award for addressing social barriers to literacy via the U.S. Library of Congress, the Friend of Education award from the National Education Association and the Distinguished Service award from the Council of Chief State School Officers both for expanding early childhood literacy, and impact on K-12 academic achievement. Dolly was also the recipient of the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in October 2022 for her work to uplift children with the gift of books.



Pictured above is Dolly Parton at a Library of Congress event.

## Research Supported

Over the last 22 years, The Dollywood Foundation and its program partners have undertaken a wide range of evaluations, studies, and data collection on numerous aspects of the Imagination Library.

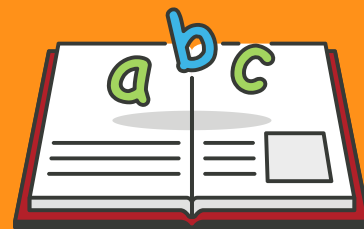
Selected measurable impact results are:

- Reading 3 times a week jumped from 60 to 85%
- Daily reading doubled from 29 to 59%
- 29% Increase in children ready for Kindergarten
- Significantly stronger reading skills and higher scores on reading achievement tests over their non-participating peers, consistently from Kindergarten through 3rd Grade
- Recent 5 years Imagination Library cohort consistently outperforming non-participating peers on annual reading assessments from Kindergarten through 9th grade.
- Consist higher academic achievement in math, science and reading
- Reduce retention in Kindergarten through 3rd grade
- Establishing reading routines brings about increased stability, emotional well-being, and improved family atmosphere.

- Becomes a catalyst for other children/family services in the community.
- A healing effect in the community manifesting in emerging neighborhood literacy initiatives, increased library usage, and connection to Adult / Dual language reading programs.

Literature shows significant correlations between a rich, home literacy environment and a child's early literacy skills. The relationship between these components and early literacy skills like receptive vocabulary and oral language, have been reinforced in other research as well. It is clear from the body of research that promoting a rich, home literacy environment is a key component of developing early literacy skills.

To view a variety of research studies done on Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, [click here](#).



# QUALITY & DIVERSITY



The quality and diversity of books is a strength of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The Imagination Library books are selected each year by a blue ribbon panel of early childhood experts and authors that The Dollywood Foundation calls the Blue Ribbon Book Selection Committee. Once a year they go through hundreds of books to select age-appropriate titles for the following year's lineup. To pull off gifting over 2 million books per month to children all over the world, The Foundation has an exclusive partnership with Penguin Random House to provide all the titles. The themes and focus of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library are around inspiration & imagination. The books are first selected on characteristics specific to its age group with the following fundamental themes: Love of reading and learning; regard for diversity of people, their roles, culture, and environment; promotion of self-esteem and confidence, appreciation of art and aesthetics. There is diversity in authors selected, and even local Thurston County author, Corinna Luyken was selected to feature her "The Tree in Me" book during the 2022 distribution to children.

Yearly, each age group of children receives two bilingual books, reflecting both Spanish and English sentences on each page. The Dollywood Foundation will pilot a bilingual program offering starting in California, Summer 2023. Parents will be able to opt in for the core program or bilingual program. This is anticipated to be rolled out to the rest of the nation, timing TBD. Parents are currently able to opt in to Imagination Library communications in the language preference of the family, either English or Spanish.

Imagination Library books are also customized with reading tips on the inside flap of each book, providing families direction on how to engage with children reading, and how to maximize the experience drawing out opinions and memories from the child, and further immersing in the books content and features.



# Expansion Journey

Expansion efforts to uplift Dolly Parton's Imagination Library across Washington has been swift and successful in great part because of the \$2.3 million contract United Ways of the Pacific Northwest has with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that provides a fifty percent monthly affiliate invoice match to help local program partners support their monthly enrollment and the cost of books and shipping. These ESSER funds have been essential boosters to local program partner stability and ability to grow and reach more families.

