



News Release

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Lake County Kids Can Receive Free Books Through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and Lifeline January 13, 2021

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Expanding on a Lake County initiative started in 2020, families with young children throughout Lake County can now get books mailed to their house for free thanks to Lifeline, United Way of Lake County, the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Children younger than five throughout Lake County can now receive free high-quality, brand-new, and age-appropriate books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Once kids are signed up, they'll have one book mailed to their home each month until they turn five.

And those free books can make a big difference for children as they prepare for kindergarten and life.

Developing literacy begins at birth. According to stats provided by the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library, by the age of three a child's brain is already 80% developed and by the time a child enters kindergarten, they must already know thousands of words to succeed in the classroom. Research has shown that a child with 25 books in their home complete an average of two additional years of schooling compared to their peers without books in the home.

A report by the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library suggests that there are men and women throughout Ohio who struggle to read food labels, prescription directions and bus schedules—each are one of the 36 million American adults who are considered functionally illiterate. A child who can't read is four times more likely to drop out of high school before graduation. Ohio's Future at Work found that in the state of Ohio 24% of adults don't have a high school diploma and, at the same time, Seeds of Literacy found that 87% of the jobs available on OhioMeansJobs.com are closed to someone without a high school diploma. This dramatically reduces the changes of someone who is functionally illiterate finding a job that will give them the independence to support themselves and their families.

Through programs like the Imagination Library, there is a path out of generational poverty through increased literacy opportunities for children.

"We're so excited to join partners throughout Lake County, as well as with the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, to provide free books to Lake County's children," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline. "As a local community action agency, we often work with adults who struggle with functional illiteracy and we know how many challenges that presents for them. If we can help prevent that, we're thrilled to be able to do so."

United Way of Lake County was eager to spread participation of the Imagination Library to all of Lake County.

“An astounding 52% of Lake County children enter kindergarten without the sufficient skills and knowledge needed to engage in kindergarten-level instruction. This puts them at risk of being left behind throughout school and life,” said United Way of Lake County President & CEO, Jennifer McCarty. “Our goal is to help change these odds, which is why we are proud to help support this program.”

Families can register to receive books at <https://www.lclifeline.org/imagination-library/> by clicking the enroll today button, or by contacting program coordinator Heather Riser at Lifeline at 354-2148.

Those who wish to donate to spread the reach of the Imagination Library in Lake County can contact the Lifeline at 440-354-2148 or give online at <https://www.lclifeline.org/imagination-library/> by using the donate button on the Imagination Library page.

Dolly Parton began the Imagination Library in her hometown of Sevier County, Tennessee, in 1995. It was her way of encouraging reading and childhood literacy. In the past 25 years, the program has spread across the country and even to United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland with the help of local champions. The Ohio Governor’s Imagination Library was inspired by First Lady Fran DeWine’s passion to improve the lives of Ohio’s children and her own family’s experiences with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a community action agency by the Ohio Development Services Agency, ODSA. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County’s community action agency in 2020.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County’s low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline’s current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services, guardianship, and consumer education & job training areas. Our motto is ‘helping people, changing lives.’ Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODSA, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health and through private donors.