



# NEWS RELEASE



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **(7/10/24) Read SI Dolly Parton Imagination Library Enrollment Event for Children to be Held in Mounds (Presented by Southern 7 Head Start and the Birth to Three Program)**

Earlier this month a familiar face began traveling around Southern Illinois helping Read SI celebrate the launch of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in the region. The familiar face is a life-size cutout of the singer, songwriter, and philanthropist, and one of its next stops will be held in Mounds, Illinois later this month.

Southern 7 Head Start and the Birth to Three Program will host a "Vanilla Ice Cream and Sprinkle Day" on July 23 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Southern 7 Mounds Head Start, located at 327 North Reader Street in Mounds. This public event will include an activity for the kids and give families the opportunity to enroll their child in the Imagination Library, whereby they will receive free books each month in the mail until they turn five years of age.

The appearance of the Dolly cutout is meant to symbolize the excitement and magic that books can bring to young readers. The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was founded by the iconic entertainer in 1995 and has grown to become a global initiative dedicated to ensuring every child has access to books. The Dollywood Foundation pays for infrastructure costs such as managing enrollment, coordinating mailing and negotiating bulk wholesale costs of the books. The remaining costs are shared by the state of Illinois and Read SI, whose members successfully raised the necessary funds to launch the program. As enrollment grows, so will the funding needs. Securing support from community members will be ongoing. The cost is \$13.30 per child, per year.

Recognizing the impact of providing early literacy support has on educational success later on, over 70 individuals, organizations, and businesses have made this launch possible through their generous contributions. A complete listing of the Imagination Library sponsors can be found on the Read SI website at [www.readsi.org](http://www.readsi.org). Among the top contributors are Legence Bank and Walmart in Carbondale. Other key donors include Fager-McGee Construction, First Bank & Trust of Murphysboro, the John A Logan College Foundation, Oliver and Associates, Southern Illinois Healthcare, Walmart in Marion, Benton and Carmi, and the Watermark Foundation. Schools and child care programs have also gotten into the act by sponsoring Imagination Library enrollment for all of the children in their program. Among those are Kiddie Kollege in Fairfield and Rainbow Day Care in Eldorado.

Read SI members firmly believe that every child deserves the opportunity to explore the world through books, and the Imagination Library will play a crucial role in fostering a lifelong love of reading. The introduction of the Imagination Library to our region promises to enrich the lives of countless children and families by promoting early literacy.

"We are thrilled to bring the Imagination Library to Southern Illinois," said Byram Fager, Director of the Southern Illinois Community Foundation, the fiscal agent for Read SI. "Dolly Parton's commitment to children's literacy is inspiring, and we are honored to launch this initiative in Southern Illinois. Every child deserves the opportunity to explore the world through books, and we believe the Imagination Library will play a crucial role in fostering a lifelong love of reading."

Read SI is a partnership of over 20 individuals, agencies, and organizations working together to promote the importance of reading and early literacy by launching and overseeing the implementation of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Southern Illinois. Co-founders of the partnership include the Southern Illinois Coalition for Children and Families, the Southern Illinois Community Foundation, and the Walker Borum Foundations.

To learn more about the Imagination Library and how to enroll a child, please visit [www.Readsi.org](http://www.Readsi.org) or visit the Read SI Facebook page. For questions regarding the Mounds event, call 618-745-6703.

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