The Imagination Library of Washington (ILWA) team has given prime focus to activating program coverage to all geographic regions of Washington, so all early learners have this opportunity as quickly as possible. Emphasis at the beginning of expansion work was put into counties that represented higher percentages of poverty and minority populations in poverty, and then emphasis was given to regions that represent high volumes of Washington's early learning population.

Since expansion began in January 2022, fourteen counties have been provided full program coverage and an additional twenty-two zip codes in King and Pierce counties, two of our states largest early learning population regions.

The fifty percent OSPI match was a strong enticement tool for the ILWA team to secure new local program partners throughout Washington, and it has helped heavy population zones realize this can be possible with not as big of a financial burden to uplift and sustain it. Below is a list of the fourteen counties who received full coverage and the regions where twenty-two individual zip codes have been activated thus far.

Pre-expansion, the state only had 17.3% program availability where children could register if desired. Currently, program access is at 47.8% of our states total early learning population of 454,364 and 8.5% of our total early learning population is currently enrolled in the Imagination Library with 38,623 participants.

14 counties uplifted with full program coverage through expansion efforts:

- Kitsap
- Whatcom
- Whitman
- Chelan
- Douglas
- Kittitas
- Garfield
- Yakima
- Spokane
- Asotin
- Ferry
- Lincoln
- Benton
- Franklin

Partial covered regions uplifted through expansion efforts:

- Pierce (8 zip codes added)
- King (14 zip codes added)



# LOCAL PROGRAM PARTNERS

The program's lifeblood are the local program partners that sign Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with The Dollywood Foundation, agreeing to secure funds to cover the wholesale price of books and the shipping fees each month and enrolling children who live within the geographical area utilizing the Foundation's Book Order System (BOS), a proprietary central database. The local affiliates also conduct community engagement and marketing activities to ensure the region is aware on how to enroll for this free program.

The ILWA team calls local program partners "heroes" for stepping up to support their early learning populations in this impactful manner. The Dollywood Foundation criteria for becoming an Imagination Library program partner is that it is a 501c3 nonprofit or school district. There are currently thirty-two active Washington program partners, representing assorted sizes of geographical program coverage in Washington, from a few zip codes, to one or multiple counties. Chief Leschi School is fully funded by a separate federal grant and does not receive fifty percent funds from the current OSPI contract match. Program partners can choose their service territory as long as there is not an existing affiliate covering the same region. There is a diverse variety of program partners ranging from Friends of the Libraries, Rotary Foundations and Education Foundations, to United Ways, Land Trusts, and Child Development Associations.

## Local Partner Facts:

### Oldest Active Partner:

Chief Leschi School (2002)

### Newest Partner:

Twin County United Way  
(October 2022)

### Highest % of Total Early Learner Population Enrolled:

Lewis County (57.8%)



Pictured above: A neighborhood registration event, hosted by Washington program partner, United Way of Whitman County.



# Washington Program Partners & Enrollment

Below is a table listing current local program partners operating in the state of Washington, the number of children enrolled per program partner, and the partners service territory. (Note: affiliates cover various ranges of state geography): Data pulled on October 25, 2022

Local Program Partner Name	Service Territory	Number of Kids Enrolled by Program Partner
Africatown Community Land Trust	King County: 98055, 98056, 98057, 98058, 98064, 98108, 98112, 98118, 98122, 98144, 98168 and 98178	412
Arlington Education Foundation	Snohomish County: 98223, 98241	992
Chelan Douglas Child Services Association	Chelan and Douglas Counties	1,232
Chief Leschi School	Pierce County: 98404 (Program covered by a federal grant source)	35
Columbia Basin Foundation	Grant County: 98337	612
Friends of the Pend Oreille County Library District	Pend Oreille County	158
Gig Harbor Rotary Charitable Fund	Pierce County: 98329, 98332, 98333, 98335, 98349, 98351, 98394, 98395	582
Goodwin Connections	King County: 98198	124
Lake Stevens Education Foundation	Snohomish County: 98258	988
Lummi Island Grange	Skagit County: 98262	21
Monroe Public Schools Foundation	Snohomish County: 98272	573
Okanogan County Child Development Associatoin	Okanogan County	1,114

