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Madison Reading Project: Expands free book giving, literacy programs to Sauk County

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Madison, WI – Madison Reading Project is thrilled to announce it is expanding its service area to include Sauk County, starting with its early literacy services for young children. We believe every child deserves the chance to fall in love with reading.

Since our pilot program began in 2014 at the Salvation Army Neighborhood Center, we have fostered curiosity, listening, trust, and collaboration to enhance access to resources. We've significantly expanded our services, reaching children from birth to 18 through our work, and launched various literacy programs to bring books and engaging events directly to communities. The impact of 12 years has been significant to the county, in the volume and quality of resources, the longevity of programs and relationships, and the willingness to be innovative to enhance book accessibility and book joy for all children, families, and educators.

We will start with the youngest readers and introduce Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for Sauk County families later this week, providing invaluable resources to support young readers. Thanks to the generous support of the Roots & Wings Foundation, our expansion will focus on early literacy services that build the foundational skills kids need before kindergarten.

Our small but mighty team is devoted to staying curious, being in the community, and making an impactful difference. This expansion marks an exciting new chapter, and we invite you to stay tuned as we share plans and ways you can get involved. Together, we can ensure that all children, families, and educators across our region have access to quality literacy materials and books to read, dream, and

succeed.Beginning March 19, parents and caregivers can easily enroll their child(ren), birth to age 5, in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to receive, at no charge, a carefully selected free book by mail every month that corresponds with the child's age. Enrollment is at www.MadisonReadingProject.com/imaginationlibrary

"We've been administering Imagination Library in Dane County since 2021, and thanks to the generous support of Roots & Wings Foundation, we're now able to widen our reach," says Rowan Childs, Madison Reading Project Co-Executive Director/Founder. "More than 13,500 children in Dane County receive this amazing gift in the mail every month and jumpstart literacy in their home. When families sign up their newborn, by the time their child turns five, the family will have received 60 books through the mail, helping build their home library, which not only enhances literacy skills, but also provides important opportunities for parent-child bonding."

"About 3,500 children throughout Sauk County could be enrolled," adds Deirdre Steinmetz, Co-Executive Director. "We are elated to grow this program to serve rural communities and bring the excitement of early literacy resources to more kids."

Each child is welcomed to the Imagination Library with *The Little Engine that Could*, and at age five, "graduates" with *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come.* Books mailed in between those are based on their birth year, starting with board books and moving through more complex learning stages.

"We're eager to make an impact in learning in Sauk County by putting more books into the hands of young children," adds Sarah Burke, Madison Reading Project's Early Literacy Coordinator. "More books in homes means more family bonding time and more opportunities to experience the joy of reading together."

"We are overjoyed to be joining the Sauk County community and look forward to learning and growing alongside local children, families, and educators to inspire the next generation of lifelong readers," Childs adds.

Questions about the Dolly Parton Imagination Program? Email: imaginationlibrary@madisonreadingproject.com

Facts to know:

- Children can be enrolled on the day they are born
- Children can be enrolled at one location- if that household is the address of a grandparent, friend, or relative, their name needs to be used as the parent to ensure delivery.
- Every child under 5 in a household can be enrolled. Duplicate titles may occur
- Madison Reading Project has funding from Roots & Wings Foundation to continue this program for five years.
- Dolly Parton Imagination Library works with local nonprofits to provide books to children in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland. Over 300 million books have been gifted since the program's inception in 1995.