# Washington Program Partners & Enrollment Continued...

Local Program Partner Name	Service Territory	Number of Kids Enrolled by Program Partner
Othello School District	Adams County: 99344	424
Port Townsend Rotary Club	Jefferson County	375
Rotary Club of Colville	Stevens County	883
Rotary Club of Ephrata	Grant County: 98823	53
Support for Early Learning and Families	Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties	5,563
Spokane County United Way	Spokane County	5,920
Stanwood-Camano Rotary	Snohomish County: 98292; Island County: 98282	753
The Lopez Island Library	San Juan County: 98261	48
Twin County United Way	Asotin County	115
United Way of the Blue Mountains	Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla Counties	498
United Way of Central Washington	Kittitas and Yakima Counties	1,790
United Way of Clallam County	Clallam County	1,112
United Way of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties	Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties	3,218
United Way of Grays Harbor	Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties	1,011
United Way of Kitsap County	Kitsap County	3,613
United Way of Lewis County	Lewis County	2,608





# TEAM DEVELOPMENT



When the OSPI contract was activated in mid-December 2021, UWPNW hired Brooke Fisher-Clark as the new Executive Director of Imagination Library Expansion for Washington State, who had previous experience managing the state's top performing affiliate with the most enrolled children. Fisher-Clark helped pioneer the idea and effort to expand the program statewide giving the opportunity to all Washington early learners. Fisher-Clark dove into prospecting affiliates, announcing the launch of expansion statewide, and developed the initial infrastructure of expansion work, and then in May 2022 hired a Communications and Outreach Manager, Angela French, who also came to the role with experience managing an Imagination Library affiliate program and executing communications and marketing activities. The final addition to the ILWA team came in September 2022 welcoming an Operations Assistant, and master of all trades who could play as the center to the organization, Alena Fridley, who came to the role with great administrative and child-centered management experience. Fridley provides affiliate and program inquiry support, manages special projects, and events and manages day-to-day administrative duties.



Brooke Fisher-Clark  
Executive Director



Angela French  
Communications & Outreach Manager



Alena Fridley  
Operations Assistant



# ADVISORY STRUCTURE

The Dollywood Foundation requires the creation of an independent 501c3 nonprofit to develop, foster and sustain Imagination Library programs across every WA county. This 501c3 “Imagination Library of Washington” necessitates an advisory board that provides oversight, strategic direction and assistance with state program sustainability. The UWPNW board approved a five-member Imagination Library of Washington advisory committee to provide guidance, and support to the ILWA team in the development of new 501c3 nonprofit. This committee will become the official advisory board upon 501c3 designation. The five members represent a variety of state geography, skill sets and professional backgrounds to provide comprehensive support to the ILWA operation. They include, Carl Borg (CEO, United Way of Kitsap County), Jodi DeCesari (Executive Director, Okanogan County Child Development Association), Ivan Orozco (Community Engagement Manager, United Way of Central Washington), Anil Puri (Past Assistant District Governor, Twin Cities Rotary Club), and Susan Grisham (Assistant to the City Manager, City of Olympia).



Susan Grisham



Anil Puri



Carl Borg



Ivan Orozco



Jodi DeCesari

# PROGRAM PROMOTION

The ILWA team secured a \$150,000 private foundation grant specifically for enhancing statewide marketing of the Imagination Library.

Communications and Outreach Manager, Angela French has built a plan to make best use of the funds with a focus to emphasize regions with high poverty and vulnerable populations, and high early learning population regions. She selected a variety of mediums that would have the greatest reach and engagement and yield a high return of new program enrollments. Examples are selected paid social media boosts with narrow target audience selections to reach a specific region of families. Several hundred new enrollments were achieved out of the test pilot of this method in Yakima County once the entire county launched full coverage. Other avenues of marketing include bus benches and transit centers in specific high poverty, high population locations throughout the state.

Marketing materials are being customized and designed to the area it is being placed minding needs for other languages, QR codes for accessibility etc.

Pictured from top to bottom: bus bench advertising in Spokane County in select regions of high poverty; window clings being distributed to all state program partners for local businesses to help support enrollment; and billboard designs getting ready to implement in King County.



# PROGRAM PARTNER SUPPORT

The ILWA team has made program partner support a top priority. Providing optimal resources, training, and encouragement is paramount to the statewide program's success as a whole.

A robust online program partner resource library was created by the Communications and Outreach Manager that provides ready-to-go letters, flyers, and other marketing resources that partners can quickly customize to their information and use to engage their community, increase enrollment, raise funds etc. New program partner orientations are conducted to ensure partners get a comprehensive overview of support available, best practices, and key operational items to focus on, and program partner forums are hosted by the ILWA team biannually to provide peer-to-peer networking, idea sharing and recognition of affiliate performance and creativity. A monthly newsletter keeps partners up to date on state program progress, and a weekly "Tuesday Tips" e-mail goes out to give creative approaches to enhancing local programs and strengthening community reach and support. Quarterly incentive contests have also been conducted to encourage local program partners to increase their enrollment, where partners who have achieved 15% growth in a specific period are entered into a drawing to win Dolly cut-outs for their marketing use, or a credit to be used towards Imagination Library promotional materials or media to support their local program. The ILWA team is always ready to aid Washington program partners with any questions or needs.



A word cloud from the first program partner forum in August 2022 where affiliate representatives conveyed words that described Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



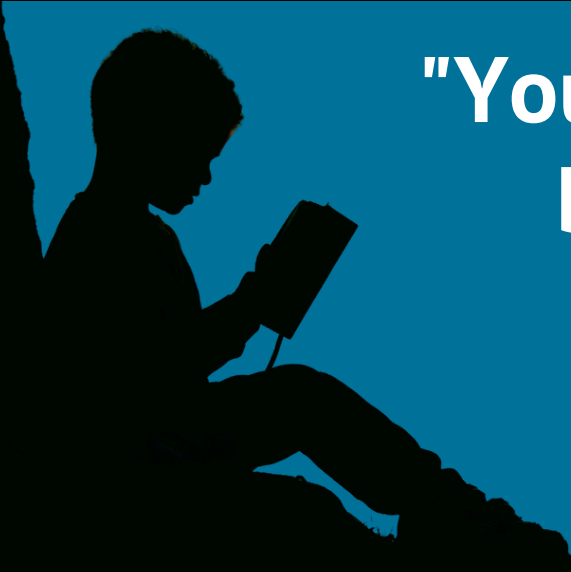
# In the Works

The goal of completing statewide coverage of the Imagination Library is almost a reality with only a handful of counties left to complete coverage (i.e., Mason, Thurston, King, Pierce, Snohomish, Skagit, Grant, and Adams), where strong prospective affiliates and funders are in consideration or planning modes. San Juan County, and regions of Skagit County are preparing to launch coverage with new program partners in November 2022 with a new affiliate launching coverage for the remaining areas of Island County in December 2022.

United Ways of the Pacific Northwest is working through the process of establishing a separate 501c3 nonprofit, "Imagination Library of Washington," utilizing best practice models from other statewide programs and guidance from The Dollywood Foundation. A statewide program has three key areas of focus; to foster Dolly Parton's Imagination Library across the state, develop countywide programs growing to at least 65% enrollment of 0-5 children and sustain local programs financially for future Washington early learners.

A donor society and business sponsorship opportunities will be unveiled in January 2023, state program fundraisers will be executed to create an affiliate crisis and support fund, and preparations will begin for a visit from Dolly Parton to celebrate statewide program completion when that occurs.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction has also asked for continued funding support of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in the OSPI budget request for the 2023-2025 biennium. [Click here](#) for details.



**"You can never get enough  
books into the hands of  
enough children."**



*Dolly*